

Long Xing Baguazhang Jing Jie

A Clear Explanation of Dragon Form Baguazhang

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More than 60 years ago, the famous martial artists, Huang Bonian, published *Long Xing Baguazhang (Dragon Form Baguazhang)*. This was a book about a wonderful branch of the Baguazhang School. Mr. Huang's skills were taught to him by the great Xingyi Quan master, Li Cunyi, and the great Baguazhang master, Cheng Tinghua. At that time, Li and Cheng shared their arts with each other. As a result, Cheng Style Baguazhang contains Xingyi Quan's transformations of the 12 Forms and striking methods of the seven fists. And Mr. Li Cunyi studied "Youshen Bagua Lianhuan Zhang." Then Mr. Li Cunyi took these two fighting methods and united them to make one, creating the distinctive "Simen Long Xing Zhang" [Four Doors Dragon Form Palm]. Its body method and stepping method use Baguazhang as its foundation. Its palm method and stepping pattern are totally from Xingyi Quan. Only it is not similar to Baguazhang. That is, it takes the circle walking and changes the training to turning on a figure "8". After this, many of the Li Style students practiced this palm method.

When Mr. Huang Bonian was studying with Mr. Li Cunyi, he learned this routine of palm methods. In his middle years, after he completed his skills, he traveled around China. Then he took a post in the Nanjing Central Guoshu Institute. He was happy to make friends with wonderful men and teachers from all over. They all had the same idea of learning from each other by exchanging views to get many benefits. He deeply felt that his teachers' transmission and training of "Simen Long Xing Zhang" still did not wholly embody the style and special points of Baguazhang, so using that as his foundation he synthesize all of his life's studies. He also created a routine for this new palm method which is today called "Long Xing Baguazhang." [Dragon Form Baguazhang]

This routine of palm methods uses the name "Dragon Form." That is because it starts with training the palm method. The body method resembles a sudden dragon. It uses rising and falling, coiling and rotating, walking and turning without stop. It uses turning around like a monkey and overturning like an eagle. Both arms coil and rotate, winding circling bending and straightening like a huge boa surging forward. It truly embodies the so-called 'Looking forward to see it in the front but suddenly it is in the back.' It is constantly changing forms and shapes. It changes without measure. It has the aspect of the magical dragon whose head can be seen but not his tail.

“Dragon Form Baguazhang” is divided into two routines. The first routine is made of the fundamental eight palms. These are the fundamental body methods and palm methods of Dragon Form Palm. It is divided to make the fixed forms and the flowing steps practices. The second routine is the “Dragon Form Eight Palms”. This is taking the palm methods of the first routine and connecting them together. In addition, it uses wonderful and profound transformations. This is divided to make eight roads.

The author studied with the famous martial arts master, Pei Xirong, for many years and became very good at this routine palm method. Master Pei is a major inner door disciple of Mr. Huang Bonian. Then he also followed Mr. Huang Bonian’s brother, Laoshi Huang Boshou, and studied the other routine of the Huang School, “Piercing the Nine Palaces.” After ten years, Teacher Pei became very fond of these two routine palm methods. Recently magazines and newspapers have been featuring articles on Mr. Huang Bonian, and in particular mentioning “Dragon Form Baguazhang.” The inner content, special points, and practice methods of these routines are talked about but without details. So I am introducing, to enthusiasts everywhere, a comprehensive explanation of “Dragon Form Baguazhang”.

1. Inner Content: According to what Mr. Huang Bonian wrote down in his book, *Dragon Form Baguazhang*, the names for the two routine palm methods are as below:

1st Road:

1. Single Change Palm (plus Dot the Knee Leg)
2. Double Change Palm (plus Stamping [蹠] Leg)
3. Turning Body Palm (plus Inside and Outside Swing the Lotus Leg)
4. Flowing Posture Palm (Front Piercing Palm, Rear Treading [蹬] Leg)
5. Spit Out the Tongue Palm (Dot the Heart Leg)
6. Wild Horse Dashes to the Manger (Head-on Striking Leg)
7. Vertical Post Palm (Toe-in Locking Leg)
8. Sparrow Hawk Body Palm (Slice the Horse Leg, Reverse Treading [蹬] Leg)

2nd Road:

1. Returning Body Palm (Point to the Face Springing Knee Leg)
2. Strike with the Body Palm (Black Dragon Winds Around the Pillar)
3. Slicing Rotating Palm (Jade Ring Springing Legs)
4. Red Phoenix Faces the Sun (Grasp and Flick, Reverse Raise the Leg)
5. Wind Wheel Splitting Palm
6. Evade and Change Shape (Knee Strike Leg)
7. Snake Form Palm
8. Four Dragons Fetch Water

