



# BA GUA ZHANG

## 10 Important Points and 8 Methods

by Liu Jingru



### Ten important points

1. About *Head*: Head upright neck straight, eyes look straight ahead, emptiness leads propping-up power (e.g. head is straightened as if there was something on it), with spirit and intention.
2. About *Back*: Chest inward back round, (then) strength is hastened forward, not stiff nor blocked, stretched and natural.
3. About *Shoulders*: Both arms close inward, should be relaxed and dropped down, (only then) power reaches hands, and this is what the arms serve for.
4. About *Arms*: Front arm bent and extended, rear arm protects body, Rolling (Gun), Drilling (Zuan), Struggling (Zheng), Wrapping (Guo), (you) change as (you) wish to.
5. About *Elbows*: Sink shoulders drop elbows, (then) strength reaches hands, essential of elbow method is to protect within attack.
6. About *Palms*: Thumb is spread outwards, forefinger extended and straightened, four fingers are kept together, Tiger's Mouth (space between thumb and forefinger) is round and separated.
7. About *Waist*: Waist stands like an axle, hardness and softness exist together, (there) is twisting (Ning) and overturning (Fan), (with) strength and agility.
8. About *Buttocks*: Contract and lift the Grain Path (anus), (so that) Ren and Du meridians connect, Qi is brought to Dantian, draw hips and smooth buttocks (so that they do not protrude).
9. About *Thighs*: Front thigh leads the way, rear thigh supports, close (He, e.g. keep together) knees and wrap (Guo) crotch.
10. About *Feet*: Inner foot (e.g. the one closer to the center of the circle) goes along straight lines, outer foot slightly toes-in, step (as if) wading through mud, toes slightly bent.

***The Ten Important Points and Eight Methods are a comprehensive and systematic way to expound postures for whole body and essential points of Baguazhang practice. One can practice Baguazhang correctly only by following the Ten Important Points and Eight Methods.***

**Explanations:**

*Head:*

Head is the master of the body. Head must be kept erect, chin slightly drawn in, head naturally pressing upward, in this way a straightening power (Ting jin) will appear in the neck. When one has a certain skill, once he uses strength of the neck, then it is impossible to move him. This is what old masters used to call "Straightening Power" (Geng Jin). Only if one has this "Straightening Power", then by co-coordinating stepping on with foot, collapsing waist, rounding back and keeping the chest slightly inward one can use a whole body power (Zheng Jin). Another goal to keep head erect is to look straight ahead, during practice the neck can twist to the left or right (but one should not rashly lower the head), because only then one will be observant and alert, able to examine the intentions of the enemy. At the same time the spirit will be focused and mind concentrated, which is helpful for using intention in controlling all Baguazhang movements, powers as well as attacking and defensive actions. Breath through nose during practice, sink Qi into Dantian, mouth should be slightly closed, tongue touching the upper palate. In this way saliva can be produced. It is called "Golden Saliva and Jade Fluid" by Taoists; it helps in digestion and is considered the "Treasure of Longevity".

*Back:*

Both shoulders should move slightly forward ("close"), in this way back will be round; when back is round then chest will naturally move slightly inwards and strength can pass to the front of the body. However one should not move the shoulders forward with too much strength, because then the back will tense. Only if chest is naturally relaxed and kept inward, the upper part of the body will feel natural and stretched and Qi can sink into Dantian.

*Shoulders:*

Both shoulders should move forward and at the same time should relax and drop, so that the back can hasten shoulders, shoulders hasten elbows, elbows hasten hands, strength reaches hands, that's why it is said "power reaches hands, and this is what the arms (should) serve for". Relaxed and dropped shoulders help the diaphragm to drop which naturally makes the lower part of the body sunk and solid and upper part of the body relaxed. In this way lower part of the body is substantial while upper is not, e.g. Water is heavy and Fire is light, that is "Solid Abdomen Smoothed Chest" which is beneficial for strengthening kidneys and sinking Qi into Dantian.

