# HSING-I

# CHINESE MIND-BODY BOXING

Robert W. Smith

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*Hsing-I: Chinese Mind-Body Boxing*, initially published in 1974, was one of the first books on the subject in English and has remained one of the best. A wealth of knowledge is compiled here from the author's tutelage under some of Taiwan's most famous and proficient martial artists.

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- The fundamental posture requirements
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- The Consecutive-Step Yunnan Boxing Form
- Advice from the Masters

**Robert W. Smith** is one of America's great pioneers in the Asian martial arts and has written numerous books and articles on these ancient fighting traditions. Smith is the author of *Pa-Kua: Chinese Boxing for Fitness and Self-Defense* and *Chinese Boxing: Masters and Methods*, also available from North Atlantic Books. He lives in Hendersonville, North Carolina.

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**Robert W. Smith**

North Atlantic Books
Berkeley, California

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# Preface to the 2003 Edition

IT IS WITH SOME PLEASURE that I make a few remarks on the new publication of *Hsing-i: Chinese Mind-Body Boxing*, first issued in 1974. Taiji, Pa Kua, and Hsing-i compromise what the Chinese call nei-chia, the internal or soft boxing arts, as contrasted with Shaolin, or hard and more forceful boxing methods. Taiji stresses relaxed slow movements and Pa Kua the use of the open hand and the circle. Hsing-i uses largely the fist on a linear path. All borrow from the other.

Over the years my book on Hsing-i had many readers and helped to introduce the art to western readers. Its success was largely due to such teachers as Yuan Tao, Wang Shu-chin, and Hung I-hsiang who taught me during my stay in Taiwan (1959-62). Whatever skill I gained I attribute to them. I was very lucky.

Now so many years later, I'm pleased to see Hsing-i reemerge. I hope it helps a new generation to find joy in this old but ever-green art.

—Robert W. Smith
Hendersonville, N.C.
2003

# *I*. The *Name and the History*

Hsing-i Ch'uan ("The Form of Mind Boxing") is also called *Hsing-i Lu-ho Ch'uan* ("Form of Mind Six-Combinations Boxing") or / *Ch'uan* ("Mind Boxing"), all these names suggesting the harmonious merger of thought and action. Traditionally, it was said to have originated with Yueh Fei, a general of the Northern Sung dynasty (960-1127). There is insufficient historical evidence to credit this claim and even less evidence to support the legend that Ta Mo, the monk who brought Zen from India to China, created it.

We know little of Chi Lung-feng, the recorded father of Hsing-i. He was born in Shanghai in the late Ming dynasty and died in the early Ch'ing. He boxed from his early youth and came to prominence in the use of the spear. Between 1637—61 while wandering in the Chung-nan Mountains in Shensi Province, he met a Taoist who taught him Hsing-i. (The famed T'ang poet Meng Chiao, who wrote in "Impromptu" the lines "Keep away from sharp swords. Don't go near a lovely woman . . ." also derived inspiration from these mountains.) Chi passed the art to Ts'ao Chi-wu, who later became the commanding general of Shansi Province in the K'ang Hsi reign (1662— 1722) of the Ch'ing dynasty. Chi's second great student was Ma Hsueh-li of Honan. The Shansi-Hopei and Honan schools descended as shown in figure 1 (overleaf).

Ts'ao Chi-wu
Skansi School
Tai Ling-pang
Tai Lung-pang
Li Neng-jan
Hopei School
Kuo Yun-shen
Liu Ch'i-lan
Chang Shu-te
Sung Shih-jung
Ch'e I-chai
Shansi School
Ma Hsueh-li
Honan School
Ma San-yuan
Chang Chih-ch'eng
Li Cheng
Chang Chu
Mai Chuang-t'u
An Ta-ch'ing
Pao Hsien-t'ing

*Figure l*

## *THE SHANSI-HOPEI SCHOOL*

We know little about the brothers Tai except that they were wealthy and loved Hsing-i. Tai Lung-pang attempted to retain the essence of the art, but the earnestness of Li Neng-jan led Tai to teach him everything.

Born in Sung Hsien in Hopei, Li started boxing at the relatively late age of thirty-seven. After *one* false start—Tai Lung-pang looked too gentle and Li refused to regard him as a master—Li returned and trained ten years under Tai. He worked for two and a half years and learned only *p'i* ("splitting") and part *of lien huan* (linking the forms). At a birthday party for Tai's mother, he so impressed her that she berated her son for being so niggardly in his teaching. After that Tai taught him the whole art and Li mastered it by the age of forty-seven. Thereafter, he was never defeated: when challenged he went forward easily, put his hand out, and achieved his purpose.

Once a boxing colleague who regarded himself as on a par with Li attempted to grab him and pick him up. Li immediately ascended and his head penetrated the bamboo ceiling. When he came down, his feet were stable and his face bore the same expression as before. The other thought it was witchcraft, but Li told him that, although it looked mysterious, it was simply the peak of the art. From such experiences he gained a reputation as the "man of boxing mystery." He was over eighty when he died, sitting in a chair and smiling. Among his many students were Kuo Yun-shen, Liu Ch'i-lan, Pai Hsi-yuan, Li T'ai-ho, Ch'e I-chai, Chang Shu-te, and Sung Shih-jung.

Kuo Yun-shen also was born in Sung Hsien in Hopei. Although he boxed from childhood, he learned little until he met Li Neng-jan. He saw Li's skill—so simple in form, so deep in skill—loved it, and learned from him for decades. Once when Li slapped him, he skillfully absorbed it, landing twenty feet away unscathed. Besides boxing, Kuo mastered the sword, broadsword, and spear. He also

mastered some of Li's esoteric boxing. In the Tiger style, he could jump ten feet as adroitly as a bird, as stable as a mountain. Once five burly boxers put staffs against his stomach, and he, exhaling, knocked them all down. Kuo's *peng* ("crushing") was so powerful, he came to be called "Divine Crushing Hand." Once in a bout in Hopei he reportedly killed his opponent and as a result was imprisoned for three years. Although restricted by fetters, he continued to practice while in prison. After he was released he took care to place the back of his left hand on his antagonist's body before using his famous right. His left helped absorb the energy of his right and spared his opponent serious injury. Sun Lu-t'ang does not mention this story in his lengthy treatment of Kuo; this leads me to regard it as possibly apocryphal. Kuo wrote an illustrated text on Hsing-i and entrusted it to Sun Lu-t'ang, but unfortunately it was stolen. When Kuo died at seventy, many of his secrets were still in him. (See page 92 for a sampling of Kuo's teaching. More biographic data on Kuo and other Hsing-i masters can be found in Draeger, Donn F. and Smith, Robert W. *Asian Fighting Arts* [Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., *1969*].)

Sung Shih-jung was born in Wan-p'ing Hsien in Hopei. He also studied Hsing-i from the great Li Neng-jan. He ran a watch shop at Tai-ku in Shansi, was an avid chess player and fan of Chinese opera, and attained a high level in Hsing-i. When he turned left in the Snake style, his right hand could catch his right heel, and turning right, his left hand could catch his left heel. His turns and strikes resembled nothing so much as a snake. In the Swallow style, he would crouch close to the ground, go under a low bench, and thrust out ten feet; he also was expert in Wildcat Climbs Tree, in which he was able to jump up a wall and stick there clear of the ground for up to two minutes. Sun Lu-t'ang vouches for this and says that once in northeast China Sung was rushed by a challenger. Sung merely flapped him with his hand, and the man shot like an arrow twenty feet away. Sung was still teaching at Tai-ku, adroit as a boy, well past his eightieth birthday. (See page *91* for Sung's advice.)

Ch'e I-chai, another of Li Neng-jan's disciples, came from T'ai-ku, Shansi, and early in life was a carriage driver. Although not as popular as Kuo Yun-shen, he reportedly beat Kuo in a challenge match. At the apex of his art, a local Samson caught him while he was washing his face in the Horse posture and kicked him from behind. Ch'e straightened up, and the attacker was thrown ten feet away and could not get up. Ch'e's best student was Li Ch'ang-yu. Ch'e continued boxing until his death when he was past eighty. (See page 100 for Ch'e's advice.)

## *THE HONAN SCHOOL*

Ma Hsueh-li, one of Chi Lung-feng's two best students (the other was Ts'ao Chi-wu), came from Honan and began the Hsing-i tradition in that province. Because he believed he could not learn Chi's secrets as a regular student, he disguised himself as a house-boy and for three years secretly watched Chi do his solo practice. When he came to say goodbye, Ma's conscience bothered him and lie told Chi the truth. Instead of becoming angry, Chi admired his will and kept him on longer, teaching him more of his art. After he returned to Honan, Ma had many students who respected his skill and his openness in imparting that skill. Ma's two best students were Ma San-yuan and Chang Chih-ch'eng. Unlike many other great Hsing-i masters, Ma died relatively early.

Ma San-yuan, a native of Nan-yang, Honan, loved to fight. Pao Hsien-t'ing writes that he killed forty or fifty men in challenge matches. Such a way of living eventually drove him to a nervous breakdown, and, one day, thinking that an approaching man was a challenger, he leaped aside, hit his head on an iron table, and died. It may be significant that we know nothing of Ma's students. Chang Chih-ch'eng was quite different from Ma San-yuan. Selective in his choice of students, he liked the few he had and they reciprocated. Li Cheng, his nephew, was his best student.

Li was from Lu-shan Hsien, Honan, and his uncle was fond of him. First he learned the "obvious" style until he could break a

tombstone with his hands but later evolved to concealed energy (see page 92). As a guard on a horse convoy, he would move away from the wagons in Chicken style, then rapidly catch up, thus working twice as hard as the horses.

In Hopei Province there lived at that time a rich man surnamed Shui who had hired several excellent boxers to teach Hsing-i to his four sons. Shui traveled 350 miles to Honan to ask Li to return with him and teach his sons. Li went. He looked so gentle, however, that one of the older boxers deprecated him to Shui and suggested that the oldest son, under the pretense of offering tea, should attack him. Shui agreed, but when the son offered the tea and attacked, Li merely used a spirit-shout (the Japanese *kiai)* that knocked the son out—without spilling his tea or interrupting his conversation with another man. When asked about it, the son replied: "I heard thunder, his hands had eyes, I fell unconscious." Predictably, Li resented this action by Shui and returned to Honan to teach. His best student there was Chang Chu.

Chang Chu, also from Lu-shan, taught the classics and was a non-boxing friend of Li's for ten years. Finally, Li invited him to learn Hsing-i and Chang accepted. Li told him that he would teach him only the best part of the art and then Chang could study alone, but that he should not pass it on to more than a couple of students. Chang learned the art well and passed it on to his son Chang Ke-erh and his nephew Mai Chuang-t'u. Chang Ke-erh by the age of fifteen had killed several men in Honan. In 1940 the martial arts hall he founded still existed. After Chang Ke-erh died at twenty, his father turned to teaching Mai, who was then his sole disciple.

Mai Chuang-t'u lived in Chang Chu's house, and everywhere he went he walked in Chicken style, causing people to laugh. Once when he was ambushed, he knocked the attacker more than ten feet. Even at the apex of his boxing career, when he was called "Boxing Teacher Mai" by many students, he maintained a fur and leather business. One of his best students was An Ta-ch'ing.

From Ch'ang-an Hsien in Shensi, An was at first only a friend

of Mai, then became his student. In turn An taught Mai about the Muslim faith to which he belonged. Later, An learned from many other schools and traveled widely, carrying the art into places like Szechwan and Hupei provinces, where few knew of it. Through his exertions, it came to be the *nei-chia* (internal art) in those places. An said that although Hsing-i looked simple, it was difficult to learn, and few learned it because they were afraid of failing. One of his best students was Pao Hsien-t'ing.

Pao Hsien-t'ing also was from Ch'ang-an Hsien and a Muslim. Very intelligent, he left the study of the classics early for the martial arts. In a few years, he had mastered fifty military arts, such as horse riding, archery, and swordsmanship. But he gave weapons up for boxing. Here too he was successful, and after ten years and ten teachers could defeat most of the Hsing-i teachers around. He then approached hot-tempered, aloof An Ta-ch'ing and was accepted as a student. An soon sensed his sincerity, and within two years Pao was regarded as the "thumb" (number one) student. (See page 110 for Pao's advice.)

Because of the pressure of foreigners at the time of the Boxer Rebellion (1900), the Ch'ing dynasty prohibited boxing. Pao, leaving An's circle and returning to his own village, gave up all the martial arts except the *nei-chia,* especially Hsing-i. He joined the army, was promoted, and would have gone higher had it not been for his individualistic temperament. In 1917 he took troops to northern Szechwan Province to repel the Communists. He continued teaching and in 1921 founded the Chi Chien Wu-shu She (Chi Chien Martial Arts Society), which had more than five hundred political and military members. At dawn Pao would read Muslim classics; as the sun rose he began teaching and, with his associates, taught until 9 P.M. He had no hobbies and neither smoked nor drank spirits. During this period he created a north-south type of synthetic boxing. He was seen in 1942, rosy-cheeked, straight, and full of energy, though eighty. One of his best students was Li Han-chang.

