

# Explaining the Secrets of Liu Style Baguazhang

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### 1. The Origins of Liu Style Baguazhang

Liu Style Baguazhang was founded by Mr. Liu Baozhen of Gu'an County in Hebei.

Mr. Liu Baozhen (1861-1922) was also called Pinqing. In his youth he practiced martial arts. He was an expert in Chuoqiao. His skill was high and his art was deep. At the end of the Qing dynasty he managed the horses in the Shuntian Palace. His foot strength was especially strong and because he was an expert in the leg methods, people called him "Flying Legs Liu." The *Gu'an County Annals* has these records. According to the teachers words, Master Dong Haichuan heard that Mr. Liu Baozhen was pretty good; that his skill was high and his art was deep. Dong then disguised himself and went to look for him in Gu'an. Liu Baozhen was quick and had strong talent. He had a generous, heroic and cheerful disposition. Master Dong was delightfully rewarded. Master Dong used Bagua's yin and yang palms to break his quick legs and accepted his surrender and took him on as a student. Master Dong stayed in Liu's home for three years. During that time he taught Liu the Eight Posts, Eight Postures, Baguazhang, Bagua Saber and the Piercing the Palaces Striking the Posts methods and the skill of practicing to get the shen to lead the qi. After Liu Baozhen received these teachings, he combined them with his previous studies to make the own unique characteristics of his Baguazhang style and system. Master Liu was also an expert in the saber method. Among the martial community he won the appellation, "Flying Saber Liu." Then he also met a Buddhist monk in a certain temple in Tongzhou who taught him the art of Qi Men Escaping the Cage. He then created the Eight Gate Nine Palaces Palm method, the Qi Men Array method (Nine Palaces Saber Array, and Sword Array), which is one of the unique factors of his school. When he managed the horses in the Shuntian Palace, he used Qi Men Escaping the Cage's gauging positions to catch thieves. He was repeatedly successful. His impressive strength cowed bandits and his fame grew throughout the seven northern provinces. He researched the principles of the *Yi Jing* and realized that it could be used to correct his errors. In his later years he reflected on spirituality and became a Buddhist. He realized that he agreed with the *Yi Jing's* creating and transforming the Way and trained in the unfathomable skills of Wuji and the eight trigrams. Later he died in a certain temple in Tongzhou, Beijing.

### 2. Liu Style Baguazhang Lineage Holders

Master Liu Baozhen transmitted to his son and to his student Guo Mengshen. His son because he smoked a lot of tobacco when it came to studying he was unenthusiastic. His vitality was deadened. His body was weak and empty. His family studies were never transmitted and he died early in his 20's or 30's. Liu family clan members never received

this branch of transmission. Fortunately the student Guo Mengshen carried on his legacy. He received the essence of Liu Style Baguazhang unbroken.

Guo Mengshen (1890 – 1973) was called Ziping. He was from Gu'an in Hebei. He was a national level martial arts judge. When he was 12 years old he asked Liu Baozhen to be his teacher. Liu taught him the Bagua School martial studies of the Eight Posts, Eight Postures, Baguazhang, Bagua Saber, Walking the Posts, Penetrating the Posts, and Striking the Posts, etc. He became the second generation inheritor of Liu Style Baguazhang. In order to keep improving, he incorporated the fine points of diverse styles. When Mr. Guo Mengshen was 26 years old, he also went to Xincheng County to ask the famous Xingyi master, Ma Yutang to teach him Xingyi Quan. With Zhu Guofu (who later won first place at the old national Hangzhou Kuoshu competition), Gao Zhendong (who later held a position as the director of the Wudang section in the old Central Nanjing Kuoshu Institute) and other senior students they practiced and researched day and night to get the real transmission of Xingyi Quan. When he was 30, he followed his senior classmate Zhu Guofu as well as Ma Yutang's son Ma Yuanji to the Nanjing Kuoshu Institute. During his time at the Kuoshu Institute Mr. Guo Mengshen followed Yang Chengfu and studied Yang Style Taijiquan. With the famous Xingyi and Bagua master Zhang Zhankui he got Bagua Spear, Bagua Staff, Bagua Sword and Bagua Ziwu Mandarin Ducks Yue. While at the institute, he earned the name "Guo Quick Hands." Based on his studies of the basics of the previous generations, Mr. Guo Mengshen took Liu Style Baguazhang and developed Bagua Sanshou Zhang. The Bagua Sanshou Saber of Wang Shutian (deceased), the martial arts instructor for the Chengdu Sports Institute, was taught to him by Mr. Guo Mengshen. (Wang took the gold medal for this routine in a national competition.) The Bagua Saber of Liu Zhiqing of Harbin was taught to him by Mr. Guo Mengshen.

