



Chinese Wushu Series

BASICS OF LONG-STYLE BOXING



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

长拳拳术入门: 英文/程慧琨著.

—北京: 外文出版社, 1995

(中国武术丛书)

ISBN 7-119-01538-9

I. 长…II. 程… III. 长拳—基本知识—英文

IV. G852.12

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (1995) 第 9628 号

责任编辑 贾先锋

封面设计 席恒青

印刷监制 冯 浩

外文出版社网址:

<http://www.flp.com.cn>

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长拳拳术入门

程慧琨著

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©外文出版社

外文出版社出版

(中国北京百万庄大街 24 号)

邮政编码 100037

北京外文印刷厂印刷

中国国际图书贸易总公司发行

(中国北京车公庄西路 35 号)

北京邮政信箱第 399 号 邮政编码 100044

(大 32 开)

2003 年第 1 版第 2 次印刷

(英)

ISBN 7-119-01538-9/G·84(外)

01550

7-E-2951P

First Edition 1996

Second Printing 2003

Home Page:

<http://www.flp.com.cn>

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ISBN 7-119-01538-9

©Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China, 1996

Published by Foreign Languages Press

24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China

Printed by Beijing Foreign Languages Printing House

19 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China

Distributed by China International Book Trading Corporation

35 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China

P.O. Box 399, Beijing, China

Printed in the People's Republic of China

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Chapter One

General Description and Basic Technical Features

Long-style boxing (*Chang Quan*) was, formerly, the general term for *Cha Quan*, *Hua Quan* and *Hong Quan* boxing styles.

Cha Quan is characterized by alternate movements of opening and closing and clear rises and falls. It stresses leg techniques and wrestling with simple and clear rhythms. Coordination of mind and body movements, plus integration of internal and external exercises, are the two essential points of this boxing style. *Hua Quan* calls for strict execution of movements, mainly of body and mind, clear lines and a strong physique. The moving exercises must be fast; the still exercises should be solid. All movements must be connected in continuity. *Hong Quan* is known for simple movements, strict composition, close attack and defence, and equal stress on hardness and softness.

Long-style boxing or *Chang Quan* is a new style of Chinese boxing developed after the founding of the People's Republic of China. It has exerted tremendous influence on the Wushu sport and enjoys tremendous popularity among the masses. The modern style of *Chang Quan* combines the good points of the *Cha*, *Hua* and *Hong* boxing styles. It has standardized their hand forms, hand techniques, stances, footwork, leg techniques, balance and jumping movements and, on the basis of the rules for body movements, woven them into different routines, including: scurrying, leaping, jumping, dodging, rising, falling, turning and bending. All movements are flexible, quick,

powerful, fully extended in posture, and clear in rhythm. *Chang Quan* is one of the compulsory events in the national Wushu competition and demonstration, as well as in international Wushu competition. The *Chang Quan* known in modern Wushu refers to the newly-composed style of *Chang Quan*.

Chang Quan is complicated in composition. Its movements are executed within a wide range, requiring tremendous physical exertion and quick speed. Constant practice helps to improve the functions of the central nervous system, the cardiovascular system and the respiratory system. It also improves the pliability and elasticity of the muscles and ligaments and flexibility of the joints. It can promote the physical development of children and young people and assist their determination in overcoming difficulties. This is why *Chang Quan* has become a popular sport among children and young people.

Every school of Chinese boxing has its own basic techniques and its own particular style and characteristics. The elements of *Chang Quan* include composition, arrangement, basic movements and difficult movements. Technically speaking, when a man or woman practices *Chang Quan*, he or she must do it with the correct posture and according to clear forms. The practitioner must apply power smoothly, change body movements frequently, follow the hand movements closely with the eyes, breathe naturally, concentrate the mind, and perform the exercises with smooth rhythm; all these aspects are interrelated.

1. Correct Posture

Generally speaking, correct posture refers to the fixed form of the body when the practitioner is in a still position. This is true in the Hook Hand with a Snap Palm and Empty Step as an example. Certain movements also call

for relative stillness in a very short time; this is known in Chinese Wushu as “stillness in movement.” This can be seen in the Jumping Front Kick.

The basic requirements for correct body posture: keep the head upright, the neck straight, the shoulders low, the chest out, the waist straight (or dropped) and buttocks pulled in. Upper limbs must be fully extended and straight. For example, when you practise the Flash Palm (Fig. 2-104), you should drop your shoulders, slightly bend your elbows to make your arms round and place your palm obliquely above your head. The outlines of the lower limbs must be very clear. In practising the Bow Step (Fig. 2-43), the front leg should be bent and the rear leg completely straight. The height of the legs should be suitable for the position of the feet. The posture of the whole body movement should be well-balanced. The implications of attack and defence should be shown both in the external forms and in your mental state when you practise a fixed form of Wushu.