After Kuo Yun-shen, Hsing-i split into three branches in Hopei: (1) the conservative style taught by Li Ts'un-i, which used the traditional postures (Li's most famous disciples were Shang Yun-hsiang and Li Yen); (2) the natural style taught by Wang Hsiang-chai, which stressed the importance of *i* ("will") and held postures secondary; and (3) the synthetic style of Sun Lu-t'ang. Other great Hsing-i boxers were Chang Chao-tung, Li Ch'ang-yu, Keng Chi-shan, Sung T'ieh-lin, Teng Yun-feng, Keng Hsia-kuang, and Wei Fang-shih. Hsing-i proved its worth in the national boxing tournaments: 1928 in Nanking, 1929 in Shanghai and Hang-chou, and 1933 in Nanking. Its exponents led the winners in each tournament.

The name of Hsing-i was changed by Wang Hsiang-chai at one point to I Ch'uan ("Mind Boxing"), the change allied to Sun Lu-t'ang's sentiment, "Boxing, no-boxing; mind, no-mind." Later still, he called it Ta Ch'eng Ch'uan ("Great Achievement Boxing"). Wang Shu-chin, who is now in Taiwan, studied from 1929-38 under Chang Chao-tung, and when he died Wang trained under Wang Hsiang-chai at Tientsin. Wang told me that Wang Hsiang-chai had changed the name to Ta Ch'eng out of grief after Chang Chao-tung's death.

Sun Lu-t'ang was a giant in the art (figure 2). His daughter, Sun Chien-yuan, writes the following about him. Born poor in Pao-ting

in 1859, his father died when he was nine. The young boy attempted to make a living by making brushes, but life was so harsh he tried to hang himself when he was thirteen. Happily for boxing, he was cut down by a passerby. After fifteen he studied Hsing-i from Li Kuei-yuan. When he was nineteen Sun walked to Peking and started Hsing-i training under Li's teacher, Kuo Yun-shen, and learned Pa-kua from Ch'eng T'ing-hua, becoming so proficient that after a year Ch'eng said he was his best student.

During this period Sun learned from Kuo half of each day and then went to another section of Peking to learn from Ch'eng the other half day. Kuo's training was spartan: often he would ride on a horse, forcing Sun to hold onto its tail, for distances up to ten miles. This instruction continued for several years. Gradually Sun became famous and was challenged many times. It was said of him that though he never lost a match, neither did he ever hurt anyone —so great was his skill. (When he was fifty, Sun began learning T'ai-chi from the famous Hao Wei-chen and was thus able to claim mastery in all three of the internal arts.)

Later, Sun returned to Pao-ting and became a merchant. The city was famed for the quality of its wrestlers. Predictably, soon after his return two wrestlers jumped him in a public teahouse, attacking simultaneously, one with two fists against his head, the other with a scooping foot. Calmly Sun defeated the head attack, raised his foot to avoid the scoop, and then used the sole of his foot against the kicker. The deflection and stamp drove both wrestlers ten feet backward, knocking them to the floor. The kicker could not get up. Sun quietly asked, "Why this mischief?" The other wrestlers crowded up asking his pardon and he smiled with, "We are all friends." The onlookers noticed that the sole of Sun's shoe had come off because of his *ch'i** After teaching in Pao-ting for

* The scholar W. T. Chan defines *ch'i* as "the psychophysiological power associated with blood and health." A simpler rendering is "intrinsic energy."

three years, Sun went to Ting Hsing Hsien where he soon established himself as the leading boxer. One of his students there, the son of a general, liked horsemanship. Once Sun told him that mere riding revealed no true technique. Later the student rode past him and Sun mounted behind him, the student unaware that he was there.

Once, in Szechwan Sun was descending a mountain clinging to a chain that bordered the more dangerous stretches along the stone path. His *ch'i* flowing, Sun had gone about a mile when he was accosted from the rear by a man. Sun neutralized the man's rush and attempted to catch him. However, the white-bearded man in Taoist clothes easily eluded him. When the man finally stopped, Sun approached, bowed, and asked his name. The Taoist told him that he was a master and that, seeing Sun's skill at descending, he wanted to talk with him. The Taoist then invited Sun to stay with him, but Sun regretfully declined, saying his aged mother needed him at home. Sighing, "That is your destiny," the Taoist forthwith taught him to cultivate the *ch'i* and told him to give up meat.

Three hours later Sun reached the inn at the foot of the mountain where he stayed. There, a servant boy hit a guest over the head with an earthen pot containing hot wine, breaking the pot and scalding the man. While trying to escape, he was touched by Sun with one finger in the ribcage and fell. Sun quieted the onlookers, prescribed medicine, and said that in seven days the man would recover. The guests thought the boy was dead, but Sun kicked him gently and massaged the base of his skull; the boy stood up then but his head hung listlessly. Sun told him that when the guest whom he had hit recovered he would cure the boy's head. The guest did recover and Sun righted the boy's head.

Another time a woman from a nearby village came to complain to him about her husband, who beat her. Sun, a martial, not marital, expert desisted. But she implored him and finally he went. Her husband told Sun to mind his own business. In the ensuing quarrel a bell was rung, which brought men with weapons from the seven-

teen surrounding villages. Sun used a long stick to keep them at bay, and those who ventured too close he felled with *tien hsueh* (the art of attacking vital points). More than thirty men fell injured. When the magistrate's guards came to arrest him, he jumped on a horse and sped away. When the injured were found unable to rise or speak, the magistrate came to Sun and, after hearing his story, scolded the husband, and Sun returned and cured his attackers.

Sun also was expert in archery. From a distance of a hundred paces he could shoot a coin off of an egg held by a student.

In the summer of 1927 some of his students asked him to come to Tientsin to teach them a few days each month. There, a proud senior student named Li asked to be shown something. Sun lightly struck at Li's head and he deflected, hardly feeling it. Sun said, "That's enough to show you." The next day Li was pale and could barely stand. He came to Sun, who prescribed medicine for the purple lump on his arm, cautioning him to take it immediately for delay would be fatal. Li recovered, no longer proud, and now fully cognizant of the old master's prowess.

Sun walked as though he were flying. One evening after supper, when he was past seventy and chairman of the Kiangsu Boxing Association, he invited his students to try their *kung fu* (skill, ability): they should try to keep up with him as he descended a mountain. None could get within ten feet of him and most he left far behind. Then he told them that they needed more practice.

He studied literature and philosophy in his spare time. By the time of his death at seventy-four in 1933, he had gathered all his knowledge in five books: *Hsing-i Ch'uan Hsueh, Pa-kua Ch'uan Hsueh, T'ai-chi Ch'uan Hsueh, Pa-kua Chien Hsueh* (sword), and *Ch'uan-i Shu Cheng* (The Real Explanation of Boxing). The first three and the last he completed, but the book on Pa-kua sword he did not. A diary he kept from youth was stolen. (See page 111 for Sun's advice.)

When the Communists came to power in 1949, Hsing-i masters such as Ch'en P'an-ling, Wang Shu-chin, Chang Shih-jung, Yuan

Tao, Chang Chun-feng, and Kuo Feng-ch'ih fled with the Nationalist government to Taiwan. Among the leading Taiwanese masters of the art developed by them was Hung I-hsiang. For three years (1959—62) I learned Hsing-i from all of these teachers except the two Changs, most of the instruction coming from Yuan Tao and Kuo Feng-ch'ih.

My principal instructor was Yuan Tao, a retired guerrilla general, who spent much of World War II behind Japanese lines. He had learned Hsing-i in Shanghai from the famed Wei Fang-shih. Yuan won the Fukien Province boxing championship in 1934. One of his boxing associates, Chin Yun-t'ing, wrote a book on the art, which says in part: "Mencius said, 'Keep your will and control your temper,' which proves the inseparable relation between the will and the ch'i. The will commands and the ch'i responds. But without ch'i, the will of the will is not performed. Thus, Mencius was also able to say: 'I know how to cultivate my great ch'i.' As a child I was an invalid and could do little. Some friends told me that Hsing-i was excellent for cultivating ch'i and eradicating illness. Thus I went to the great Sun Lu-t'ang and practiced under him for twelve years. Gradually Hsing-i freed me of disease and I grew robust. This boxing art is characterized by a simple and graceful style. It is easy for novices to learn and is not injurious to beginners. If practiced correctly, the exercise in a short time should strengthen the sinews and promote blood circulation. Finally, it is a kind of practice good for everyone regardless of age."

# 2. *Hsing-i and Internal Boxing*

Hsing-i is one of the three ancient Chinese internal boxing arts, the other two being T'ai-chi and Pa-kua. Internal boxing is essentially moving meditation. *Boxing* is something of a misnomer, because by learning the skill there is no need to use it. Ultimately it becomes part of your bones; it is there if required, but it need never be used. In our utilitarian society this seems a silly motivation—to learn something so that you never have to use it. The internal masks the boxing skill; an internal boxer looks like anything but a boxer.

Indeed, none of the internal boxing arts has sparring. They are essentially methods of boxing by oneself, of changing sperm into ch'i, ch'i into spirit, and spirit into emptiness. The boxing is at once the tool and the product of this creative process. And because it lies so close to creation, it cannot lead to destruction. True enough, the old masters met challenges. But more often than not they were able to send the challenger away happy—happy because lie had been soundly defeated, educated but not hurt.

This reveals another reason why Hsing-i has no sparring: while the master boxer can meet and defeat a challenger without injuring him, the aspiring boxer cannot. The nature of Hsing-i blows is such that, done correctly, they are dangerous. If the punches are pulled, or muted in some way, they are no longer Hsing-i. Thus the karate no-contact bout cannot help the Hsing-i boxer

sharpen his technical skills. Hsing-i is similar in this respect to the ancient *jutsu* forms of Japanese combatives, which have remained the same because of their intrinsically dangerous natures. If regulated and restricted and made sportive, these arts lose their essence.

If the motivation in learning the art is primarily to gain skill as a boxer, then motivation will impede learning. To learn combatives because of their self-defense value is a confession of weakness, of being unable to resolve interpersonal problems rationally. But if the internal is viewed, as it should be, as a form of meditation that in time bequeathes boxing skill and other useful values, then progress will be more rapid. For the internal emphasizes meditation and exercise, out of which the combat technique emerges, but the combative is always under the control of the meditative.

The internal requires quiet, stillness. But this stillness is not simply the absence of sound. It is a total presence, an attentiveness, which must be a part of the discipline if excellence is to emerge. I believe that the silences a man must live with in training in the internal themselves produce part of the skill that ultimately comes. When the silence releases its new energy a quiet mind is produced, and when this happens the whole being becomes truly active.

The internal is dynamic training of mind-body. An old Taoist saying goes: "In standing, like a pine tree; in moving, like the wind; in sleeping, like a dead man." To which I would add, "In thinking, like a placid, slow-moving stream." Theoretically, many Asian martial arts promise this mind-body synthesis. Few achieve it.

A system based solely on body mechanics remains forever at the level of calisthenics and rudimentary fighting. Functionally, such a system is limited by the fact that in the animal world man is something of a weak creature. Except by recourse to his brain, he cannot stand physically with most of the other animals.

But the brain itself needs to be checked and trained. The trouble

with urban cultures throughout the world is that man's brain is out of control. The internal imposes the restraint that, paradoxically, leads to freedom. The mind is king—remember this—and must be accorded priority over the body. Louie Armstrong once croaked, "I never let my mouth say what my heart can't stand," which is simply another way of stating it.

By its very nature, the internal is cooperative. It breaks down when it becomes overly competitive. Springing from Taoism and Buddhism, it stresses *being* and *becoming* rather than *thinking* and *doing.* Learning is aided if one remembers that there is no opponent—only ourselves.

However, the internal is not a gift: it must be worked for, and discipline is necessary (an old text runs, "An inch of meditation, an inch of Buddha"). But even this is largely cooperative. Too often what passes for discipline becomes sadistic (on the part of the teacher) or masochistic (on the part of the student). Many martial arts taught today, in Asia as well as the West, tend toward the sociopathic on this score. What is wanted is a good balance. The Indiana poet, Max Erhmann, put it well: "Besides a wholesome discipline, be gentle to yourself."

In a relativistic world, one of the few absolutes is that it is more difficult to train external boxers in the internal than it is those who know no boxing at all. Previous boxing or highly competitive or strength-oriented sports are impediments. Competitiveness must be discarded if one is to enter into—much less make progress in—the halls of the internal. Although the internal is harder work and takes longer than the external, it has no limits. One has but to watch old *judoka* or *karateka* and to contrast them with an internal master to see the truth of this.

Because I have taught the external, I know the difficulties of the transition. And I can tell the reader in advance his reaction to the internal. He will be vexed at the lack of tangible indices of progress, which are easily recognizable in the external. He will want to go faster. (Talleyrand once said to his coachman, "Slow

up, slow up—I'm in a hurry.") Most of these reactions will be competitive, hence detrimental to the mind-body synthesis we are trying for.

The teacher-student relationship pivotal in Asian martial arts rests on competitive, and thus frail, foundations. That is why I favor the name *guide,* rather than *teacher.* But because I know something of the internal and the reader does not, he must accept what I write initially, for skepticism lies close to paralysis. Later he will not progress unless he himself can add to what is given him.