Guo Zhenya is the third generation lineage holder of Liu Style Baguazhang. In his youth he practiced martial arts under his father Guo Mengshen. He first studied Baguazhang and later studied Xingyi Quan and Taijiquan for over 10 years. His skill is high and his art is deep. His wude is in high esteem. He is an expert at Bagua Sanshou and Bagua Saber. In 1980 and in 1986, during the national martial arts competitions he won three gold medals and one silver medal as well as the First Class Martial Paragon Badge. Mr. Guo Zhenya's seven pound heavy saber training comes on like sudden wind and rain; like surging and billowing waves. The saber follows the stepping and turning. The stepping follows the moving of the saber. The will leads and the spirit is connected. It is very energetic. When people see it they exclaim in wonder. People call him the "Bagua Saber King." In the records of the past 80 years, the martial arts community has passed on the saying, "Southern Palm, Northern Saber." The Southern Palm refers to the Baguazhang of Master Sha Guozheng (deceased) of Yunnan. The Northern Saber refers to the Bagua Saber of Master Guo Zhenya. One can see that their influence is great.

Besides teaching his children, Guo Hao and Guo Yingwai, Mr. Guo Zhenya also has taught thousands of other students. He has many pupils and schools all over the world. Mr. Guo, in his sixties, also seeks disciples to carry on the art in Zhejiang, Sichuan, Shandong, and northeastern areas to systematically teach Baguazhang and weapons. That

way many provinces and city areas will have the splendid martial art of Liu Style Baguazhang available to them. So to Liu Style Baguazhang, from Master Liu Baozhen to today's fourth generation lineage holders, I hope that the comrades in the similar schools work together with single-mindedness to allow this Bagua bright pearl to always shine in the martial community.

The poem says:

Master Dong transmitted Bagua to Mr. Liu,  
Flying Saber and Quick Hands shocked the martial altar;

Three generations of the Guo Family defend the legacy,  
Continuing from the beginning through a thousand years.

### **3. The Liu Style Baguazhang System**

The Liu Style Baguazhang System can be divided into four sections:

#### **Section 1 – The Post Methods**

- 1) The Eight Posts (Fixed Posts):
  - a. Squeeze the Horse Post
  - b. Push the Mountain Post
  - c. Wind the Body Post
  - d. Twist and Pierce Post
  - e. Lower Thrusting Post
  - f. Double Slapping Post
  - g. Overturn the Body Post
  - h. Seize the Sinews Post

This is mainly cultivating the dantian neigong. These use the microcosmic orbit and the drumming swaying round rolling energy of Bagua to lay the foundation. Simultaneously they train the coordinated stretching, expanding, opening and closing of the sinews and bones; moving the sinews and shaking the bones; and strengthening the sinews and bones. These lay the foundation for studying the palm methods.

- 2) The Eight Postures (Moving Posts):
  - a. Relax and Sink Posture
  - b. Push the Mountain Posture
  - c. Embrace the Ball Posture
  - d. Teapot Posture
  - e. Golden Needle Posture
  - f. Monkey Form Posture
  - g. Extend the Claws Posture
  - h. Looking and Observing Posture

The Eight Postures mainly train issuing energy from a dynamic state. It lays the foundation for studying Baguazhang and fighting.

- 3) The Fighting Post Methods
  - a. Walking the Posts: (Heaven Basin) Walk the eight trigrams and practice the palm methods on one meter high posts arranged in the nine palaces shape.
  - b. Penetrating the Posts: (Earth Basin) Piercing, moving, swimming and walking between the nine palace posts to practice the hand, eye, and body methods and the stepping methods.
  - c. Striking the Posts: (Man Basin) Uses the Penetrating the Posts above as the foundation. It takes the palm methods from the routines and uses the posts to represent people to practice the fighting palm methods.