*Arms:*

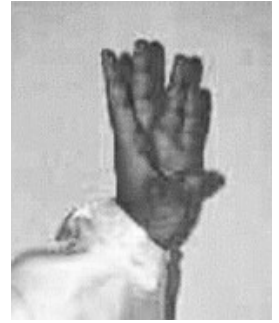
Front arm should be slightly bent when extended forward, not straight and stiff, muscles relaxed; when the arm is straight and stiff, then it is not agile, so the whole body power cannot reach the hand. The elbow of the rear arm should be directed at the pit of the stomach, and cover and protect chest; only in this way both arms can form a kind of a closing and embracing power directed forward (Hebao Jin). Because of Rolling (Gun), Drilling (Zuan, power directed forward), Struggling (Zheng, power directed outside) and Wrapping (Guo, power directed inside) a spiral power (Luoxuan Jin) is created; this, adding changes between substantial and insubstantial, makes the movements of arms more agile, Drilling (Zuan) and Overturning (Fan) more smooth; one moves as the circumstances demand, changes at will, front and rear hands interchange at will and opponent is defeated by a surprise move.

*Elbows:*

There is no doubt that when shoulders sink and elbows drop then strength reaches hands. Besides, elbows can be used for attack and defense, in attack one can use Propping Elbow (Ding Zhou), Pouncing Elbow (Pu Zhou), while in defense Sinking Elbow (Chen Zhou), Covering Elbow (Yan Zhou), etc. That's why essential of elbow method is to protect within attack.

### *Hands:*

Apart from Yin Style palm method, most of other Baguazhang branches use Dragon Claw Palm. Dragon Claw Palm is formed by spreading the thumb outwards, extending and straightening the forefinger, keeping the Tiger's Mouth (space between thumb and forefinger) opened, forefinger, middle finger, ring finger and little finger are slightly bent and separated (little finger may be kept together with ring finger). When thumb rolls to the inside and little finger brought towards ring finger then the inside of the palm will be concave and the back of the palm will look like a round tile so a kind of hidden power (An Jin) will appear inside the palm. When thumb is spread outwards and forefinger extended and straightened, then Tiger's Mouth will become round and thus the strength can reach whole palm or fingers. At the same time the strength of thumb and forefinger will increase so that they will develop ability to Catch (Diao), Grasp (Na), Pull (Dai), etc. Keeping the fingers slightly bent helps to lead Qi with Intention (Yi), Strength (Li) with Qi; when bottom of the palm pushes forward, then a bold Sinking (Chen) and Collapsing (Ta) hidden power will appear.



### *Waist:*

Baguazhang emphasizes "Slant Retreating Straight Entering" (Xie Chu Zheng Ru), "Moving to the Left and Right in Turns" (Hu Zuo Hu You). Waist twists to the left and right are required to perform these movements; waist should be agile and smooth just like an axle. Waist should collapse (Ta), which means there should be a Sitting Strength (Zuo Li, so that waist collapses as if one was sitting on a chair) that is elastic, not stiff. Thus the turns of the body will be flexible, agile and powerful. That's why waist should be both flexible and strong.

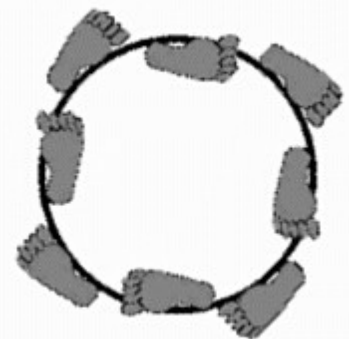
### *Buttocks:*

In Baguazhang practice tongue should touch upper palate, and at the same time anus should be lifted, hips drawn and buttocks smoothed. When tongue touches upper palate, hips are drawn and buttocks smoothed, then anus can be lifted. This is the "bridge" for connecting and opening Ren and Du meridians. If Qi can sink into Dantian and Ren and Du meridians are opened, then Dantian power can be used. This is so-called "Essence Nourishes Fairy Root Qi Nourishes Spirit, Nourish Essence Nourish Qi and (you) will see Heavenly Truth, Nourish Dantian, the Treasure of Longevity, it cannot be given to anybody even for ten thousand liang of gold".