Deep humility will help one learn. The greatest Hsing-i boxer to ever come to the United States was a woman who taught Chinese at a large Midwestern university. A few years ago, she told me, that as an experiment she started a Hsing-i class on campus (for which she charged no fee). Only five persons enrolled. Within a month, one person remained. She, who on the mainland had sat at the knee of Teng Yun-feng, one of the greatest boxers China has produced, told me that never again would she teach the art—such students did not deserve it.

Therefore, in the face of real knowledge, be receptive. The intellect may hold facts but hardly truths, and the internal gives intellection short shrift. Once a Zen master gave a student the problem: "What was Buddha before he came to this world?" A week later the student brought in his solution; he presented the master with a frog. But the master rejected the answer, saying it was "too intellectual." In sum: relax, work, cooperate.

# 3. The *Primary Requirements*

To learn Hsing-i one must master these fundamentals:

A. *Five Postures*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Chicken Leg | One leg firmly supports; one leg is held off the ground. |
| 2. Dragon Body | The body is segmented in three: heels to knees, knees to hips, and hips to head. |
| 3. Bear Shoulders | The shoulders are sprung forward from the spine like a bow. |
| 4. Eagle Claws | The fingers clutch tightly. |
| 5. Tiger Embrace | The arms are folded threateningly, like a tiger leaving its den. |

B. *Nine Words*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Three Pressings | Head presses upward, tongue presses forward, and palms press to front. |
| 2. Three Strengthenings | Strengthen the two shoulders, hands and feet, and teeth. |
| 3. Three Roundings | Back round, breast round, and the space between thumb and index finger *(hu k'ou,* "tiger mouth") round. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4. | Three Sensitives | Eyes sensitive, heart sensitive, and hands sensitive. |
| 5. | Three Holdings | Hold the lower body, hold the upper breath, and hold the two shoulders. |
| 6. | Three Sinkings | Ch'i sinks, shoulders sink, and elbows sink. |
| 7. | Three Curvings | Knees curve, shoulders curve, and elbows curve. |
| 8. | Three Straightenings | Neck straightens, spine straightens, and joints straighten. |
| 9. | Three Embraces | Two arms embrace chest, ch'i embraces navel, and courage embraces body. |

C. *Six Coordinations*

1. Internal
   a. Heart — Mind
   b. Mind — Ch'i
   c. Ch'i — Strength
2. External
   a. Shoulder — Thigh
   b. Elbow —• Knee
   c. Hand — Foot

D. Three points on one line: the tip of the nose, the fingertips, and the toe tips are on one imaginary line.

E. The body lowers with the ch'i rising and rises with the ch'i falling.

F. The hands rise like steel spades and fall like iron hooks.

G. *Eight attitudes* — Rising and falling, to and fro, right and left, acting and observing

H. *Foot Movements*

1. Action — Flying, firm, dropping, and treading

| | |
|---|---|
| 2. Steps | Inch step, big step, pushing step, quick step, and flying step |
| *Hand Actions* | |
| l. Single Hand | Thrusting like a hawk raiding a forest and falling like a swallow sweeping over the water's surface |
| 2. Two Hands | Rising like two hands raising a tripod and falling like two hands breaking bricks |

J. *Summation*

In essence, body components must conform to the following:

The waist — sinks
The shoulders — shrink
The chest — withdraws
The head — pushes up
The tongue — touches the roof of the mouth
The hand — feels as if pushing upward
The sacrum — circles inward and upward

The fundamental tactic—and one the masters practice by the hour—is the same as in Pa-kua: rise, drill, fall, overturn. Twist **1-5**

as you rise and overturn as you fall. Twist while your head pushes up and overturn as your head contracts. Twist while your hands stretch out and overturn while they lower. Twist as your foot goes forward and overturn as it drops in place. Your waist rises as you twist and falls as you overturn. Rise equals go, fall equals strike. Together they mean to strike like a rolling wave. Each part must be clearly differentiated; all must be done like lightning. This is facilitated by keeping the body relaxed until the final instant. A cardinal principle of Hsing-i is that all movements must be done lightly and briskly without the heavy muscular contraction of karate.

# 4. The Five Basic Actions

Hsing-i's five basic forms are built on the *wu-hsing,* or five primary elements: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. Each element is capable of generating another element as follows: metal generates water, water generates wood, wood generates fire, fire generates earth, and earth generates metal. The five basic forms originally followed this sequence, each form symbolizing an element, which generated another. However, both Sun and Yuan placed wood ahead of water, and this is the sequence I learned and present here.

The five forms are as natural as a baby's movements. But because they are natural, after long practice they become dangerous. They are correlated with the five elements, physiology, and the ch'i as follows:

| | Name | Element | Organ | Action of Ch'i | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Splitting *{p'i-ch'uan)* | Metal | Lung | Rises and falls as if chopping with an axe | 1 |
| 2. | Crushing *{peng-ch'uan*) | Wood | Liver | Expands and contracts simultaneously | 2 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 3. | Drilling *(tsuan-ch'uan)* | Water | Kidney | Flows in curving eddies or shoots like lightning |
| 4 | 4. | Pounding *(p'ao-ch'uan)* | Fire | Heart | Fires suddenly like a projectile from a gun |
| 5 | 5. | Crossing *(heng-ch'uan)* | Earth | Spleen | Strikes forward with rounded energy |

### *A. The Preliminaries*

Starting, stand erect and relax your entire body. Your mind is at ease and your hands, palms inward, hang at your thighs. Sun called this prestarting posture the illimitable *(wu chi).*

Next, turn halfway to the right and move your left foot a bit forward and attach the heel to your right instep at 45°. Hold your

tongue against the roof of the mouth and raise your sacrum.

Following this, in a posture which Sun related to the Grand Terminus *[T'ai-chi),* relax and slump your shoulders. Circle your two arms above your head until the fingers form a pyramid; then lower them as you lower your body until the hands are in front of your heart, fingers extended forward. Your elbows are near your ribs. Simultaneously, push your head upward, straighten your neck, **7** sink your waist, curve your thighs inward, and twist your heels outward so that the knees are pressed together. Quiet your mind and sink your ch'i to your navel.

Done properly, you thus achieve the three internal coordinations. Your body should resemble: (l) a chicken's leg, (2) a dragon's body, (3) a bear's shoulders, and (4) a tiger embracing its head. Sun termed this the "one ch'i embracing the four secondary figures [s*zu hsiang*]." The I Ching says: "The four secondary figures are closely related to the two powers [*liang-i*], the yang and yin, which in turn are closely related to the one ch'i. The emptiness [*shih-wu*] creates the one ch'i, which lays the foundation for the two powers." The chicken's leg symbolizes independence; the dragon's body, a three-part folded posture; the bear's shoulders, the straight energy of the neck; and tiger embracing its head, a tiger springing from its den with its two paws embracing its head.

The philosophy and exercise proceed together. Hsing-i as related to the two powers is the principle of movement and stillness, rise and fall, expansion and contraction, and going back and forth in boxing. When expanding it is yang; when contracting it is yin.

Clench your fists and screw your right fist, palm up, directly ahead. As you step forward with your left foot, gradually push **8** your left hand forward and pull your right hand back as if tearing silk. Your left hand and foot should rise and fall at the same time **9** and your right foot should not move. Your left foot holds 45 percent, your right foot, *55* percent of your weight. The fingers of both hands are open: the thumb of your left hand must be flat

horizontally and the index finger stretched forward. You are now in *san-t'i* (three essentials). Your left hand is on a line with your mouth, the forearm kept level, and your right hand is near your navel. Both arms are bent "seeking straightness." The thumb and index fingers of both hands should be semicircular, your eyes looking at the "tiger mouth" of your left hand *(hu k'ou:* that area of the hand from the base of the thumb to the tip of the index finger).

Relax your shoulders and curve your thighs inward; the shoulders will then coordinate with the thighs. Your elbows should be bent and your knees curved inward, thus coordinating the elbows and knees. Your heels twist outward, coordinating them with the hands. This is termed the three external coordinations. The shoulders press the elbows, which press the hands; the waist presses the thighs, which press the knees, which press the feet. Your body should be straight, your mind at ease. There is yin in the yang and yang in the yin: they are in harmony. In this state the three internal and three external coordinations are complete.

Thus, from the harmony of yang and yin the three essentials *(san t'i)* are created. The essentials symbolize heaven, earth, and man; in boxing they are the head, hands, and feet. Each is divided into three sections:

| | |
|---|---|
| Head | head<br>back<br>waist |
| Hands | hands<br>elbows<br>shoulders |
| Feet | feet<br>knees<br>thighs |

An ancient classic says: "When yang and yin united, the three essentials were created, which in turn produced all creatures. Thus the one ch'i that came from the emptiness and created yang and yin is the foundation of heaven and earth." Sun called it the pill of immortality and the internal energy of Hsing-i boxing.

## B. *The Heart* of the Matter

The five basic forms are the core of Hsing-i. Unlike T'ai-chi, the movements in Hsing-i are normally done at regular speed. As a meditational breathing practice, however, the postures can be held at various points for varying times. The method given below is that of Yuan Tao; its differences from that of the orthodox school (which Yuan learned first and then modified) are delineated and the full set of the orthodox is then provided by Master Wang Shu-chin. In striking, the weight, which in san-t'i has been held 45-55 percent front to rear, is reversed, the front leg receiving the greater weight. All Hsing-i strikes occur directly on a line with the nose and most are centered on the opponent. Power, speed, and focus are thus enhanced. Your nose is your guide: by fronting yourself to your opponent, it is difficult to miss him. Moreover, a strike at his middle meets his arms at their ends—the hands—their most vulnerable points. Finally, before jumping in, because the English terms are somewhat ambiguous, the reader is asked to memorize the Chinese names of the five forms.

## 1. *SPLITTING (P'I-CH'UAN)*

*P'i* belongs to metal of the Five Elements and lets the ch'i rise and fall as though one were chopping something with an axe.

You are in san-t'i. With your left hand and leg forward, lower your left hand to your navel, twist it upward to your mouth, and then continue twisting forward and gradually clenching it, until, palm up, it is on a line with your left foot not higher than your eyes or lower than your mouth. Simultaneously, take your left foot a short step forward in accordance with your height, put it down toed out at 45°; curve your thighs inward, and place your right
10 hand palm down near your left elbow. (Sun's style keeps the right fist near the right lower ribs; other schools place the right fist, palm upward, near the left elbow.) Now over the loaded, toed out left foot take your right foot a full step forward and strike with your right palm, the middle finger of your right hand passing over the index finger of your left hand, which is retracted to your
11 left side, palm downward. At the same time, your left foot follow-steps to where it is at shoulder-width from your right. This half step foliow-step is essential; in fact, Hsing-i is also called *Three Legged Boxing* for this reason.

Advance your right foot farther forward and toe it out while your right hand is pulled back, clenched into a fist, and stretched

from under your chin forward over your right foot. Simultaneously, raise your left palm to a point near your right elbow. Then 12
take a full step forward with your left foot, the left palm striking forward, the right hand pulling back to your right side, and your right foot follow-stepping. 13

Following this, again stretch your left foot forward and toe out your left foot and repeat the movement as before, taking your right foot and hand forward, and your left foot in a follow-step. 14

With your right hand and foot forward you are ready to turn. Shift your weight to your left leg, then pivot your right foot leftward on its heel and put it down about 60° from where it was. Pick up your left foot and put it down toed out going the opposite way. Simultaneously, lower your right hand near your left (near your lower waist), and then stretch your left in a fist, palm up, above your toed out left foot, the right hand palm down near your left elbow. 15

Repeat the same three movements going in the opposite direc-
16-20 tion.

Thus, three movements forward, turn, and three movements returning. (The orthodox turn is different, being done with the left hand and foot forward and turning to the right instead of the left as in the modified version.)

## 2. *CRUSHING (PENG-CH'UAN)*

*Peng* goes straight and true like an arrow and symbolizes wood of the Five Elements.

Continuing from the previous posture, which ended with your right palm and foot forward, turn as before (pivot right foot on heel, 60° to the left). As you turn, take a short step forward with your left foot, clenching your fists and bringing the right fist back
21 past the right side. Then, as you pull your left fist, palm up, back

to your left side, shoot your right standing fist over it directly forward ahead of (but on a level lower than) your nose. Simultaneously, your right foot follow-steps and is put down on its toes beside your left foot. Your knees are well bent, close together, 22
and the punch is focused low at the opponent's stomach, proceeding like an arrow.

Put your right heel down, take your left foot a half step forward and toe it out. Now, take your right foot forward. Follow-step 23-24
with your left foot on its toes, shooting your left fist over your right fist, which retracts to your right side. 25

Take a half step forward with your right foot, toe it out, and take a full step with your left foot. As you follow-step with your 26
right foot on its toes, shoot your right fist forward over your withdrawing left fist. 27

Finally, repeat the movement by putting down your right heel,

28 taking your left foot a half step forward toed out. Take a full step forward with your right foot and follow-step with your left foot, while shooting your left fist forward and withdrawing your right
29 fist to your side.

You may repeat the same steps going the other way as you did in p'i above, by turning and shooting your right fist. You would then follow this as you move forward with your left fist, right fist, and end with your left fist. Thus, four movements forward, turn, and repeat the same four movements returning. Alternatively you would go only one way, linking up with the next form when you turn. This is the method illustrated below. (The orthodox peng is higher stanced, aimed at the upper body or face, and the turn is made when the right fist is forward.)