The inner content above is what Mr. Huang wrote in his book, *Dragon Form Baguazhang*. Only at that time, Mr. Huang really taught Teacher Pei a different “Dragon Form Baguazhang.” The palm method was divided into two roads. The First Road was made of the Fundamental Eight Palms, altogether eight Roads, the names of which are given below:

- 1st Road: Single Change Palm (Hidden Dot the Knee Locking Leg)
- 2nd Road: Turning Body Palm (Inside Closed Sweep the Leaves Leg)
- 3rd Road: Wind Wheel Palm (add Stamping Leg and Short Nail)
- 4th Road: Flowing Posture Palm (add Tripping Leg)
- 5th Road: Overturning Body Palm (add Snagging [挂] Leg)
- 6th Road: Strike with the Body Palm (contains Sweep the Lotus Leg)
- 7th Road: Slicing Rotating Palm (Snagging Five Rings Reverse Treading Leg)
- 8th Road: Returning Body Palm (Evade and Change Shape, 1000 Pound Falling)

From the above names you can see that in the first routine palm methods the obvious legs and hidden legs are comparatively many. When Mr. Huang Bonian wrote the book teaching the palm method, the inner content also is very similar. And the second routine palm method then is pure Swimming Body Lianhuan Palm. The inner content is completely made of the body method, palm method, eight roads, and eight basins. It does not contain one leg method. This is because Mr. Huang grasped the essence of the old Baguazhang manuals. In his practice of Baguazhang, he was conducting anew, arranging and improving. Thereupon he composed this routine using his expertise in Bagua to make the palm methods and cause the name “Dragon Form” to be real. During my years of study with Teacher Pei, I heard Teacher Pei reminisce that Mr. Huang Bonian did not attach much importance to the names of this routine. He only used to call them first palm, second palm, etc.

From the specific inner content you can see that there are only two to four actions in each routine. But each of the actions involves coiling, rotating, walking and turning. They don't have fixed forms. Because of this also it is very difficult to give them names. One only can grasp the specific outgoing hand directions and forms to determine the names, more or less like below:

- 1st Palm: Inner Wrapping Palm, Coiling Rotating Palm, Change Form Palm
- 2nd Palm: Coiling Rotating Palm, Vertical Post Palm, Wiping Tail Hold up the Spear Palm, Twist the Arms Palm, Coiling Rotating Palm, Change Forms Palm
- 3rd Palm: Coiling Rotating Palm, Change the Flag Searching Palm, Change Forms Palm, Snake Parts the Grass Scoop the Yin Palm, Change Forms Palm
- 4th Palm: Coiling Rotating Palm, Conceal the Body Searching Palm, Below the Elbow Palm, In the Sleeve Piercing Palm, Wavy Body Palm, Change Form Palm
- 5th Palm: Coiling Rotating Palm, Point to Heaven Palm, Conceal the Body Overturning Palm, Change Form Palm
- 6th Palm: Coiling Rotating Palm, Pierce the Throat Wiping Tail Palm, Change Form Palm, Sweep the Neck Sever the Waist Palm, Change Form Palm
- 7th Palm: Coiling Rotating Palm, Three Piercing Palms, Below the Sleeve Palm, Change Form Palm, Rolling Hand Palm, Change Form Palm
- 8th Palm: Coiling Rotating Palm, Conceal the Body Piercing Palm, Change Form Palm, Winding Hand Piercing Palm, Change Form Palm

When training these routine palm methods, the body method and palm method completely exist every minute without stopping, giving free play to walking and turning. It completely relies on the stepping method and body method to benefit the person. Only since Baguazhang always has the reputation for hidden legs, concealed within the stepping method is the trampling method and the treading method.

2. Special Points: The practice method and functional method of “Dragon Form Baguazhang” each embodies the distinct special points of Baguazhang as recorded in the Baguazhang Pu:

*“Like the mixed original one qi, walking is boundless;
Bagua true principles are my family;
Techniques are not bad, the feet change;
Standing still makes falling flowers.”*

You can see that Baguazhang uses non-stop walking, turning, and changing palm methods for fighting. There is a common way of saying it, it is mobile warfare. In moving, deplete the enemy. Striking defeats the enemy. The fighting, turning, and transforming are all accomplished in the moving. Because of this, all of the forms in this routine palm method center on moving and are designed with it in mind. Another verse of the song says it very well:

*“If high, strike low and if low, strike high;
Diagonal strike to the side and there is no need to shake,
Hard to meet the long and thin, rely on roll back and pull aside;
Old age or no skill, look above and below.”*

In the actions, you can naturally follow the power and respond with change. It embodies going out to meet a dissimilar enemy using a dissimilar striking method, but his response to those skills is ineffective like an old man. Do not use moving hands, only flowing surrounding him, turning in a circle. It is easy to say that the hands take the victory.

Therefore this “walking and turning” is the first notable special point of the routine palm methods.