Front thigh means front leg, rear thigh means rear leg, rear leg must support whole body, hips hasten knees, knees hasten feet to move forward. When knees close the crotch is covered, and thus it is protected. When front and rear legs are bent then their shape should be like scissors (Jianzi Gu).

### *Feet:*

When walking in a circle the inner foot steps in a straight line, the outer one toes-in slightly to the center of the circle. Only in this way one will walk along a circle; if outer foot steps in a straight line then one would walk along a straight line. If inner foot toes-out towards the center of the circle instead of moving in a straight line, then knees can not be closed (kept together) and crotch will not be protected. While walking toes should "grasp" the ground for three reasons: firstly, so that neither front of the foot nor the heel are easily raised, (this error) is called "Lifting Hoofs and Showing Soles"; secondly, during fighting once the foot/toes are put on the ground with power, then strength is issued from the foot and reaches leg, waist, shoulder, arm and finally hand; thirdly, toes should grasp the ground to root the foot and strengthen the leg so that one would stand as firm as mountain. While walking one should slightly rub the inner ankle of the front leg with the rear foot; feet should not move higher than about one inch above the ground and should stay parallel to the ground; just like wading through mud when it rains in torrents, that's why this walking method is called "Bagua Mud Wading Steps" (Bagua Tangnibu).



## Eight methods



1. *Three Pressing principles*: Head Must Press, Tongue Must Press, Palms Must Press. Head presses upward, it has the might of clashing the sky; Tongue presses upward and thus saliva can be produced; Palms press outward so that power reaches fingers and the strength of palms is sunk and heavy.

2. *Three Arching principles*: Both Shoulders Arch, Backs of Palms Arch, Backs of Feet Arch. Both shoulders arch (e.g. turn inwards) so that Qi and strength (Li) can reach elbows; Backs of palms arch so that Qi and strength (Li) can reach hands; Backs of feet arch, toes grasp the ground, strength comes from feet, strength reaches whole body, standing is firm and steps are steady.

3. *Three Round principles*: Back Round, Chest Round, Tiger's Mouth Round.

Back should be round so that strength is hastened forward; Chest should be round so that strength in both upper arms is full; Tiger's Mouth should be round so that strength of fingers increases and strength can propagate.

4. *Three Quick/Agile principles*: Heart (e.g. Mind) Should Be Quick, Eyes Should Be Quick, Palms Should Be Quick.

When heart is agile, one can act as the changing circumstances demand; When eyes are agile, one can observe six paths (e.g. forward, backward, to both sides, upward and downward); When palms are agile one can subdue the enemy with attack.

5. *Three Embracing principles*: Mind (Xin) and Intention (Yi) Embraced, Ribs Embraced, Courage Embraced.

When Mind and Intention are embraced together then Qi will not be emitted out; When ribs are wrapped (Guo) and embraced then striking forward and drawing hands back will be with powerful; When courage is embraced then one will not be in mess when facing the enemy.

6. *Three Dropping principles*: Qi Should Drop, Shoulders Should Drop, Elbows Should Drop.

When Qi drops then it sinks into Dantian; When shoulders drop then strength is hastened towards elbows; When elbows drop then both arms become naturally round.

7. *Three Bent principles*: Both Arms Bent, Both Legs Bent, Both Wrists Bent.

When both arms bent, then the strength is bold and vigorous; When both legs bent, then they can hasten the body; When both wrists bent, then the strength of palms is firm.

8. *Three Straightening principles*: Neck Should Be Straightened Up, Waist Should be Straightened, Knees Should Be Straightened.

When neck is straightened then spirit passes through the body to the top of the head; When waist is straightened then strength passes through the whole body (and reaches all its parts); When knees are straightened then (walking is) elastic and strong, Qi soars and Spirit is happy.