### 3. *DRILLING (TSUAN-CH'UAN)*

*Tsuan* belongs to water of the Five Elements and symbolizes ch'i flowing in curving eddies. It is likened also to a shooting geyser or streaking lightning. It correlates with the kidney. If the ch'i is harmonious, the kidney becomes strong; if the exercise is done incorrectly, the kidney will become weak.

Ending peng, after going only one way, you are anchored on your right foot, your left foot on its toes and your left fist forward. As you turn leftward toward the opposite direction, simultaneously
30 swing your left fist circularly and raise your right arm; twist your left fist, palm up, out from under your chin straight ahead of your
31 nose as your left foot goes forward.

Toe out your left foot, turn your left fist over circling the arm clockwise as your right foot takes a full step forward and your right fist, palm up, is extended forward directly ahead of your nose. Your left fist ends its circle near your left side, palm down, **32** and your left foot does a half step follow-step.

Toe out your right foot and go forward with your left foot, shooting your left fist out on a line with your nose and over your right arm, your right foot follow-stepping. **33**

Toe out your left foot, go forward with your right foot, and strike with your right fist. After follow-stepping with your left **34** foot, you are ready to turn into *p'ao.*

The target of tsuan is the opponent's chin. One very important point is the weight. If both the advanced fist and foot carry most of the weight, this is a fault called in Chinese boxing *double-weighting.* Therefore, in tsuan be sure to keep most of your

weight on your rear foot as you strike. Thus, if your right fist strikes, most of your weight is reserved on your rear (left) foot.

### 4. *POUNDING (P'AO-CH'UAN)*

*P'ao* represents fire in the Five Elements, is equated to the heart, and symbolizes the sudden firing of a gun. If done correctly *p'ao* will calm the mind; if done incorrectly, your mind will become confused and your body awkward.

You ended tsuan with your right fist and foot forward. Pivoting leftward on your heels so that you face the other way, curl your
35 two fists at your sides. Step out diagonally left with your left foot, and simultaneously strike upward with your standing right fist while your left arm circles upward, palm out, to protect your head
36 and your right foot follow-steps.

Take a half-step forward with your left foot on the same diagonal line, bring your right foot up to it, and rest it on its toes. Both fists circle downward to your sides, both knees are well bent, and
37 the body is "cocked" for the next strike. Now take a long step diagonally rightward with your right foot while your right fist rises, palm out, to protect your head and your left fist strikes
38 upward on the diagonal line and your left foot follow-steps.

Taking your right foot a half step forward on the same line, lower your fists to your sides as before and bring your left foot up to your right foot and put it down on its toes. Then step forward 39
to the left diagonal and raise your arms as before. 40

Finally, repeat the cocking step; then go forward to the right 41
diagonal, striking with your left fist and protecting with your right. Follow-step with your left foot. 42

Now you are ready to swing leftward into *heng.* The path in p'ao is a zig-zag one, your body lowering as it cocks and rising as it strikes. (The orthodox p'ao is a higher, more extended posture.)

## 5. *CROSSING (HENG-CH'UAN)*

*Heng* belongs to earth in the Five. Elements. Even though it comes last in the sequence, *heng* is considered the mother of the others. Kuo Yun-shen called it the *t'ai-chi ch'uan* of Hsing-i. Equated to the spleen, it has a rounded power. If done properly, your stomach and spleen will be solid; if not, they will become weak.

You ended p'ao aligned toward the right diagonal, your right foot forward, your right fist, palm out, protecting your head and your left standing fist striking forward. Turn leftward as before, pivoting on both heels and circling both fists toward your sides. 43
As you take a short step with your left foot, your right fist circles clockwise under your left and is stretched out on a line with your nose with the palm up; your left fist, palm down, circles clockwise and returns to your left side. As in the other forms, you take a half step follow-step with your rear (right) foot. 44

Take a half step forward with your left foot and toe out. Then take a full step forward with your right foot while your right fist turns over and circles counterclockwise above your left fist, which circles from under the right counterclockwise and strikes forward, palm up, on a line with your nose. Simultaneously, follow-step with your left foot. Your right fist comes to your right side, palm
45 down.

Toe out your right foot, taking it a half step forward. Now as you take a full step forward with your left foot, turn your left fist palm down and circle it clockwise above your right fist and bring it to your left side, palm down. Simultaneously, your right fist circles clockwise from under your left and strikes forward with the
46 palm up as you follow-step with your right foot.

Take your left foot forward a half step and toe out. Then take a full step forward with your right foot as your right fist turns over and circles counterclockwise above your left fist to your right side, and your left fist circles counterclockwise under the right
47 and strikes forward and the left foot follow-steps.

Finally, turn leftward, bring your feet together and your fists
48 to your sides, thus ending the walking of the Five Forms. Alternatively, as you swing leftward go into a scissors crouch and use
49 p'i with your right arm.

Heng is done on a wavy alignment contrasted with the direct path of p'i, peng, and tsuan, and the zig-zag of p'ao. Heng's target is the opponent's upper body. In sum, going one way p'i is done three times; peng, four; tsuan, three; p'ao, four; and heng, four.

To illustrate the orthodox style, Master Wang Shu-chin does the five basic postures: p'i, figures 50-56; peng, figures 57-60; tsuan, figures 61-63; p'ao, figures 64-67; and heng, figures 68-71.

50-71

Let us briefly compare the two styles. In the orthodox method, peng is used to strike the opponent's upper body; in the modified, it is directed against the navel or groin. The orthodox stance is

higher, the knees less bent. The orthodox turn is also different, being done when the right fist and left foot are forward.

Turn your left foot inward (to the right) 90° and lower your right fist. Circle your right fist under your chin, and simultaneously raise your right knee to a point under your right elbow. 72
Turn your right toes rightward as far as they will go, raising the sole in the direction toward which you are turning. Use left p'i, 73
and stop as your right foot goes forward as far as it can and is put down at 45°. 74

Next, as you take a full step forward with your left foot, strike forward with your right fist and retract your left fist under it to your left side. At the same time your right foot follow-steps a 75—76
half step behind your left foot. Thus, the orthodox follow-step in p'i is quite different from Yuan's. Then continue as before.

Wang Shu-chin stressed to me the virtue of peng as a double impact punch. The initial strike is with the top of the standing fist, breaking the opponent's foothold, or root, then the lower part of the fist is screwed upward. Yuan also modified his peng by using only the extended knuckle of the index finger.

### C. *Linking the Five Forms*

The five forms are linked together in *lien huan.* Yuan's method is as follows.

Stand upright with your heels together. Relax your entire body
77 and breathe naturally.

Pivot on your right heel 45° rightward while lowering your body and bringing your open hands down near your thighs and
78-79 clenching them into fists.

Bring your fists up, your right extended, palm up, and your left, palm down, near your right elbow as you pivot 45° leftward on
80 your left heel so that you again face directly to the front.

Separate your hands, bringing your right back to your right side
81 and using your left in p'i as your left foot goes forward.

As you peng with your right fist, bring your right foot forward
82 on its toes next to your left foot.

Take your right foot and most of your weight rearward, and as

you strike forward with left peng retract your right fist, palm up, to your right side. 83

Step forward with your right foot and use right peng as you retract your left fist to your left side. 84

Raise your two fists upward (in figure 85, the left is obscured) and bring your right foot back on its toes near your left foot and strike your right fist into your left palm. 85-86

Take your right fist up to protect your head, and as you step directly forward with your right foot and follow-step with your left foot, use left p'ao. 87

Taking your left foot forward use left heng, while retracting
88 your right fist, palm up, to your right side.
89 Next, convert heng to p'i.
Thrust your right fist, palm up, forward in tsuan, your left hand, palm down, at your right elbow, and take your right foot forward,
90 putting it down toed out.
91 Step forward with your left foot and use left p'i.
Go forward with right peng as your right foot goes forward on
92 its toes to your left.
Turn rightward slightly, your feet scissored, lower your two hands to your pelvis and then take your right fist up in tsuan, your

left palm at the elbow, as you advance and toe out your right foot. 93

Go forward with left p'i and your left foot. 94

Again take your right foot forward on its toes as you use right peng. 95

Retract your right foot and peng with your left fist. 96

Use right peng as your right foot goes forward. 97

Raise your two fists and strike the right fist into the left palm as your right foot goes back on its toes. 98-99

Raise your right fist above your forehead and use left p'ao as your right foot steps forward. 100

Take your left foot forward and use left heng. 101

102 Change your left heng to p'i.
103 Step forward with your right foot toed out and use right tsuan.
104 Step forward with your left foot and left p'i.
105 Go forward with your right foot and right peng.
Turn rightward, your feet scissored, lower your right hand to your pelvis, and shoot out right tsuan as you step forward with
106 your right foot and toe out.
107 Take your left foot and left p'i forward.
108 Take your right foot forward to the beginning posture.

## D. The *Function of the Five Forms*

While the ultimate aim of Hsing-i is an immediate response without cognition to an attack, like T'ai-chi and Pa-kua its exercise components are, in themselves, fighting techniques and thus useful starting points for that no-mind response. The functions for the five basic forms given below do not exhaust the fighting possibilities, however. The discerning student will be able to discover others. But the uses given are the major ones and should be learned as a basis for others one might devise. Remember: like the forms, the functions should be practiced from both sides.

### 1. *SPLITTING (P'I-CH'UAN)*

Better than any of the basic five forms, p'i reflects the use of the Hsing-i guiding principle: rise, drill, fall, overturn. Some boxers do this exercise until its use becomes as reflexive as withdrawing one's hand from a hot grill. (See figures 1-5 on page 27.) Guided by the hand the opponent uses—if he uses his right you use your right—irrespective of which foot you have forward, you counter him with p'i. Your fist is actually more of a strike than a deflection, and is driven at the opponent's chin as he strikes. Only if it meets his incoming attack does it become a deflection. Thus, your lead hand may do the striking or may deflect and open your opponent for your rear hand. You may use it with a simple half step forward with your lead foot or a full step bringing up your rear foot.

You and your opponent stand with your right feet forward. He attacks with a right cross. Toe out your right foot, stretch your 109
right arm, palm upward, forward and deflect his cross, carrying
your left palm forward near your right elbow as you deflect. On 110

deflecting, turn your right fist over, grasp his right wrist, and pull it toward your right side. Simultaneously, take a full step forward with your left foot, keeping your ch'i at the navel and chopping forward against the opponent's upper body or face with your open
111 left palm. The chop circles forward and down impacting on vital points such as those in the face, the carotid artery, or the heart. Alternatively, it is not necessary to take the body forward. The strike may be accomplished from a static posture provided the opponent is close enough, the auxiliary hand grasping or simply slapping the opponent's wrist. This method is faster but not as
112 powerful. (Figure 112 shows it applied from the right side.) However, power is not the major determinant in a strike. Celerity and placement from a well-centered body carry as much impact. Also, in using the palm, you can spear or scrape the opponent's eyes on
113-14 impact.

## 2. *CRUSHING (PENG-CH'UAN)*

Peng is a response to a body attack. It is a powerful action and one that the famed Kuo Yun-shen and Shang Yun-hsiang used to perfection. Wang Shu-chin could use it starting with his fist against the opponent's body and drop most men, so well was he able to generate power from his legs. To perfect it the undefeated Shang Yun-hsiang walked (barefoot with his shoes draped around his neck) twenty miles to and from his teacher's house each day, using a "half bamboo step." That is, he would take a half step forward, bring the rear foot forward and punch. And then repeat with the other fist (the same foot goes forward while the fists alternate. Figure 117 shows the "half bamboo step.") Kuo Feng-ch'ih also **115-18**

taught me a full-stride walking method in which you peng alternately with each fist as one foot touches down. The walk is then varied by striking when the other foot touches the ground.

119 Your opponent, his left foot forward, strikes with his right fist.
120-22 Deflect lightly and use right peng in the orthodox (figures 121—
123 22) or modified (figure 123) way.

### 3. *DRILLING (TSUAN-CH'UAN)*

Functionally, tsuan is directed at the head. Your opponent at-
124 tacks with a right cross. Toe out your left foot, deflect the strike downward with your left palm, and at the same instant drill your right fist, palm up, to his chin or nose while taking your right
125—27 foot a full step forward. The fist strikes as the right heel touches down, but the weight is then shifted to the rear leg to avoid double weighting. Alternatively, tsuan can be used without stepping for-

ward, merely by shifting out of the path of the punch and impaling your opponent on the fist. This requires no deflection and can be done with either foot forward. Finally, the fist may be articulated to either jab upward or to club downward. 128-29

4. *POUNDING (P'AO-CH'UAN)*

Although the orthodox and modified versions use the same direction for p'ao—a diagonal approach *to* the opponent—-the target and technique are somewhat different. The orthodox is a longer expansive movement directed at the upper body; the modified is a quicker and shorter action focused on the opponent's face. Depending on the opponent's angle of attack, the response may be made inside or outside his attacking arm, and with either foot ahead. In use, p'ao cannot follow the form exactly, however. If you have your left foot forward and your opponent strikes with his right fist, it would take too much time to step diagonally forward with your left foot, bring your right foot up to it, crouch and cock, block the punch with your right arm, and strike with your left fist. Therefore, if you have your left foot forward, you should use p'ao inside the deflection; if your right foot is forward, you should use p'ao outside the deflection. Also, although p'ao works better against a hook, it can also be used against a cross focused on the upper body.