These actions of attack and defense can be illustrated by the actions of an automobile. That is, in general, these are a type of actions that are non-stop chasing and striking, dodging and evading. But in a short time it comes to grips, launches an attack, then stops the machine by cutting off the power to arrive in the time to achieve great success. This time, the weight and inertia of the automobile mutually add to each other. Then they can produce big and powerful striking strength. This can destroy him.

The second notable special point is the body method.

Dragon Form Baguazhang is famous for using the 1000 changes and 10,000 transformations of the palm method, like fish and dragons: graceful and stretched out. And its body method is also superb. The palm method follows the rising and falling, waving and leaning, sucking and spitting, contracting and expanding, changing and transforming, and free play of the body. For example the palm method uses a lot of “coiling rotating palm” forms. This action has one hand coiling around the head and one palm held horizontally closely behind the waist. The body follows the rear palm toward the side then leans forward after it. And the body, also from the rear hand, leads the coiling and rotating. It is like the posture of a kitten catching its tail. It is such a rare and subtle action that it makes people call it superb. And this palm method’s application is also ultimately swift and fierce. No matter how the enemy uses his hand or foot to attack, I, without exception, step and move toward the enemy’s outer right side. And I use my right hand to twist, wrap, and go around my body’s right side to part horizontally. Simultaneously, I turn my palm over to protect my head. The body steps and turns left. My left palm goes out from my left ribs to sever or push toward the enemy’s right ribs or waist. My body is concealed from the enemy’s line of sight and he is unable to sense my attack. And especially when he does see me, my hand has already joined his body and issued strength. He then meets an emergency but finds out it is already too late to do anything about it.

Also, the 5th Palm really only has one “Conceal the Body, Overturn the Palm” action that is trained repeatedly. This action is extraordinarily marvelous. It is just like the “Turn Back the Horse Spear” of the spear method. It is a special technique used to snatch the victory when retreating. No matter how the enemy uses his hand or foot to attack, I retreat, then walk to the side to counteract his posture. When the enemy fiercely attacks again, I then lower my body to the lower posture and use the lower basin palm method to bring my rear hand from down towards the rear towards up to horizontally scoop his hand or foot. And my body follows my hand raising the front foot to hook inward. The front palm follows the body and rear palm goes towards the rear and goes up to rise, overturn, and drill outward. The enemy will not be able to evade and be struck in the heart or perhaps the throat by my palm. Only this requires that the body, hands, and stepping have a high degree of unification. With the right timing you can have success with one strike.

One other notable special point of “Dragon Form Baguazhang” is that it is difficult to study and difficult to practice.

First of all, it is difficult to study because the whole body needs to be coordinated and unified. Particularly the stepping method ultimately is complex. When studying this routine palm method, do not be afraid of someone stealing the art. If the teacher does not teach diligently, you will only have empty forms and no functionality. Its subtleties are totally in the changes of the stepping method. When Master Huang Bonian wrote his book *Dragon Form Baguazhang*, he did not have good pictures or clear writing. Self study from this book is simply as difficult as climbing a ladder to heaven.

This routine palm method is also divided into the three basins palm method and the three basins stepping method. It trains the walking and turning on a circle. The circle is divided into three sizes, big, medium and small. The big circle is made up of eight steps. The medium circle is made up of six steps. The small circle is made up of four steps. When training the palm method, it all follows the circle and gives free play to the transitions within the circle. Its miraculous, wonderful, and subtle appearance really lies in the stepping method atlas. If you do not have this atlas, studying the palm method and body method will be frustrating. Without it, the fundamentals will have stiff and inflexible linkages. When I was studying this routine palm method, Master Pei said that the stepping method atlas the Mr. Huang taught from was destroyed early on by fire and there was no way to get it back. As a result I designed an approximation of it and also considered drawing an atlas for the Eight Roads palm method. I also asked my teacher to make corrections, and we made many modifications based on what he could recollect. I now consider it a finalized manuscript and the completed project is titled *Atlas of the Palm Postures and Stepping Methods in Three Basins*. I believe that there is very little difference from Mr. Huang's original atlas, and that there is no deviation from his general idea.

3. Fundamental Skills of “Dragon Form Baguazhang”

When Mr. Huang Bonian was teaching his art, in addition to the palm method routines and dodging hands combat, he also taught foundational skills as listed below.

1. Bagua Post Method: The post methods are similar to the outer forms and fundamentals of traditional Baguazhang post stepping. The inner content however is very different.

First, its palm form is peculiar to “Dragon Form Baguazhang”. It is formed with the index finger pointing upward. The thumb is opened wide. The tiger's mouth is stretched and rounded. The other three fingers are naturally curved implying hooks.

Secondly, normally the two palms in Baguazhang are held with one palm stretching out to the front and one palm protecting the heart. In the 36 Stanza song of Baguazhang it says:

“The palm used to one side does not make skill, at the least you must open up two sides.