This mainly uses the inner five elements to study and drill the outer five elements. It adds dodging, expanding, jumping, and shifting to the fighting repertoire. It adds the skills of swimming body and shifting to surprise your opponent.

## Section 2 – The Palm Methods

- 1) Baguazhang
  - a. Single Change Palm
  - b. Double Change Palm
  - c. Flowing Posture Palm
  - d. Turning Body Palm
  - e. Returning Body Palm
  - f. Scooping Body Palm
  - g. Twisting Body Palm
- 2) Nine Palaces Palm
  - a. Qian Palace Open Gate Palm
  - b. Kun Palace Death Gate Palm
  - c. Kan Palace Stopping Gate Palm
  - d. Li Palace Scenery Gate Palm
  - e. Zhen Palace Injure Gate Palm
  - f. Sun Palace Closed Gate Palm
  - g. Gen Palace Creating Gate Palm
  - h. Dui Palace Frightened Gate Palm
  - i. Center Palace Local Tyrant Gate Palm

The Palm Methods are for training the utilization of the skill methods, fighting methods and many types of turning and changing angles and combat striking.

### Section 3 – Weapons

- 1) Bagua Saber (Night Fighting Eight Directions Saber)
- 2) Bagua Sword
- 3) Four Gates Dragon Moving Sword
- 4) Bagua Reverse Hand Sword
- 5) Bagua Ziwu Yuan Yang Yue
- 6) Bagua Butterfly Moving Hooks
- 7) Bagua Spear (Double Headed Snake)
- 8) Bagua Staff

- 1) Sword vs Sword
- 2) Saber vs Saber
- 3) Spear vs Spear
- 4) Saber vs Spear
- 5) Hooks vs Spear, etc.

Weapons are an extension of the hands. They are created from the palm methods. When the palm methods are completed, then one moves on to the weapons. Practicing the weapons is in order to make the palm strength even more flowing extended and unimpeded: to become continuous and far extended and to make the body and weapon one unit.

### Section 4 – The Array Methods

- 1) Bagua Nine Palaces Palm Array
- 2) Bagua Nine Palaces Saber Array
- 3) Bagua Nine Palaces Sword Array

The Array Methods have their origins in the Eight Array Diagram. Master Liu developed this martial art based on the principles of Qi Men. It contains the essence of the seven stars, the subtleties of the eight trigrams, and the spirit of the nine palaces. Ji and zheng are mutually created. The five elements move together. The *Yi Jing* and martial arts are embodied as one.

## 4. Style Characteristics of Liu Style Baguazhang

Liu Style Baguazhang's characteristics are quick and pure. It is continuous and linked. When training, quickness is the important characteristic of rushing out. The stepping is quick. The body is quick. The hands are quick. The eyes are quick. However one must not float when doing the quick stepping method. One must be agile and yet stable, like drifting with the tide. It uses treading mud with toeing-in and toeing-out to make the corpus. It uses hooking, hanging, treading, and intercepting to make the functions. The hand method pays attention to: pushing, upholding, replacing and leading; tearing, digging, capturing and pulling aside. The body method pays attention to: twisting,

rotating, drilling, and overturning. The eye method pays attention to: eagle's eyes and tiger's gaze. It uses the internal skill of "drumming swaying round rolling energy" and uniting that with the outer forms to make the talent method. Skill and talent become one; very simple and very fine. Fighting pays attention to 1) piercing, 2) walking, 3) observing, and 4) issuing. Joining hands is like a boa penetrating and a snake winding, something that is difficult to escape from. Issuing energy is like shaking heaven or a clap of thunder. It throws the enemy a yard away.

The song says:

Yin yang turning changing Baguazhang,  
The five elements, six skills and seven stars are hidden;

Drumming swaying round rolling one qi swimming,  
Relaxed and calm naturally walking the nine palaces;

Push, uphold, replace, lead, the hand method is pure,  
Toe-in, toe-out, treading mud step moving rapidly;

Upper and lower mutually follow each other, the waist twists and rotates,  
Not fear the fierce man with the strength of 1000 pounds.

