

# Ba Gua and Xing Yi Linked Combat

by John D. Bracy

In recent issues of the *Pa Kua Chang Journal* there has been discussion of teachers of Xing Yi and Ba Gua teaching both arts in concert. Teachers from Taiwan, China, and the United States were included in these discussions. One article described Cheng Ting Hua (程庭華) as the first person to study both arts. In some articles, Sun Lu Tang (孫祿堂) was described as researcher, writer, and master of both. Another story featured Xu Hong Ji (許鴻基) as a specialist of the internal arts whose repertoire included both arts.

These arts, although using divergent methods, are of the same larger family and share underlying principles of internal power and mechanics. This article will introduce an approach to how these arts might be studied and applied together for self defense applications.

Ba Gua, with its characteristic coiling and distinctive circle walking methodology develops into an evasive and highly maneuverable art. Its principles are like that of a fighter pilot who is able to outmaneuver the enemy and come suddenly from behind, quickly turning the odds in his favor. Contrast this to the Xing Yi proficient, whose pugilistic skills center on his ability to effectively apply devastating power from a short distance, without telegraph.

The common ground between these two arts are their relaxed, natural approaches to combat, weight shift/balance principles, and power directed from the waist. Ba Gua takes advantage of all parts of the hand (open and closed) as well as elbows, forearms, shoulder and head-butting, while using the entire body. Xing Yi concentrates on the hand as the primary weapon to deliver compactly directed strikes. These two approaches, when coupled together, create an ideal self defense system.

## Cross Hybridization

One key to linking these two arts is to focus on the strong points of each and practice them together. In my experience, this develops skill to switch from one to the other without breaking flow and rhythm of movement. Loss of momentum should be avoided by not overextending the Ba Gua or Xing Yi weapon and allowing the components of Ba Gua and Xing Yi to blend together naturally.

Power should be maintained throughout the defense and counter attack through use of linear "spring like" tension held at the lower torso (dan tian). This central governing position coordinates movement and power. Tension in the body center is kept as a coiled spring, relaxed and tenacious, not locked. Thus from this "spring principle," the entire body maintains the ability to conform to an attack and immediately respond and

strike changing from Ba Gua to Xing Yi and vice versa as needed. To apply this principle it is important to keep this interconnected tension as a whole and not utilize moves in isolation. This loose and relaxed tension allows the intermixing of Ba Gua and Xing Yi attacks where the looseness, coiling and evasive tactics of Ba Gua incorporate the closing with the enemy and delivery of powerful strike tactics of Xing Yi.

Included with this article is one example of how these methods can be studied together.

*About the Author: John Bracy is Director of the Hsing Chen School of Martial Arts in Orange County, California. He began martial arts training in 1967. In 1981 he was introduced to Ba Gua Zhang by Ho Shen Ting of Taipei, Taiwan. In 1988 he became a student and 5th generation lineage holder under Liu Xing Han of Beijing, China. He is presently working on several Ba Gua books and video tapes.*



Photo 1

Photo 1: Attacker grabs towards defender's throat



**Photo 2**

**Photo 2:** Defender side steps and deflects at attacker's right elbow.



**Photo 3**

**Photo 3:** Xing Yi corkscrew punch initiated over attacker's right arm.



**Photo 4**

**Photo 4:** Corkscrew punch strikes right side of attacker's jaw



**Photo 5**

**Photos 5 and 6:** Attacker initiates second attack, a left hook punch. This is matched by defender using a right Ba Gua step and checking with the right arm.



**Photo 6**



**Photo 7**

**Photos 7 and 8:** Ba Gua single change under the opponent's left hook



**Photo 8**



**Photo 9**



**Photo 10**



**Photo 11**

**Photo 9:** Close the left Ba Gua guard position to the outside of the attacker's left arm.

**Photo 10:** The defender's right arm stays in check as he prepares for a left Xing Yi crushing fist.

**Photo 11:** Defender executes a crushing fist to the attacker's left side.



**Photo 12**

**Photo 12:** Show are valuable targeting points to the attacker's torso. The higher point is the "Da Bao" point at the terminal end of the thoracic nerve. The lower point is at or near the "Zhong Men," below the floating rib.