130-31
132-33

## 5. *CROSSING (HENG-CH'UAN)*

Functionally, there is a problem with heng analogous to the Lotus kick of T'ai-chi: both are done clockwise rather than counter-clockwise. We just have never been taught to strike in this way. More than this, at first blush it is difficult to see how it could be effective. But it can be and is. Its effect depends in large part on the element of surprise; the striking arm is carried away from the normal power source, apparently sacrificing leverage and momentum. In reality it is simply a circling strike of considerable momentum but one that approaches the opponent from a quarter he does not expect.

As your opponent strikes with his right fist (figure 134-), step **134** forward with your left foot, deflect and grab his right arm from the inside with your left hand, pulling it toward your left shoulder. Simultaneously, loop your right fist, palm up, in a clockwise circle striking your opponent in the right armpit. On impact, the punch **135—36** is driven directly forward off the circle, the legs enlisted to create punching power. The technique works as well from the outside as

the inside. If he crosses with his left fist, step in with your left foot, capture his arm from the outside and attack his heart with your
137—38 right fist looping from underneath.

### *E. Functions Equated to the Five Elements*

Above we stated that each element represented by a form is capable of generating another element. The generating actions are for normal practice. Each element also is capable of countering another element as follows: metal *(p'i)* counters wood; wood *(peng)* counters earth; earth *(heng)* counters water; water *(tsuan)* counters fire; and fire *(p'ao)* counters metal. This is the tradition and philosophy. In real combat, of course, other counters than these may be used. These counters can be arranged in various combinations. Sun Lu-tang's are as follows.

139 You are both in san t'i, each with your left foot forward. He
140 takes a short step forward with his left foot and uses right peng.

Grasp his right wrist with your left hand. He takes another half 141
step forward with his left foot and uses left peng. Toe out your 142
left foot, twist your left hand under his, grab his wrist, and step 143—44
forward a full step with your right foot and strike with right p'i. 145
Thus metal breaks wood.

However, he twists his left hand from your grasp, blocks your p'i and uses right p'ao against your chest. Thus, fire can be pro- 146—47
duced from wood and can destroy metal.

As your opponent tries p'ao, take your right foot back and using inward "wrap" energy press his right fist down with your left hand; then take a half step forward with your left foot and use 148

149 right tsuan against his chin. Therefore, metal can produce water, which in turn can destroy fire.

He pulls back his right fist to his right side and simultaneously
150 strikes your right elbow with left heng on an upward slant. Thus earth is produced by fire and can destroy water.

You retract your right fist and use left peng against his stomach, showing that water creates wood which in turn can destroy earth. 151-52

He uses p'i against your left fist and grasps the wrist, while withdrawing his left hand and foot. Thus again metal breaks wood. 153-54

Take a left half step forward and use right peng. He takes back his right hand and foot and uses left p'i against your right peng. Thus, metal breaks wood. 155-56 157

Again take a half step forward with your left foot and use left peng. He twists his left hand up outside your left arm, grasps your wrist, and takes a full right step forward using right p'i against your left shoulder or face, metal again destroying wood. 158-59 160

# 5. The *Twelve Styles*

Because of his brain man is superior to other animals. But physically he can learn much from animals. To the five basic forms, therefore, Hsing-i adds an auxiliary twelve styles derived from the fighting characteristics of animals, some mythical. The arrangement, types, and names vary according to the schools. The twelve taught by Yuan Tao are as follows: (1) Dragon, (2) Tiger, (s) Monkey, (4) Horse, (5) Turtle, (6) Chicken, (7) Falcon, (8) Swallow, (9) Snake, (10) Dove, (11) Eagle, and (12) Bear. Other schools delete some of these and use the mythical *T'ai* bird, the Ostrich, Goose, Camel, and others. Below these styles are sampled and their salient features pointed out.

1. Dragon is a vigorous series of movements employing vertical action from down to up and hardy leaps into a low, crouching form
**1-4** of p'i. (Performed by Ch'en Yun-ch'ao, eldest son of the great Ch'en P'an-ling.)

2. Tiger also is vigorous and features an initial deflection fol-
5-6 lowed by strong palm-pushing.

*3.* Monkey reflects rapid dexterous retreating and jumping. The back of the wrist is used to attack the opponent's heart. Alterna-

tively, you may use the hand to grab his wrist. Finally, the knee can be employed to strike. (Performed by Kuo Feng-ch'ih.) 7-10

4. Horse advances directly forward and is a speedy and powerful posture in which the fists are used with the palms downward (flat fist). 11-14

5. Turtle is very fast and attacks obliquely with all the fingers
15—17 curved except the index finger.

6. Like the Horse posture, Chicken moves directly ahead. The edge of the palm is used as you come forward onto one leg (figure
18—19 18); thereafter the open palm is changed into a fist (figure 1.9). The elbow is also used extensively.

7. Falcon is sharp, violent, and multidirected. Among its actions

it employs a shooting palm (figure 20) and p'ao (figure '21) as well as tsuan and others. 20-21

8. Swallow is also lively and invigorating and uses p'i and the Chicken posture. 22—23

9. Snake stresses elasticity, diagonal movements, and shooting palms, all from a crouching posture. 24-27

10. Dove uses much rising and falling movement and a cross

arm block that continues into a two fist (palms up) attack, finally
28—29 "folding" into elbow strikes.

11. and 12. Eagle is yang, uses the same straight-ahead route as p'i and features grasping. It is often combined with Bear, which is yin. Combined, the postures go diagonally like heng and cross
30-33 the opponent's attack, permitting the capture of his arm.

# 6. *Consecutive Step Yunnan Boxing*

## *A. The Form*

Hsing-i principles can be seen in various fistic forms. One in which they figure prominently is the standardized Consecutive Step Yunnan Boxing (Yunnan Lien-pu Ch'uan), named after the southwestern province in which it was widely practiced in the 1930s and 40s by Chinese Nationalist soldiers. (It is also called Szechwan Linked Boxing by boxers who learned it in that adjoining province.) This form is done at normal speed and makes balanced use of internal and external methods. It is realistic in eschewing overuse of feet and stresses extrication from holds, a blend of open and closed hands, and ripostes from vulnerable positions. It must be practiced lightly and power applied only at the last moment of each strike. It should not be done so rapidly that the techniques are blurred or cheated of their full value. Crispness and celerity are the key words in its practice. Below we first detail the form and then delineate the functions of the postures.

Stand at attention but without rigidity. Bring your left hand, palm down, smartly to your midriff where it "holds a ball" above the palm-up right hand. Lower your body, fixing your knees to-

gether, and bring your right hand outside the left hand up above
3 your forehead, palm inward (figure 3), while your left hand is lowered to the level of your knees (not shown).

Take a full step leftward with your left foot, your left hand stretched above it. Your right hand is clenched, palm up, at your
4 right side.

Turn abruptly to face in the opposite direction with most of your weight on your left leg, snapping your right fist upward, your left
5 palm held at the right elbow. Slide your right foot forward and ex-
6 tend your right fist, shifting most of the weight to your front foot.
7 Slap your left shoulder with your right palm and step out fully with your left foot 90° to the left as your left palm stretches out above your left leg, and your right fist, palm up, is pulled to your
8 right side.

Shift your weight to your rear (right) foot, toe out your front (left) foot, and go forward with your right foot and right flat fist while your left hand is clenched and held slightly higher than (and
9 in front of) your left shoulder.

As you take your right foot a full step to the rear, turn your left fist palm up and screw clockwise until the palm is down on the right arm as your right fist screws clockwise until the palm is up. Thus, the left fist ends up forward, palm down, and the right fist at your

right side, palm up, while most of your body weight is on the rear (right) leg. 10

Toe out your left foot and step forward with your right foot and fist as before. I I

Toe out your right foot and take your left foot forward as your left fist hammers down and your right fist is retracted, palm up, to your right side, most of your weight remaining on your right leg. 12

Straighten up, shift most of your weight forward to your left foot and shoot your right, palm down, forward over your left fist. 13

Shift your weight back to your rear (right) foot, as your left fist screws counterclockwise, palm up, to your front and your right fist clockwise, palm up, to your right side. 14

Toe out your left foot and take a full step forward with your right
15 foot as your right fist chops into the palm of your left hand.

Toe *out* your right foot, take your left foot forward while your right fist opens, palm down, and lowers to your midriff, and your left hand, palm up, is raised to shoulder height. Your weight is
16 largely on your rear foot. Toe out your left foot and step forward fully with the right foot, your right palm spearing directly forward over your left hand, which is held palm down at your right armpit.
17 Your weight is now thrust forward on your right foot.

Shift your weight rearward, make a flat fist with your right hand, clench your left hand and strike forward out of a Horse posture with
18 your right while your left is held above your head.

Shift your weight to your right foot, pivot your left foot on its heel leftward 90°, and as it touches down, turn your body leftward and with a right standing spear hand strike diagonally downward, your left hand slapping the top of the right forearm. Again, your
19 weight is thrust forward.

Shift your weight to your rear (right) foot as you strike forward
20 with your left fist and retract your right fist to your right side.

Toe out your left foot, step forward with your right foot and
21 chop your right fist into your left palm directly ahead of your chest. (This repeats a previous posture.)

Shifting your weight rearward, shoot out your standing left palm and retract your right fist, palm up, to your right side. 22

Shifting your weight to your front (right) foot, spear, palm down, with your right hand over your palm-down left hand held at your right armpit. (This is a repetition.) 23

Shift your weight to your rear (left) foot, clench your hands, and as you shift your weight forward again, assume a Horse posture and shoot your right flat fist forward and bring your fist, palm outward, above your head. (This repeats the previous Horse posture movement.) 24

Take your right foot backward a full step and put most of your weight on it, and strike forward with p'i. 25

Toe out your left foot, take a full step forward with your right and chop into your open left palm with your right fist, palm up. (Another repetition.) Keeping your feet in place, lower your right fist, unclenched and palm down by your left armpit, as your left standing palm strikes forward as more weight is pushed onto your front (right) leg. 26 27

Turn leftward 180° by spinning on your left heel and swing your right elbow to where it strikes into your left palm as your left toe
**28—29** touches down. Now bring your right foot to your left, put it down, and then step 180° rightward with your right foot as your right
30 elbow is pushed out by your left palm over your right knee.

Toe out your right foot, take a full step forward with your left
31 so that your feet are parallel, and "uphold" with your two hands.

Turn around rightward 180°, taking your right leg forward and
32 pushing with both hands. Shift leftward and strike **with** a standing
33 spear, your left palm slapping your right wrist in the process.

Retract your weight to your rear (right) foot, sliding your left

foot back on its toes, shooting out a left standing fist, and bringing your right hand clenched, palm up, to your right side. 34

As you step with your left foot toed out about 20° to the right, circle your left fist counterclockwise, step forward with your right 35 foot and chop with a right standing fist into your left palm. 36

Take a short step farther left with your right fist circling clockwise while your left fist circles to your left side. 37

Take a full step with your left foot as your left standing fist strikes down into your right palm. 38

Fixing your weight on your front (left) foot, spread your arms at shoulder height and scoop forward with your right foot. 39

As you put your right foot down a full step back, strike down-
40 ward into your left palm with your right standing fist.

Turn your body rightward 180° and push forward with both
41 hands over your right foot.

Spinning on your left heel, turn back leftward 180° and push
42 with both hands over your left foot.

Bring your right foot forward, join the heel to the left, and hold your left hand, palm down, over your right, palm up, repeating the
43 first posture.

44 Finally, lower your hands to your sides and stand at attention.

### *B. The Function*

The uses of the postures are many and are not limited to those shown. The thinking student will be able to create functions of his own. In many postures of the form you end in a stance much more expanded than you would in a real street situation because in the street your opponent's body "interrupts" your strike. By practicing going into such an expanded stance you "image through" the opponent in the street and enhance your strike. All of these tactics can be used consecutively, correlated with the form, but, to give them more realism, some are divorced from their form context.

The first technique is one for use in close quarters in which you

have no room to use long strikes or kicks. It only requires that your opponent be close to you. He crowds you, attempting to get a hold on you. Keeping your power in the navel, circle your left hand, palm down, laterally to your chest while simultaneously circling your right hand, palm up, to your navel. Your fingers striking 45
the opponent's armpit and external oblique muscles (both vital points) at the same instant can create a strong impact (although it lacks the body movement, the posture is similar to the Cloud Hands of T'ai-chi). This technique is a good example of defense from a static posture in a confined space. ("If you're close enough, there's room enough" is the way Dashiell Hammett's Continental Op put it when he confronted a gangster who, looking around the small room, complained, "There's no room.")

Another close quarters, static posture: You have no place to go and your opponent launches a fist, foot, or combination attack. From the previous posture, simply lower your left palm inside your right to your knees and raise your right hand outside your left above your forehead, while your knees are brought together and your body lowered, deflecting both his fist and foot. You thus 46
use vertical distance—the lowering—to mitigate the effect of the strike. As in all the functions, you may modify it depending on the circumstances and use only part of the posture.

The third posture functions as an attack or simply to move your opponent from a close-in position to *one* farther away preparatory
47-48 to attacking him.