One horizontal and one straight to make triangular hands, like hugging someone to my chest.”

But the two hands in the Dragon Form Baguazhang post methods are not held ‘one horizontal and one straight’ but both hands are held as if embracing. Each repeatedly wraps toward the inside and overturns to brace outward. This makes one hand slightly in front with its height level with the nose. The rear hand height is level with the shoulder. Both palms together take the shape of horns which is more advantageous for fighting.

Furthermore, this post requires that the ribs to begin doing the work. This way, in the Turning Palms, the True Qi can pass up through the shoulders. The internal power is substantial in the shoulder hollows and travels down through the *quchi* points [LI 11] toward the *laogong* points [PC8] in the centers of the palms and can follow the palm as it strikes out.

2. Turning Palms: Baguazhang's Turning Palms Moving toward the Enemy imitate the turning and coiling of eagles and falcons in the air, lying in wait for prey on the ground. Once discovered they take advantage of the situation. They change rapidly and shoot down. And if they miss, they flap their wings and rise up into the air, coiling and turning, looking for prey.

Because of this Baguazhang's Turning Palms are very fundamental skills for going to meet the enemy. When first beginning to practice, you can use eight steps to walk the circle. Gradually seek the correct postures while walking and turning. As your skill gradually deepens, you may add more speed, and you may contract the stepping to six steps on a circle. As you get deeper, you may go to four steps on a circle. In general, it is appropriate to use a speed of coiling, rotating, and turning that does not make you dizzy.

When doing the Turning Palms, you must use the scissors legs and mud treading steps. The legs move alternately like scissors. The feet are like you are walking in ankle-deep water or mud and the feet never break the surface of the water. The idea for moving is that each rising step seems like it is being pulled out of the mud. The front foot treading down must be a light and store energy. It is like a clever cat desiring to catch a mouse. It is also like a tiger or leopard hunting. The whole body is braced. Up and down, left and right, front and back together make one united spirit. And you cannot have the errors of the waist rising and falling.

3. Body Stepping - Moving Through Obstacles: When practicing the fixed palms you must first practice coordinating the body, hands, stepping and feet. The very fundamentals, like piercing palm, pressing down palm, covering palm, embracing palm etc. must be coordinated with toeing-in, toeing-out and turning body, twisting body, overturning body, twisting body, throwing body, etc. The training method is to place bricks on the ground respectively arranged in a triangle, square, hexagon, and octagon. Train each type of palm method while standing on top of the bricks. The stepping foot must tread on the bricks using the toe-in and toe-out stepping. It cannot fall to the ground. After a while you will develop skill and agility.

Also, one of the important fundamental skills in traditional Baguazhang schools is the Piercing the Nine Palaces post method. According to Master Pei, Mr. Huang Bonian's brother Mr. Huang Boshou was particularly good at "Nine Palaces Baguazhang", also called "Bagua Flying Nine Palaces." His method was to place nine wooden posts in the ground. Eight posts were on the circle with one post in the middle. When practicing, he would move between these posts on a fixed pattern, in every way dodging and evading; walking, overturning, twisting, turning, gradually breaking all resistance. Mr. Sun

Lutang, when he wrote *The Real Meaning of Boxing* referred to the Nine Palaces post method and the pathway to walk it, and commented on the practice methods. It really is the true essence of the Bagua School.

4. Bagua Taiji Ball: The ball is made of iron and is divided into two types. The first type is an iron ball about 30 centimeters in diameter with a solid core. The second is two small iron balls about 10 centimeters in diameter. When training, you can use both hands to hold up the large ball and train according to the palm methods or you can hold up one small ball in each hand and practice the Level Upholding Palm posture. The balls may also be made of wood or stone. The weight of the balls depends upon the individual's strength.

Using the above makes a few of the original Baguazhang fundamental skills. After Master Pei was subjected to this routine, often he loved his transformed like a dragon. Only cherish his extremely exhaustive skills. The beginning student, from studying to reaching realistic utility, not even three years of hard work is sufficient to handle an enemy. The reason is only through long years and many months of training the Turning Palms will the True Qi be able to permeate to the palms and fingers to produce internal strength. One can say that there is no shortcut. The special points of this routine, in the event of not having profound internal strength and palm superior skill, and an agile body, will be of no avail. For this reason, Master Pei especially brought the Wudang Five Palms Neigong and Tai Yi Grinding Coiling Palm from Daoist Chief Xu Benshan of the Wudang Purple Cloud Temple and incorporated them into this routine. He also visited Grandmaster Yin Yuzhang and received from him the Internal Bagua Eight Forms skills. This causes "Dragon Form Baguazhang" to have very special neigong system. The palm methods are assisted by using neijia real strength. It is really like doubling your effort and makes it more perfect. Next time I will write more about this type of skill.

