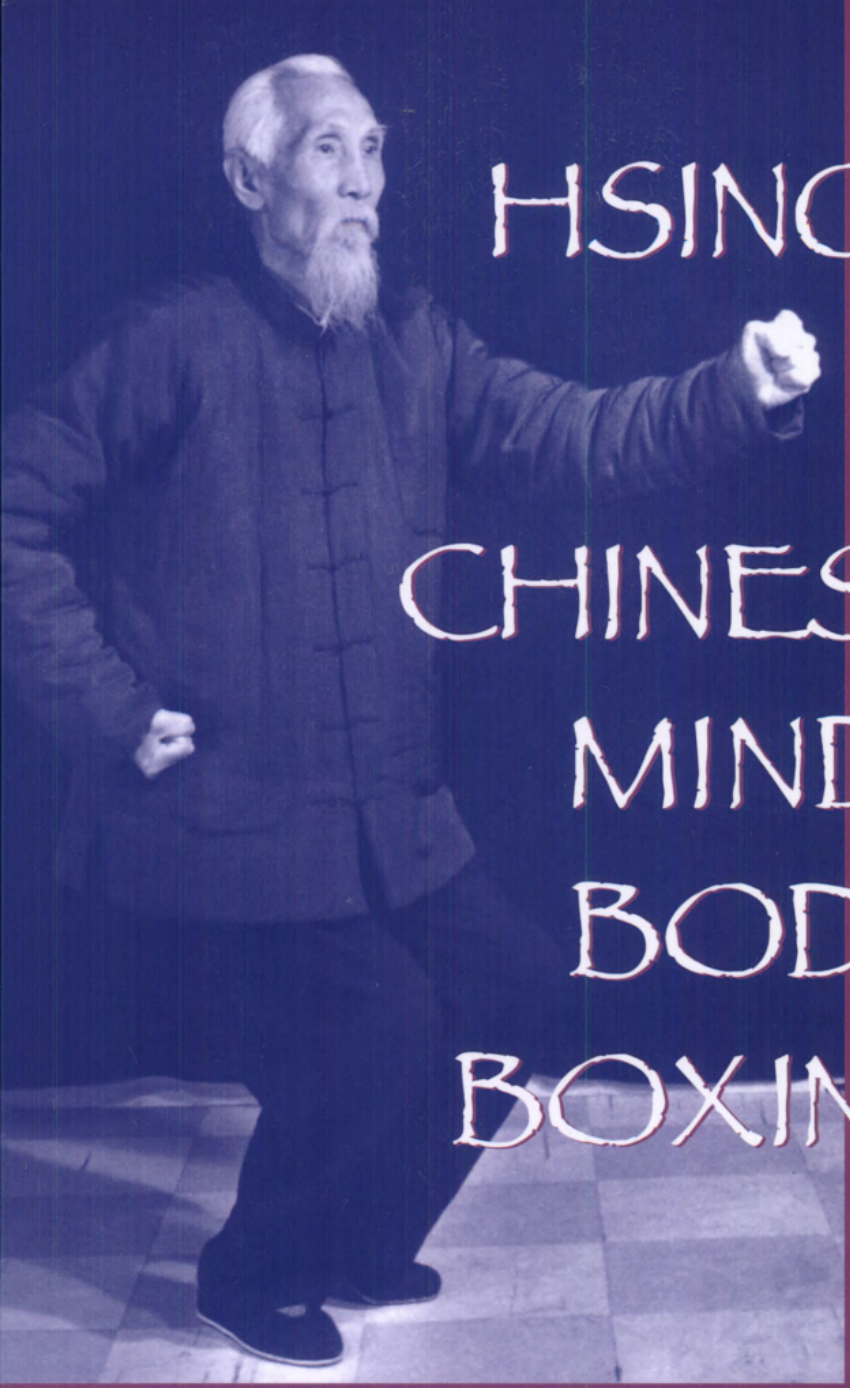

HSING-I CHINESE MIND-BODY BOXING

Robert W. Smith

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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 evergreen art.