49 He attacks your middle from the rear with his right fist. Spin and lightly deflect his right forearm from outside with your right fist,
50 your right foot poised on its toes a half step ahead of your left foot. Then extend your right foot and your right fist forward, the fist
51 striking your opponent's right armpit.

Your feet are on a line. He grabs your shirt near your left shoul-
52 der. Press his right hand with your right, holding- it against *your* right shoulder. Next, step forward with your left foot and thrust
53 your left thumb into his right armpit.

Your left thrust misfires, and he grabs it (alternatively, he grabs your left wrist as an initiating rather than a countering action). 54 Clenching it into a fist, raise it, palm toward you, near your left shoulder. Simultaneously, toe out your left foot and take a full step forward with your right foot while striking him with your right flat fist. Here *again,* "imaging through" is important. Your cir- 55 cling left arm will seek to evade his grasp at its weakest point—between his index finger and thumb. This will cause him to "freeze" his mind and energy on your wrist, thus permitting you to step forward and strike. The strike itself can be articulated as full fist, all knuckles, or one knuckle.

He grabs your right hand. As you take your right foot a full step 56

to the rear, turn your left fist, palm up, then screw it down against
57 his hold, effecting your release.
58 He grabs your left hand. Repeat the earlier movement of toeing out your left foot, twisting your left fist to your left shoulder, and
59 stepping forward with your right foot and flat fist.

Again he grabs your right fist. Shift your weight to your rear
60 (left) leg, toe out your right foot, and go forward with your left
61 arm and leg. Your left arm circles up and, as your left foot touches down, your left hand scythes his hand (be it right or left) off your
62 wrist. "Imaging through" is done here by going into a deep squat. As you cut his hand off your wrist turn your right fist over and retract it, palm up, to your right side.

The next function can flow from the preceding one or it can originate from scratch. If the former, simply rise, straighten your left toes, and thrust forward at his throat with a flat right spear hand, palm down, as your weight goes forward to your left leg. 63

From scratch, he throws either hand. Depress the attacking hand with your left and simultaneously spear forward with your right hand. 64-65

He holds your right hand, palm down, with either of his. As you 66
shift your weight rearward to your right foot, twist your left fist
up in a counterclockwise circle against his hand, and simultaneously 67—68
twist your right hand, palm up, out of his grasp to your right side. 69
Your weight shifts but your feet do not move.

He strikes at you with his left fist. Toe out your left foot and
70 shift your weight to it; then, deflect his left fist with your left hand,
71 and grab it as you go forward with your right foot and fist. Your right fist loops and strikes his head at the carotid artery or base of his skull, while your right foot thrusts inside his left leg if possible to "freeze" him for the strike, or to use as a lever if the strike
72 misses.
73 You have your left foot forward, and he tries a right cross. In a moving lock, shift your weight rearward to your right foot and strike his right elbow from left to right and, simultaneously, his

right wrist from right to left. These converging strikes applied 74
crisply at the same time can produce dislocation. (Caught with your left foot back, the strike will work, but less effectively.)

Your feet are on a line, and he strikes with his left fist. Deflect 75
and grab his left arm and, going into a Horse posture, strike his left
side with your right fist, which can be held flat or as a standing 76—77
fist.

You have your right foot forward and are attacked from the rear. 78
Shift your weight to your right foot, pivot on the heel of your left foot and, as the toe touches down facing your opponent, deflect his

79-80 strike with your left hand and attack his groin with a standing spear. The left foot turn is important: it permits you to throw most of your body weight forward to the left foot as your right hand strikes.

You have your left foot forward. He grabs your right wrist. As 81
you shift your weight rearward to your right foot, twist your right
fist out of his grasp and retract it, palm up, to your right side.
Simultaneously, strike his middle with your left standing fist. 82-83

Both of you have your left feet forward. He grabs your left wrist
with his left hand. Shift your weight to your right foot, toe out 84
your left foot, and take a full step forward with your right foot. As 85
your right foot comes down, attack his left carotid artery or the
base of his skull with your looping right fist. As in a previous pos- 86
ture, your right foot thrusts inside his left leg if possible, so as to
"freeze" him for the strike.

You have your right foot forward, and he grabs your right hand. 87
Spear forward with your left standing spear as you twist your right
fist, palm up, and take it to your right side. 88

Again, your right foot is forward. He grabs your left hand with

89 his right. Turn your left hand palm down, bring it back to your chest, and strike over it with your right flat spear against his
90 throat or upper torso without moving your legs. Alternatively, the left hand, if not held, can depress a strike and the spear can be used over it.

The next posture is a repeat of a previous posture. You have your left foot forward. He shoots a left cross at your head or upper torso. Deflect it with your left hand, grabbing his wrist, and strike his side with either a standing or flat fist as your right foot goes
91-92 forward into a Horse posture.
93 The next posture is p'i of Hsing-i. He strikes with his right fist, and you chop down against his head and arm as you take your
94 right foot back.
95 He grabs your left wrist with his right. Toe out your left foot

and take a full step with your right foot directly between his legs and loop your right fist to his neck. 96

You have your right foot forward. He strikes with his right fist. 97 Depress his fist with your right hand and strike over it with your left standing spear. 98

99 You have your right foot forward. He approaches from the side and grabs your left shoulder. Shift your weight to your left foot and
100 attack him with your right elbow.

You have your left foot forward. He tries a right cross. Deflect
101 outward with your right hand, then cup your right fist and strike his chest with your right elbow as your right foot goes a full step
102-3 forward.

You have your right foot forward. He grabs your shirt with both
104 hands, palms up. Take your left foot forward to where it is on a line with your right, turn both your palms upward, and seize his elbows from underneath. Simultaneously, push down against his fists with

your chest. This usually is a hold preliminary to a strike, but can be used as a strike rather than a hold. 105

This posture is simply a push-strike with or without an initial deflection. He attacks you from the rear. Turn rightward, take your right foot forward, and, evading the blow, strike him in the abdomen. 106 107-8

This, too, is an attack from the rear and repeats a previous posture. As he attacks, spin on your left heel, and as the toes touch

down, deflect the strike with your left hand, and strike his groin
109 with your right standing spear.

I 10 You have your left foot forward, and he grabs your right wrist. As you shift your weight rearward to your right foot, clench your right hand and twist it back, palm up, to your side while your left
111 fist is driven into his abdomen. (This is a repetition.)

You both have your left feet forward, and he strikes at you with
112 his left fist. Take your left foot nearer to his, toe it out, and take a full step forward with your right foot. Simultaneously, cross his left arm with your left, palm up, and turn it over and grab his arm

as you strike the base of his skull with your right fist. (This also is a repeat.) 113

Using the same technique against his right fist, repeat the same movement but use your right hand to deflect and grab and your left fist to strike. 114-16

You have your left foot forward. He uses his right fist. Toe out your left foot and step forward with your right, while deflecting his right fist with your left and attacking the right side of his neck with your right. At the same time, attack his right ankle from inside with a right foot scoop. This action is common in Chinese boxing I 17 I I 8 I I 9

and is also used in traditional Chinese wrestling *{shuai chao).*

I 20 You have your right foot forward and he grabs your left hand. As you step rearward with your right foot, strike the left side of his

121-22 neck with your fist.

I 23 This posture is a repeat. As he attacks from the rear, swing rightward, take your right foot forward and, evading his strike,

124-25 push-strike his midriff.

I 26 — 28 This is also a repeat, but with your left foot going forward. This tactic works as well when used as a response to a hold.

This is a repeat of the first posture in which your two hands are thrust circularly inward to the attacker's side and opposite armpit. **29**

# 7. *Advice from the Masters*

*KUO YUN-SHEN*

Hsing-i is similar to Taoist meditation: both have the goal of emptiness. But where we go from inaction to action, the Taoists go from action to inaction. We borrow from the Taoists three changes: (1) sperm to ch'i, (2) ch'i to spirit, and (3) spirit to emptiness.

| *Hsing-i Stages* | *Sedentary Stages* | *Changes* | *Type of Energy* | *Type of Breathing* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Change sperm into ch'i | Fire work (hard burning) | Bones | Overt | Basic |
| 2. Change ch'i into spirit | Summoning fire | Sinews | Covert | Intermediate |
| 3. Change spirit into emptiness | Divine fire | Marrow | Mysterious | Advanced |

The way to mysterious *[hua]* energy is through the obvious and the concealed energies. To get obvious energy you must be centered and balanced. Through this energy sperm is worked into ch'i, which changes the bones. At birth our bodies are strong but

later they decline. Ta Mo developed a teaching to change the sinews and to wash the bone marrow. He believed that this would permit the body to return to its prenatal state. In the Sung dynasty [960-1279], Yueh Fei added to Ta Mo's doctrine that of changing the bones. The Five Fowl exercise and Eight Part exercise reflected these teachings. After concerted practice, the dispersed ch'i is concentrated at the navel and all parts of the body are coordinated. This is called *Little Heaven.*

The next stage is concealed energy. It is free, relaxed, soft, and natural. However, do not be misled by the word *soft.* It is not soft like grass; rather, it is elastic. This stage deals with changing ch'i into spirit and concomitantly changing the sinews. It is called *Big Heaven.* In boxing when your right hand goes forward, the left hand pulls back as though it were tearing cotton or drawing a bow. This is done slowly, not abruptly. When your two hands go forward it is like pulling a cart. That is, just as your legs, not your hands, move the cart, it is your legs, not your hands, that impart strength to your boxing. The rear foot holds strength as though you are going to leap off it across a ditch.

The highest stage grows from the second. It is called mysterious, the result of marrow washing. It is soft and uses no strength. It lets you move more easily because the energy is concentrated. And this energy merges you with emptiness, the Tao in which "Boxing is non-boxing, non-boxing is boxing." The energy derived is different from actual strength. Although the actions taken are the same, the energy stays inside, controlled by the mind. This is the acme of Hsing-i—the best of alchemy, boxing, and the Tao.

Simultaneously with your advancement through these stages, there occur three changes in your body: (1) change of bones, (2) change of sinews, and (3) washing of the bone marrow. To change the bones means to hold your body like a mountain. When you stand and move, your bones become hard. To change the sinews is to fuse energy into and through all sinews, forming membranes to them and energizing them. To wash and clean the bone marrow is

to relax completely and purify and refine the internal organs by using your mind, thus making your body as light as a feather.

There are three ways of breathing in Hsing-i: basic, intermediate, and advanced. In the basic stage of obvious energy, put your tongue on the roof of your mouth, which is half opened, half closed. Breathe naturally, through your nose without attention to inhalation and exhalation. The hands and feet coordinate with your breathing to transform sperm into ch'i. In the intermediate stage of concealed energy, the mouth and tongue are held the same and you breathe through the nose, but now you pay attention to sinking your breath to the navel, thus transforming ch'i to spirit. The third and highest breathing stage of mysterious energy is reached unconsciously by doing the first two stages. In this stage your spirit is transformed to emptiness and you do not feel that you are breathing: there is no sound, no smell, and everything is empty.

How is Hsing-i used in the three stages? In the first stage it is like a steel chisel, which goes out strongly but falls like a light piece of bamboo. In the second, it starts like an arrow, and falls weightless like the wind. In the highest stage, it follows the wind and chases the moon. An outsider never sees it hit; if he does, it does not belong to this stage. This is Hsing-i, the highest level of achievement: the mind is mindless; you do nothing and have done everything. In the emptiness we find our prenatal bodies. But do not be overly concerned about this. If you try too hard, it will elude you. Instead of trying to achieve it, pretend you already have it. This will help your mind. After all, the mind is the embodiment of your actions: therefore, Hsing-i is mind boxing.

In the basic posture [san-t'i] most of the weight is on your rear foot. In Hsing-i the weight is never shared equally: this eases movement and avoids the rigidity of double weighting. It lets you distinguish the soft from the hard (yin and yang). Hsing-i is uncomplicated because it is natural. We are in harmony with everything. Do not look for miracles. Carry on like a normal person doing ordinary actions, and with perseverance progress will come.

You may learn Hsing-i simply for health. But if you learn it for boxing purposes it is more difficult. Whoever is proud will lose. Watch the distance between yourself and an antagonist; study his physical characteristics and stance. When you step forward intend to dig into him. Protect your body with your elbows. Be versatile and flexible; do not be afraid of changing your tactics. Do not use strength. Be calm and you will be stable. Ch'eng T'ing-hua told me: "Whenever I fight someone, I look to see how strong, soft, muscular, or tricky he is. I try to discover his weak points. I never stick to one way: long or short or high or low. Assessing your enemy this way, even if you don't defeat him, you will never be defeated."

To practice your movements plant nine numbered bamboo sticks as shown in figure 1. At first make the distance between them great; gradually decrease it until the sticks are barely a shoulder-width apart. Go from one through nine from inside and then reverse the order, gradually increasing your speed. Avoid colliding with the gates. Later arbitrarily move through them without regard to number. This exercise derives from the *I-ching* and is excellent in that you may regard the posts as opponents to evade and strike. If you do it long enough, it will produce a great change in you.

*Figure 1*

## *PAI HSI-YUAN*

The function of Hsing-i is to get rid of disease and to prolong life, as with the study of herb medicine. A person may be seventy years old, but his body will be elastic and lively even though he has never taken a strength tonic or medicine. Because of boxing, we know how to train breathing and body movements. To learn boxing is easy, but to reach the pinnacle is hard. First, you need a good teacher from whom you learn the essentials of boxing, the basics, accurately and thoroughly. Be patient and do not rush. You should love boxing and throw all your energies into it. And you must persevere.

