

Old Three Palms Practice Methods

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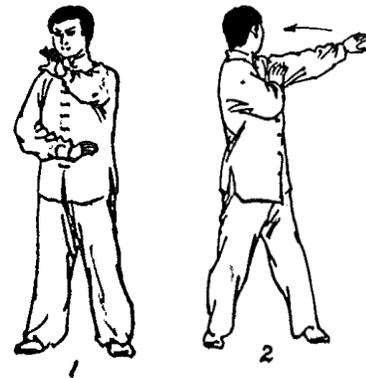
The old three palms are the original palm methods of Baguazhang. When Dong Haichuan was creating Baguazhang, there were only three types of palm methods: Cutting Palm (qie zhang, 削掌), Armpit Palm* (ye zhang, 腋掌), and Sinking Palm (ta zhang, 塌掌). These three palm methods were simple forms, nevertheless their fighting methods are unique and their transformations are unfathomable. When they are joined with the hunyuan skills, they are sufficient for controlling the enemy's responses. According to legend, the great Xingyi Quan master Guo Yunshen heard about Dong Haichuan's fame. He made a special point of paying a visit to Dong Haichuan in order to exchange knowledge. Guo Yunshen continuously issued his half step beng quan. Dong Haichuan 'used horizontal to break the straight'. His body was like a swimming dragon. His stepping method was lively. He used the cutting palm to neutralize each beng quan. After this the two men became friends. Only in the Baguazhang tradition, after the second generation, people tended to embellish the story. The story became more and more complex. The old three palms changed to become 8x8=64 palms. In addition were added the 72 legs. From the story above you can see that the fighting methods are numerous. It is strong in actual combat but has few techniques. The principles presented here of the old three palms are the early practice methods of Baguazhang. This shows that old Baguazhang was a simple and unsophisticated practice, which attached special importance to fighting. With bitter practice these three palms can develop issuing hunyuan's spiraling spinning twisting turning strength, as well as an agile and quick body and stepping methods.

1. Cutting Palm (qie zhang, 削掌)

1. Fixed Step Practice Method (pictures 1, 2)

The fixed step practice method pays attention to strengthening horizontal strength of the arms and palms horizontal and the lively nature of the body.

Both feet open to the left and right about shoulders' width. Both knees slightly bend. The body stands straight. The head pushes up and the neck is vertical. The right hand rises up. The forearm is horizontal in front of the belly. The palm faces down to protect the right ribs. Then the left palm goes to the right. From the left to the right, it passes the face then goes down to arrive at the chest. It changes so that the palm faces downward. It arcs horizontally toward the left rear direction making a cutting action. This palm's form is like a sharp knife horizontally cutting a wooden post. Thus it is called Cutting Palm. When doing



the left horizontal cutting palm, the waist and head also follow it and turn to the left rear direction. When doing the right cutting palm, the practice method is similar, only it is a mirror image.

When practicing, you must condense the vitality within. The qi sinks to the dantian. The actions are loose and soft, smooth and natural. The whole body, especially the shoulder areas and arms, cannot use strength.

2. Lively Step Practice Method (you can refer to the fixed step practice method pictures, therefore pictures are omitted)

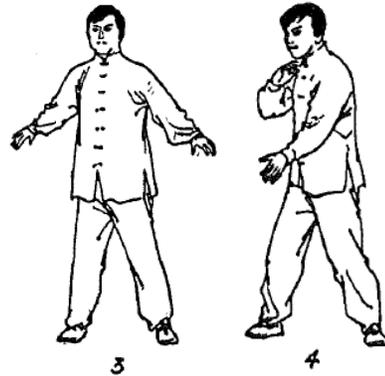
The lively step practice method makes use of the vitality. The idea is to train in a manner of “though nobody is there, it is like somebody is there.” Using this type of method, you can grasp the cutting palm’s fighting methods and self-defense routes. If we speak of fixed step practice emphasizing striving for skill, then the lively step practice emphasizes striving for functionality.

Using the left form as the model, both feet open about shoulders’ width. The left foot is in front and the right foot is in back. The body then sits. Both legs slightly bend. The weight is distributed 40% in front and 60% in the back. Slightly twist and turn to the left. The eyes gaze toward the left front direction. The left arm bends the elbow to encircle by the front of the chest. The fingers are separated and open, naturally bent. The right elbow braces outward. The palm faces up. The five fingers point to the front. Both hands are like embracing a baby. The left foot moves toward the right front direction. The toes then point toward the left front direction. The body weight falls into the left foot. The right foot rises and moves along the direction of the left foot toes. When the foot come even with the left foot, the right foot drops to the ground and moves to make a kou bu toward the left front direction. When the body weight moves to arrive in the right foot, the left foot along the direction of the right foot toes moves, the body weight follows and changes. The right foot moves to arrive in front of the left foot a suitable distance to use strength to do a kou bu. The body pivots on the right foot and turns left 180 degrees. The left hand follows the turn of the body and does a cutting action toward the left rear direction. The right hand rises to defend by the face. The head slightly twists toward the left. The right form essentials are similar to this only done in mirror image.