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

1. 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 *I 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).

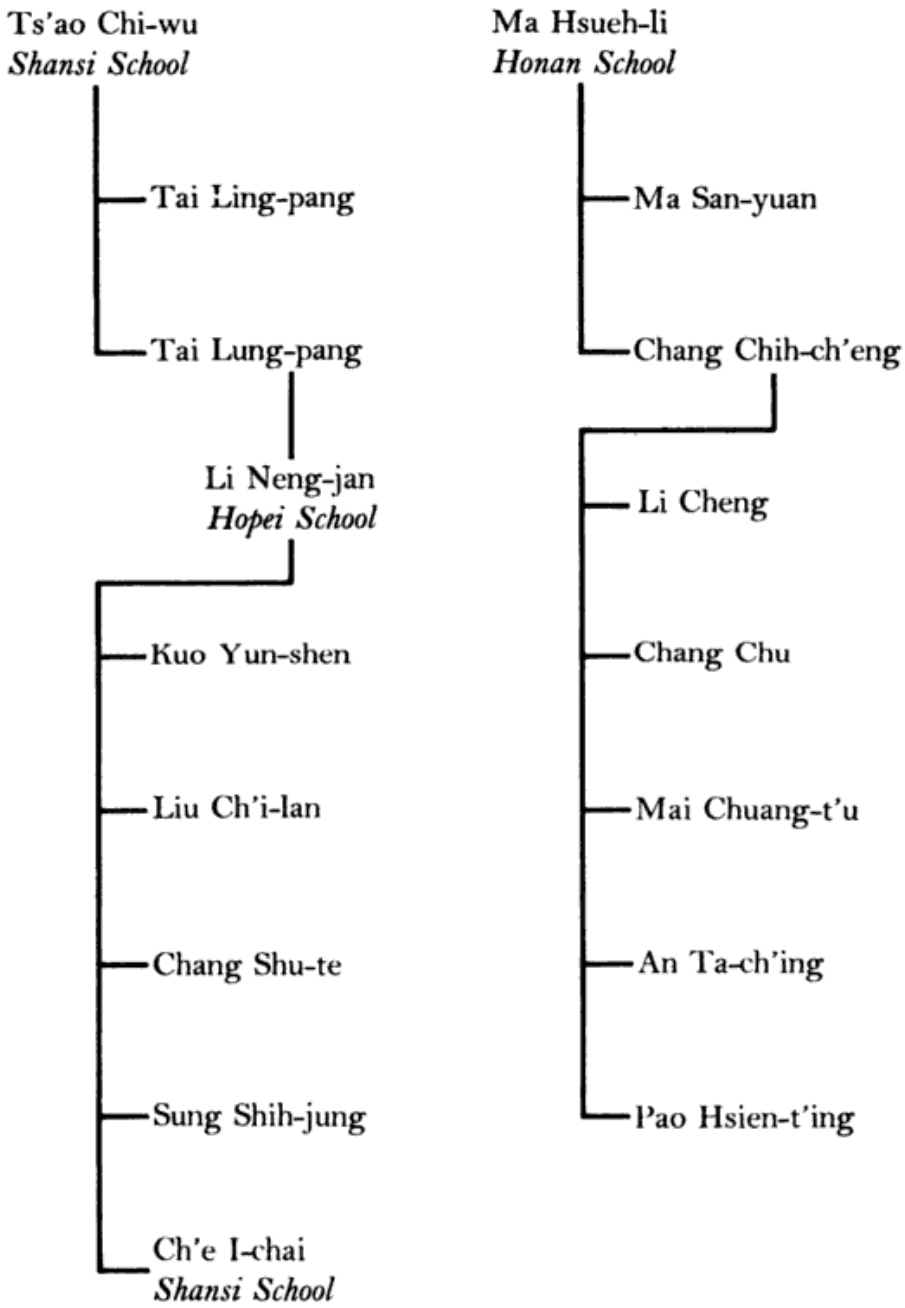


Figure 1

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 97 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 he 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 he 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