As you learn, beware of becoming proud. This is one of the greatest defects. You need a teacher who can see your errors at one glance; otherwise your mistakes will be habitual, you will become sick and think boxing is the cause. The teacher must be skillful and experienced in correcting errors and in discovering the causes of sickness. Trouble on the right side of the body can come from the left; it takes a good teacher to identify these troubles. If every student practices hard, with a good teacher seven or eight of every ten will make progress. But only two of the ten will become good teachers.

## *LIU CH'I-LAN*

Hsing-i merges body and function. To use the action on someone, you must practice this during the exercise. Concentrate your eyes on a point—e.g., your hand or a wall—without letting your eyes wander. Your ch'i and mind will sink, and your inside and outside will coordinate. To focus your eyes on one point is the most important thing when you begin to practice. Fix your eyes, but fix your mind also. In a fight, fix your eyes on the enemy's forehead, palms, or feet. You must not fix your movement in one way, however. Mobilize all your actions in one round of exercise, but mix them up, using the proper action at the proper time. One

thing, however, does not change: you remain calm and concentrated. If your eye is never distracted by his actions, you will become invincible.

Without a calm mind you cannot learn. Remain calm when you meet an enemy. Begin with a firm foothold and finish with a body like bamboo, dexterous and light. Use all your actions: jump, rise, soar up like a dragon, strike like a thunderbolt, attack like an arrow, overwhelm like a whirlwind. Your opponent comes to feel that he is chasing the moon. He cannot discern your actions. Your actions are faster than physical speed and your body is fully coordinated.

To master Hsing-i, your mind must be empty. Start with an empty mind and imagine yourself bodiless. Although you have a mind, imagine yourself mindless. An old sage said, "Mindless mind, insubstantial-substantial." If you are attacked, counter naturally. Hit the person as if you were disembodied. You come to be the same as a Taoist: mind, mindless; body, bodiless; something, nothing.

(From Shen Hsien, Hopei, Liu was a student of Li Neng-jan. After learning for several years, he left for the countryside, where he spent the rest of his life teaching. He was liberal, and he coordinated all forms of boxing with Hsing-i. He had many famous disciples, one of whom was his son Liu Tien-ch'en, who wrote *Hsing-i Ch'uan Chueh Wei* [Probing the Essence of Hsing-i Boxing].)

## *SUNG SHIH-JUNG*

All the Hsing-i postures are very simple; in use they may be changed and combined differently. Thus, a limited number of postures becomes numberless. Your mind is empty, your body bodiless. When fighting, your body becomes as strong as metal, your mind becomes many minds. When a boxer achieves the peak, he can act without your being aware of his action.

In the Snake style you must imitate a snake going through the grass turning left and right, up and down. You must become a snake. Full coordination is required. If you hit a snake's head, its tail will respond and hit you; if you hit the snake's tail, its head will hit you. So when you learn a certain style, you must understand its functions. After you know the functions, it is easier to understand coordination.

To hit objects some distance from you, you must use long strength. For close objects, use short strength. If your enemy is close and on the left or right side, hit him with flapping strength (like rowing a boat). For objects moving on a curving path, you must use soft strength. Against something hard and fast close to you, use hard strength. So we have long, short, soft, and hard strength. Hsing-i is a philosophy that enables you to deal with changes, to maximize use of the mind as a demonstration of nature.

Hsing-i fundamentally consists of two things: (1) the art of Hsing-i itself, and (2) its functions. It is a martial art because its functions show how to fight another person. As a Taoist exercise, it is used to prolong life.

Hsing-i uses the san-t'i posture, with one foot having more weight than the other. Shaolin boxing emphasizes the attack in fighting; its postures emphasize equal weighting on both feet, so that the center of gravity descends to the center of the two feet. Movement is then awkward, clumsy, and confused. Breathing may also become mixed up. The ch'i is not always kept in the navel. Therefore, in Hsing-i never equally share the weight on your two feet. Also, Hsing-i boxers say in fighting the feet take 70 percent of the importance, while the hands take only 30 percent. [This means that the weight is sunk and the hands are subordinated to the body. It does not mean that kicking is given 70 percent and fisting 30 percent of the importance.]

In Hsing-i, we start exercises with the five forms *(wu hsing).* These forms enable you to coordinate the five actions in the mind and enable you to follow the 70-30 percent foot-hand ratio. Action

flows freely with a free mind and in accord with all changes. When you beat something, you do so without feeling any difficulty. This kind of exercise becomes real art. When you reach the peak, with Hsing-i as your weapon you will be unbeatable.

The san-t'i beginning posture provides a solid foundation because the front foot is light and the back foot heavy. San-t'i generates the five forms. You must become flexible, elastic, and dexterous, never clumsy or heavy as in Shaolin. While learning you should emphasize mind cultivation and breathing. Breathe easily to get a good foothold. Because your aim is to return to your original prenatal self, strength used in Hsing-i is the same as the strength you had when you were bom. The prenatal strength and the postnatally acquired strength together make up the full-strength fighting that can never be exhausted. Hsing-i paves the way for your return to prenatal strength.

T'ai-chi uses the yin-yang; in Hsing-i the san-t'i posture derives from the yin-yang also. We say of yin-yang: when we take action, this is yang; when we remain standing still, this is yin. Actually the three schools of Hsing-i, Pa-kua, and T'ai-chi are one. In Hsing-i the action heng-ch'uan begins with prenatal strength, moves naturally, and may be fatal, because with your original strength you are unbeatable.

The Taoists have sedentary breathing exercises. In Hsing-i, hand and foot actions are coordinated with the breathing. Every action follows a discipline, so we never get confused; that is, the movements are coordinated with the breathing so that boxing becomes like sedentary work. You should pay great attention to the breathing. Back and forth, up and down, the air moves in a cycle with full regulation of breathing. In sedentary work, we try to settle down from action, but in boxing we move from inaction to action. Both of them reach the same goals: full calmness, full regulation of breathing, and full coordination of the body.

## *CH'E I-CHAI*

Hsing-i conforms with the theory of the Golden Mean *[Chung Tung]* of Confucius. This theory is very broad, great, and complicated, although it looks simple. It is always centered, balanced, and thorough.

You put out strength and it goes everywhere; retract it and it hides inside. This is difficult for a beginner, but as he progresses he will understand. Each action is launched from emptiness but has the greatest strength. From the empty to the substantial: this is the mind action we call Hsing-i, which means "the shape of the mind." This is also true of Pa-kua and T'ai-chi: both reach the perfection of the empty mind. The three internal schools emphasize the mind, whereas Shaolin stresses fighting. The latter's fighting emphasis means it can never be as lively as the internal.

The boxing classics say, "Concentrate on the mind and spirit; the *tan t'ien* [sea of ch'i]] must be cultivated always. Think about the spirit and the ch'i, and crouch and sink it to the navel. When you reach maximum stability, the *yuan ch'i* [original ch'i] will circulate throughout the whole body and will penetrate every pore and the extremities of the limbs. It prevails everywhere and combines with yin and yang; it is never extreme."

Thus it accords with the philosophy of the Golden Mean. Confucius says about the Golden Mean: "The spirit is great. It exists, but you cannot see it; you can sense its existence but never hear it. It is very full and lacks nothing." When we do Hsing-i, we never move in a fixed way; we act flexibly. There are no rigid rules to beat an enemy. When you perfect an action, you can use it properly. Outside of combat, Hsing-i will improve your ch'i, enlighten your mind opening it to wisdom, refine your nature, and improve your temperament. Finally, the body and function merge, everything becomes natural, and you will walk and speak in conformity with Hsing-i principles.

In my childhood I had great strength and I learned many types

of boxing. I was very aggressive and clever. Whenever I fought someone I used different styles to win. I became very proud, but this is poor. An enemy may be better than you. If he can use your own style against you, you must be able to change your tactics. When he changes, you should have more changes.

Formerly, I learned about the ch'i. The strength acquired after birth is not real strength. Hsing-i strength is prenatal strength. When I was young I tried to use the Horseback posture in which the weight is even. Once while in the Horseback posture, a man kicked at me. As soon as his leg reached me, I automatically evaded it and he hit empty air. I realized then that whatever style I used I had come to the stage of natural evading. When struck, I would slap the attacker with my palm, and he would fly ten feet in the direction of his strike. I realized then that it was only the strength of his own strike that propelled him. Therefore, strength should be used in an inconspicuous manner. Then real boxing emerges. The father of boxing, Chang San-feng, left the real art to us; we must give it to sincere people.

## *CHANG SHU-TE*

Hsing-i never begins with weapons. When I began Hsing-i exercises, I learned this. Later I learned weapons, especially the spear, for scores of years. I visited my friends in different provinces and met many popular boxers of many schools, some good, some bad. I combined the use of the spear with Hsing-i. It is not simple, for I do not depend on speed, but rather on Hsing-i. The spear must accord with Hsing-i. It is segmented like Hsing-i. When you use the sword or spear you must judge where you are going to hit and fix your eyes on the target. Focus your eyes on your opponent's head, torso, or foot. When you thrust out with the spear, fully coordinate it with your mind, hands, and feet. Your spear shoots like a dragon out of water, surrounding his body, and you will hit him. Hsing-i depends on the mind. After I combined Hsing-i and the spear, my spear art was greatly improved. Weapons and box-

ing are two in one. Old boxing classics *(ch'uan ching)* taught: "The mind is the commander, the eyes are the spearhead, the feet are the vanguard, and the hands are the sentries and the separate combat units." Thus, by combining boxing with my spear practice I achieved great success with my spear.

(Chang came from Hopei and learned Hsing-i and weapons play from Li Neng-jan. His combination of these arts was unique. A retiring man, he beat all comers, and lived to more than eighty years of age.)

## *LIU HSIAO-LAN*

Actually the theory of Hsing-i is simple. It aims to divest what we acquire after birth and return to the origin (the oneness) through the five fists and the twelve styles. All these derive from one style. Keeping the mind calm and at the navel, you will come to the one.

In my childhood, I learned Pa-chi Ch'uan ["Eight Ultimates Boxing"], mastering all the postures and skills. When I fought, I used Pa-chi and won. But finally, I met a man of changes. He changed styles and his body, feet, and hands so quickly I was unable to adjust and to use Pa-chi, a rigid style, against these changes.

Hsing-i has the five fists at the beginning. Each fist complements the others. You understand this only after scores of years. The mind is always empty; the inside and outside are always coordinated. Hsing-i has a mutual helping and overcoming principle by which you can generate one style from another as though one fist grew from another. This is its highest achievement.

(Liu, from Hopei, also learned the art from Li Neng-jan. He was able to combine it with an active business career in Peking where he had many students. He was past eighty when he died.)

## *LI CHING-CHAI*

At the beginning of Hsing-i we have the san-t'i posture which we always use to take some action. One boxer I knew had good san-t'i, but when he practiced he forgot the fundamentals and how they relate to actual fighting. The postures and actual use must go together. Both are required to be consistent, harmonious, and fully coordinated. It does little good to have perfect postures if you do not keep them in the heat of combat.

(From Hsin-an Hsien, Hopei, Li was a scholar who liked boxing. He did not become a student of Li Neng-jan, however, until he was thirty-eight. For a long period he lived with Kuo Yun-shen. He kept improving and after seventy was able to merge the teachings of Confucius with Hsing-i. He was over eighty when he died.)

## *LI TS'UN-I*

To be calm means that you stand still. When you stand still, keep everything in the navel; when you move, energy shoots out from the navel in connection with obvious and concealed energy. When you relax and keep the ch'i at the navel, the outside and the inside combine. Take no action: fix your eyes on your enemy's two eyes and his limbs. When you move your body coordinated with your hands and legs, that is function. Hsing-i comprises the standing still and the function.

In my long period with Hsing-i, I have never used tricks. My teacher mentioned them, of course, and warned that one must guard against them. Instead of tricks, I have always relied on my knowledge and skill. When you use tricks, your opponent will never feel convinced by his defeat.

During a fight, pay heed to the soft and the hard. Do not rely on the hard staying hard, because it can change to soft. Sometimes your opponent will confront you with hard staring eyes and external strength; sometimes he appears soft and relaxed and, more-

over, uses the soft style to fight. His hand is like cotton, he conceals his tactics; he is dexterous, lively, and swift. Against such an opponent, you must be very careful for he has reached a stage where his ch'i has been transformed into infinity, his obvious energy has been replaced by concealed energy, his outside and inside are unified, and his mind and body perfectly coordinated. You can never hit him, for he will be insubstantial; when he hits you, it is like a mountain. The main purpose of Hsing-i, Pa-kua, and T'ai-chi is to develop the one ch'i, so that the inner strength becomes great.

When practicing with a friend, agree in advance on the use of strength. During a challenge, if you believe that he is a profound boxer, you must be wary. Do not challenge him unless you want to learn from him. Compromise with him and learn.

Military strategy books say that in order to fight a war, an army must know itself as thoroughly as it knows the opposing army. The same holds true in boxing. Invincibility does not reside in merely appearing strong and bellicose. Carefully examine your opponents: their bearing, gestures, and manner of speaking. This is internal boxing, as contrasted with external boxing. Although it is sometimes easy to test him, often it is difficult to tell whether an opponent is an internal or external boxer. I have seen some who appear soft as a pretense. I have been tricked, but I was never killed because I stayed alert.