2. Armpit Palm (ye zhang, 腋掌)

1. Fixed Step Practice method (pictures 3, 4)

Both feet open to the left and right about shoulders' width. Both hands naturally hang down loose. The palms face downward. The ten fingers are naturally separated and open. Then both hands turn over. The right palm is placed by the inside of the left shoulder. The palm and fingers point to the left front direction. The left palm faces the front. The five fingers face the lower left direction. The forearm is slightly curved. It is pulled down by the waist. The left palm strikes out toward the front direction. Simultaneously the body inclines toward the right. Then the left palm returns. It is placed by the inside of the right shoulder. The right palm is pulled down by the waist and strikes out toward the front. The palm faces the front. The five fingers face the lower right direction. The body then inclines toward the left direction. Practice like this repeatedly.



When practicing, you must pay attention to using the heel of the palm to issue strength, achieve using the waist to pull and move the forearm, and use the forearm to pull the palm. When issuing strength, the elbow area, specifically, must be curved and cannot be straight. These requirements are similar to Cutting Palm.

2. Lively Step Practice Method (pictures omitted)

Using the left form as the model, both feet complete a ding ba (丁八) posture. The left heel is slightly raised. The right leg is slightly bent. The knee cap has the idea of slightly rising up and knocking to the front. The upper body slightly leans forward. The left arm, in front, protects the face. The palm faces the front. The right arm is in the rear. The right hand is by the lower abdomen. The palm faces downward. Both arms must be curved; the elbows bent about 90 degrees. Then the left forearm toward the left outside, and hangs (挂). The left elbow braces outward. Simultaneously, the right forearm does a ye zhang toward the front and issues power. The palm changes to face the front. The fingers face right. The left foot advances toward the front. The right foot follows and advances. The weight moves to the left foot. The upper body turns left. The right form is similar to this only a mirror image. Repeat these actions like this. When practicing, the gaze must look off to the distance. The mind should be threatening. The posture must put pressure on the person. The whole body must be loose.

3. Sinking Palm (ta zhang, 塌掌)

1. Fixed Step Practice Method (pictures 5, 6)

Using the left form as the model, the left foot is in front and the right foot is in the rear. The weight is in the front foot 30% and the rear foot 70%. The left hand stretches out to the front. It defends along the center line. The palm faces upward. The right hand protects the abdomen area. The palm faces downward. Then the left hand turns over and drops down to the front doing a pounding strike. The fingers point right. The right hand then moves upward. It is placed by the right side of the face. The palm faces front. The finger tips point to the left. The left foot advances one step to the front. The toes face right. The right foot follows and advances. The toes also point right. Make a horse riding posture. The right form essentials are similar only a mirror image. When the hand issues strength, the body must sink down. You must have the awesome strength of getting a wall to collapse.



2. Lively Step Practice Method (pictures omitted)

Both hands rise up from the sides of the body, like strongly pushing down a ball. The right foot is in front, the left foot is in the back. Then the left hand arcs from the left toward the upper right to arrive in front of the face. The palm changes to face upward. The right hand then arcs from the right toward the left and then inward to arrive at the abdomen area. Simultaneously the left foot arcs toward the front and is placed in front of the right foot (kou bu). The toes point toward the right direction. The right foot, in place, turns towards the outside. The toes also point toward the right direction. The right foot is even with the left foot. The body follows the movements toward the right. The hands do not stop. The left palm, by the face, overturns outward. It drops down making the sinking palm. The right hand then goes up to the right. It is placed by the right side of the face. Both legs bend making a horse riding posture. The body sinks down.

When practicing, the whole body must be loose. The actions must be soft and harmonized. You cannot use strength. The stepping method and actions of the four limbs must be well coordinated. The vitality must be clear. The mind must be sent far. You must have quality of vigorously breaking bronze and iron walls.

*Translator's note: I suspect that Ye should be 掖 instead of 腋. 腋 means armpit. 掖 means to thrust between. In this article I am using what the author used, however other authors tend to use 掖.