I. *Hand Actions*

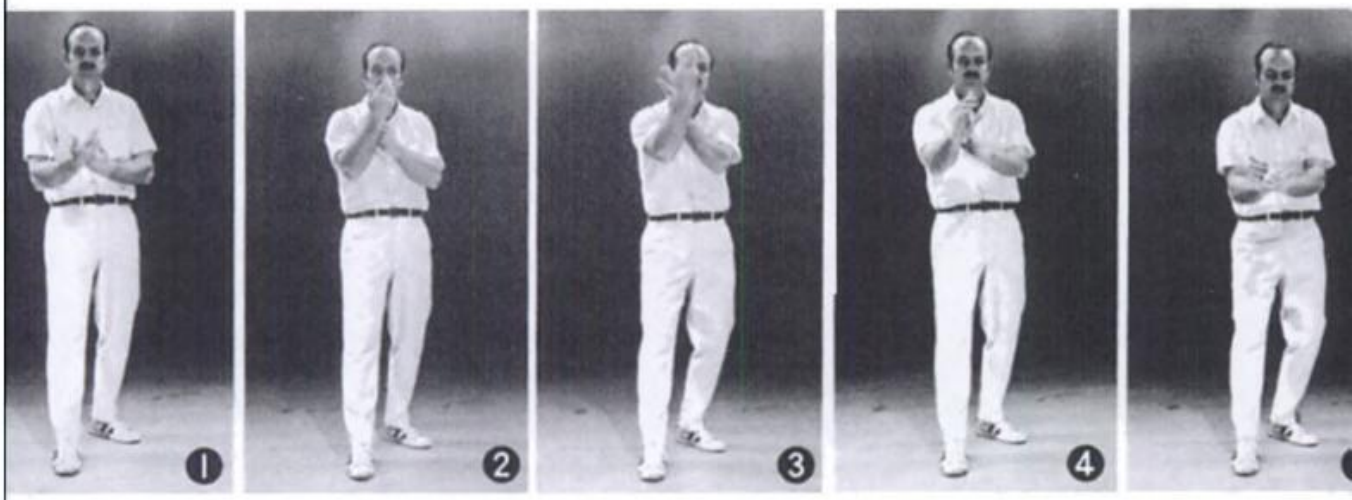
1. Single Hand	Thrusting like a hawk raiding a forest and falling like a swallow sweeping over the water's surface
2. Two Hands	Rising like two hands raising a tripod and falling like two hands breaking bricks

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



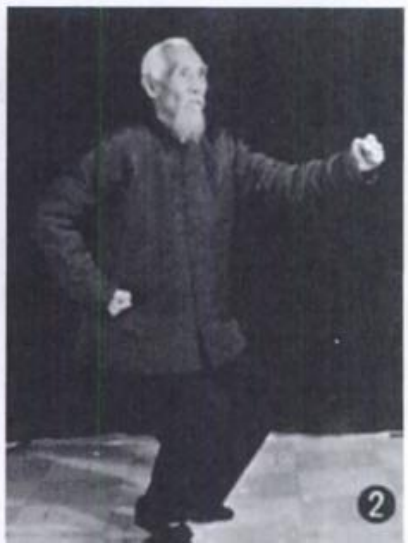
as you rise and overturn as you fall. Twist while your head pushes up and overturn as your head contracts. Twist while your hands stretch out and overturn while they lower. Twist as your foot goes forward and overturn as it drops in place. Your waist rises as you twist and falls as you overturn. Rise 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
6 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

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Within this book you will find:

- The history and meaning of Hsing-I Ch'uan
- The fundamental posture requirements
- Detailed instruction in the Five Forms: Splitting, Crushing, Drilling, Pounding, and Crossing
- Fighting Functions of the Five Forms
- The Twelve Animal Styles
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