(Li boxed as a boy in Shen Hsien, Hopei, and later became a Hsing-i student of the famed Liu Ch'i-lan. He learned and taught the art to many for nearly a half century. Although a generous and kindly man, he was as rugged as a wall. As a convoy escort, he had many battles with robbers. Once, surrounded by many of them as they tried to seize the convoy, he dispersed them with his broadsword. For this, he earned the nickname "Tan Tao" [Single Knife] Li. He died when he was more than seventy years of age.)

## *T'IEN CHING-CHIEH*

Hsing-i is mainly based on balance and centeredness. When you are upright and your body is harmonious, the ch'i circulates everywhere. You should never incline forward or backward, or left or right; you must always keep your balance, always be centered. You can withdraw ch'i to the navel or you can manifest it in the five forms and the twelve styles. The ch'i reaches everywhere. When you are balanced you can move up and down, left and right, back and forth freely, using hard and soft actions commanded and guided by your mind.

(From Hopei, T'ien also learned from Liu Ch'i-lan. He, too, was a convoy escort for some years and had many students. After he was seventy he still practiced in the countryside until his death.)

## *LI KUEI-YUAN*

Hsing-i means the original nature of a person. The earth is like the original soil of your body. Heng means all is one, comprehensive, inclusive, centered, containing all elements. Keep the wholeness of your body and of your original nature. Hsing-i contains four things to be transformed: p'i, peng, tsuan, and p'ao. These four styles all derive from heng.

In Hsing-i you move your body and limbs in a natural, unobtrusive, and harmonious way. When you achieve the highest level, you become a superior man. It emphasizes the inner aspect, so that where you think, the action goes. Sedentary work emphasizes static sitting. After sitting very long, the ch'i circulates. Action (yang) grows after sitting (yin). Although Hsing-i action differs from that of a sedentary person, it derives action from the calmness of Taoist sedentary work. Thus, our theory is consistent with that of the Taoists.

In Hsing-i, the upright head looks like the use of obvious energy. Also, the sloping shoulders may be regarded as obvious. In calligraphy, holding the brush is obvious. The concealed aspect is when

you write the characters; then you use concealed energy. The posture is obvious; when you use it, it is concealed. Obvious and concealed energy are tangible; mysterious energy is not. In calligraphy when one writes without looking, it is the same as mysterious energy in boxing.

A student should not stick to one style, nor should he be too fussy about a style. Neither is the right way to learn Hsing-i, which does not follow formality too closely. Rules are taught by teachers, but the essence is comprehended by the boxer himself. Rather he should seek to get to the origin of boxing. The inner helps you do the external exercise. He must have the best teachers, otherwise everything will be confusing. The profundity of boxing appears beyond our reach. But the Golden Mean says: Tao is not far from you. If you try, you can approach it.

In the universe, fauna and flora prevail. Man also is a creature of earth. If we understand the theory of plants and animals, we can understand the way of our own body. This depends on using our minds to analyze and to feel. As you think, so you become. Boxing is the same. We begin by learning san-t'i. All the forms and styles derive from it. You sink the ch'i to the navel and reach infinity. Take the snake as an example—how it meanders and shoots forth. It is one of the twelve styles. You act like a snake. From san-t'i come the five forms, and from these come the twelve styles. They all come from the inner strength, which comes from the ch'i generated at the navel. Crawling and curving naturally, the snake acts just like a wire. If you touch a part of it, all parts move; it is flexible and dexterous.

When you concentrate, you can make yourself anything. The mind is everything. When learning boxing, never feel proud. In my youth, when I boxed or fought with the spear, I was often defeated. But I learned and improved. Everybody can be your teacher. If you want to advance, endeavor to get the best teacher. You can apply it to your way of living. Remain modest and humble and never be proud: that is the way to success.

The practice of Hsing-i consists of several levels. Do not be preoccupied: keep your mind empty and your ch'i full in every posture. Hold your waist correctly. In the five forms and the twelve styles, cleanse confused ch'i, imagine that it is perching beneath your navel, and regulate your breathing. Hold your tongue against your teeth and your mouth half open and breathe naturally. Never do three things: (1) push out your chest, (2) raise your abdomen, or (3) blow up your ch'i. Even if a boxer has a peaceful mind and his inner side is good, if he does not follow the correct technique, he will not make progress. Thus the rules for practice are also important, though the most important thing is the mind. If a person who looks strong inside and out during a fight uses strength on his enemy, he is not strong. He follows the rules rigidly but does not know the mutuality of the postures that make his actions forceful and effective.

Sometimes when following the technique exactly, you feel that your body is not coordinated, your abdomen does not feel good, the postures are bad, and you are not happy. Do not worry! You have gained something and are at a point where you can solve problems. Do not despair! Instead, ask guidance of your teacher. You then comprehend, everything will crystallize in your mind, and out of great confusion will come bliss, certainty, and progress.

(From Lai-chui Hsien, Hopei, Li was a singular man. Early in life he became expert in T'an-t'ui ["Deep Legs"] and Pa-chi. While he worked as a convoy escort he took on all challengers and beat them. But when he faced Kuo Yun-shen he learned that huge muscles and adroit kicks were not enough. Sun Lu-t'ang watched this match and writes that when Li kicked, Kuo touched his leg and Li flew twenty feet over a bench. Li then knelt to Kuo and learned from him for several years, achieving high mastery. When he gave up external boxing he also began to study the classics and became a noted calligrapher. Later he turned to clerical work and stopped boxing. He was past seventy when he died.)

## *KENG CHI-SHAN*

During my youth, I liked boxing but I was uncouth and hot-tempered. I looked for trouble and made enemies of my boxing colleagues. My attitude affected my learning. Later, a friend introduced me to Liu Ch'i-lan. He told me that Hsing-i will refine your nature, reform your temperament, and return you to your original self. The strength one feels comes from something acquired after birth. Hsing-i takes you back to the stage before birth. After practicing Hsing-i five years, I sensed a thorough change in myself. I spoke and acted in a better way than before. Five or six years after that, I began to learn concealed energy, which felt different from obvious energy. It changed my personality greatly. I then could get along with anybody and I felt sympathy for others. But I was reluctant to divulge secrets of the boxing I had learned, and I concealed my art. Five or six years later, I learned an energy entirely different from concealed energy, a fusion of obvious and concealed energy: mysterious energy. Mind and abdomen became empty. I no longer felt arrogant around nonboxers and I shared the boxing I knew. I was content and knew I had achieved something. Hsing-i transforms one into a man of perfection.

(Keng was born in Shen Hsien, Hopei, and was a classmate of Li Ts'un-i under Liu Ch'i-lan. He lived quietly but had many students. At sixty-eight he was still very agile in the art. He was over seventy when he died, leaving a son, Keng Hsia-kuang, expert like his father in both Hsing-i and Pa-kua.)

## *CHOU MING-T'AI*

While learning Hsing-i, make your body lively and elastic, but never rigid. The boxing classics say that of the sixteen ways to learn boxing, the worst is rigidly; this is the greatest defect in boxing. To straighten your body does not mean to make it rigid, but to do so in a natural way, entirely relaxed and fully harmonious. All is in balance. From the outside your breathing appears mild and

natural; inside, you have harmony and balance. Do not be proud. Your actions are both substantial and insubstantial and you should apply them flexibly. Sometimes you use an insubstantial action to discern his action; then you can overcome him. When a person with much *kung fu* [skill, ability] appears, do not let his bearing upset you. Fix your eyes on his body and watch him. Evade his challenge, hide your defects, and use your strong points. Although you may not beat him, you will not be defeated. You should feel neither proud and invincible, nor defeated and cowardly. During a challenge, know yourself and know your enemy.

(From Jao-yang Hsien, Hopei, Chou was a servant of Liu Ch'i-lan who was later accepted as a student. He became very skilled and, like many other boxers, learned to apply the art as a convoy escort. He died in his late sixties after passing the art to many students.)

## *HSU CHAN-AO*

In learning Hsing-i, carelessness is the greatest defect. Hsing-i consists of five forms and twelve styles. Some people think they can learn the five forms or the twelve styles in a week or ten days. With this attitude, they are bound to fail. They will learn just the skin and hair of Hsing-i, no profundity. A person who has no ambition and has the illusion of learning boxing very fast does not care about flaws in his actions or about the rules. If he does not stick to the san-t'i, he can never reach harmony and full balance in his body. In Hsing-i, you must pay attention to san-t'i in order to reach full harmony. Though you may not feel easy for weeks or months, continue practice indefinitely. Some learn fast, others slowly. Constancy, accuracy, carefulness, and concentration are needed on every point. If you succeed with the san-t'i, the forms and styles will be easy. You must master one style slowly in order to learn the others fast. Do not be too anxious to learn quickly.

(Hsu came from Ting Hsien, Hopei, from an affluent family.

From an early age he combined the study of classics with boxing from teachers hired by his family. He also learned weapons play. In Hsing-i, Hsu was as dexterous as a bird, from which derived his nickname "Feather-matcher." Most of his skill came from Kuo Yun-shen. Hsu had many students and was past sixty when he died.)

## *PAO HSIEN-T'ING*

Pao, an inheritor of the Honan school, wrote a book entitled *Hsing-i* in *1936.* Built on a treatise originating at least as early as the nineteenth century, the book deals with internal boxing. To this Pao added a brief chapter on Honan Hsing-i. The original is abstruse and is essentially concerned with showing that internal "shapeless" movement counters visible movement. The spirit and mind control the ch'i, which in turn controls the strength wielded through seven "fists": head, hand, elbow, shoulder, thigh, knee, and foot. Pao summarized the fourteen principles of Hsing-i as follows:

1. Keep the ch'i in your navel.
2. Retain some strength on top of your head.
3. Depress your chest and spring your back forward.
4. Sink your shoulders and elbows.
5. Be able to rise and fall rapidly.
6. Your sperm is insubstantial but your spirit is substantial.
7. Coordinate your upper and lower parts.
8. Integrate yin and yang.
9. Blend your internal and external parts.
10. Make your action continuous.
11. Be calm—calmness controls your action.
12. Control your strength with your mind.
13. Defense is the best tactic.
14. Soft actions are better than hard ones.

## *SUN LU-T'ANG: THE FINAL WORD*

Sun Lu-t'ang's skill and books did much to spread the internal rationale. In an introduction to Sun's *Ch'uan-i Shu Cheng* (The Real Explanation of Boxing, 1929), Wu Hsin-ku stated that "youngsters think boxing is merely a weapon to be displayed with foolish courage and youthful vigor" and that Sun had written the book to offset this and to present the true art. I have drawn on this book heavily for background on Hsing-i masters. It is only fitting that this book end with Sun's own words.

Tao embodies the universe and is the foundation of the yin and yang. In boxing Tao symbolizes the *nei-chia* comprising Hsing-i, Pa-kua, and T'ai-chi. The forms of these three are different, but the principle is the same: everything begins and ends in emptiness. The *yuan-ch'i* [original *ch'i*] must be maintained. This force that keeps the sky blue and the earth calm also makes for achievement in man. The *nei-chia* thus conform to the teachings of Confucius, Lao-tze, and Buddhism.

I had always heard that boxing is Tao, but I could not really understand it until I learned secret energy *[an ching}.* In our training we combined hard and soft tactics and became light, dexterous, and natural. But when we learned mysterious energy *[hua ching},* we did not tell each other the sensations we felt. But I want to write of it now. After practicing one form or style, I would stand upright and calm, collecting my ch'i and i ["mind"]. Then I would feel something in my genitals. I felt it every day. From action came inaction. When I stopped practice I felt everything outside and within me was empty. At this time the real yang felt as if it wanted to discharge. If you moved, the yang would discharge. I used the boxing way to curb this: I sank the insubstantial spirit to my navel and at the same time moved the yang upward from my genitals to the navel. My genitals thus shrank, the sperm moved to my *tan-t'ien,* and I could feel continuous circulation throughout my body.

After four or five hours of being in a near coma I would become

normal again. In boxing you must breathe anchored to the navel. Chuang Tzu said, "Breathe from the heels." With this channel the continuous ch'i goes and the body fire never goes out. But you must be slow and harmonious in your approach. Keep your arms and legs flexible. Some boxers would do this after one set, others after two sets, of practice. But in use it came to the same. Try to lift yang to the navel and concentrate the ch'i there. Use your spirit to motivate. In circulating the ch'i from the anus up the spine to your neck and head, it is the same as in sedentary meditation. From boxing you can get it, and, later, you can achieve it when you merely stand or sit. You sleep alertly as though you were awake. In the waking state you are as one asleep. Boxing is difficult at first; later it becomes easy. When you sink the ch'i, it will cure everything. Therefore boxing and Tao are the same. In an emergency you do not try to hear or see: you merely avoid automatically. Confucius said, "From the greatest sincerity comes the greatest achievement." I know of only four boxers who were able to avoid attacks from every quarter without hearing or seeing: Li Neng-jan (Hsing-i), Tung Hai-ch'uan (Pa-kua), and Yang Lu-ch'an and Wu Yu-hsiang (T'ai-chi).