2. Clear Forms

Forms refer to the methods of movements in kicking, striking, throwing, catching and other exercises. The starting and finishing lines, plus the force points should be clear so as to show the technical features of attack and defence in the exercises. For example, when you kick with the heel, the toes should be upward while the sole is forward, with the force point on the heel. In the snap kick, the toes should be forward, the instep flat and the force point on the toes. In the side sole kick, the toes should be turned, the foot sole forward and the force point on the sole. Only in this way can the different hand and leg techniques be differentiated from each other. If you do not strictly follow the rules for the different forms, you cannot

express the true significance of their differences; as a result, implications of all attack and defence skills in *Chang Quan* are lost. This is why, in practising *Chang Quan*, you must understand the specific contents and methods of movements for attack and defence skills. You must clearly remember their different lines, locations and force points, and make yourself familiar with the different degrees of applying power and the different speeds of movement.

3. Smooth Power Application

The word “power” refers to the power applied when you do exercises. The power must be either hard or soft. The power should be applied smoothly, yet with an explosive force. If the power is not properly applied, the movements will be stiff and rigid. In *Chang Quan*, you must avoid stiff movements with hard power only. In pushing, chopping, hammering, kicking and elbowing, you should use the power that is first soft and then hard, with the power smoothly applied to the force points. For example, in thrusting your fist in a bow step, you should transmit the power generated from your feet, knees and hips to the thrusting fist through the waist, back and then to the shoulders and elbows. This will ensure that the power from the lower and upper body becomes one. The problem of stiff and rigid movements is not caused by how much power is applied, but by whether it is smoothly applied. Therefore, in practising *Chang Quan*, the power applied should be hard but not stiff, soft but not loose. The degree of hardness and softness should be properly controlled. Moreover, you should use your consciousness to control the application of the power, and coordinate your breathing with the application of power so as to achieve the integration of the external and internal.

4. Varying Body Techniques

Body techniques refer to the various techniques of attack and defence, mainly using the body. The body techniques in the *Chang Quan* routines include “dodging, extending, lying prostrate, lying on the back, turning, recoiling, pushing and leaning against.” These body techniques are used with the waist as axis. They are combined with various hand and leg techniques to demonstrate a variety of movements. On the one hand, the body techniques should change from time to time; on the other, the pliability of the chest and waist should be strengthened, so that movements are executed both softly and vigorously. When the movement is soft, it is flexible; when it is hard, it is powerful. Therefore, the body techniques are not isolated movements of the upper part of the body, but closely related with attack and defence implications of the whole exercise and movements of the entire body. If the body techniques are to be used correctly, it is necessary to understand the essential technical points as well as the implications of attack and defence movements. You must know how to use the waist properly to change from one movement to another, and different methods for different movements.

5. Follow Movements Closely

The methods of coordination between the eyes and the movements are called eye techniques. The eye techniques are an important link in the expression of the spirit. Two boxing proverbs say: “Follow the hand movements closely with the eyes,” and “The eyes go to where the hands are.” In practising boxing, if eye expression is not properly used, the movements have no life and the routine becomes only a rigid set of movements. But if eye expression is coordi-

nated properly with the movements, the inherent spirit and consciousness will be fully expressed through the eyes. The result will be an entire exercise that is well-coordinated and full of life. The methods of coordination between the eyes and the movements vary: there are fixed looks and moving looks. A fixed look means fixing your eyes on a certain target; a moving look means moving your eyes along with the movement of a certain part of your body until the movement is finished. Take the Swing Palms with Cross Step in the basic routine as an example. The eyes follow the hands closely to coordinate the whole exercise. The eyes technique is not only closely related with the hand techniques, but also with the movement of the neck. When the fist is thrust forward to the right, if the neck does not move and the head is not turned to the right, you have to look at your hands sideways. Therefore, in the eye techniques, when you move your eyes to the left or right, up or down, the neck and the head have to be turned quickly.

The coordination between the eyes and the movement must be based on the correct execution of the movement. If not correctly executed, it will affect the display of the inherent spirit and consciousness; if not correctly coordinated, it will also affect the quality of the movement. "Similarity in form" is the basis for the "vivid expression of the mind" which, itself, is the highest manifestation of "similarity in form." Neither should be neglected, or the vivid expression of the mind is impossible.

In the use of the eye techniques, you should avoid confusion; i.e., if movement of the eyes is not done properly, the mind will not concentrate. The point is that you should be calm and flexible.

6. Breathe Properly

Because composition of the routines is complicated and the movements are fast, with tremendous physical power required in the *Chang Quan* exercises, there is great need for oxygen. Therefore, proper breathing is very important to achieving the technical level and the longevity of the power. *Chang Quan* stresses abdominal breathing method which result in breathing in order to conserve energy. Only in this way, can the exercise be lasting and balanced.

There are four breathing methods, “lifting,” “propping,” “accumulating” and “sinking,” in the *Chang Quan* routine exercise. The “lifting” method means deep breathing. The abdomen should be held in so as to give the whole body a feeling of lightness and rising. The “propping” method means slow breathing. The whole body should be fully relaxed. The “accumulating” method means short breathing. It should permeate the whole body for the convenience of power application. The “sinking” method requires the practitioner to keep his abdomen solid and make his breath short and even. In jumping and in moving from a lower level to a higher level, the practitioner should use the “lifting” method. In doing still exercises at a higher or lower level, he should use the “propping” method. In making hard and clean fast movements, he should change to the “accumulating” method. When passing from a high level to a lower level, he should use the “sinking” method. When the breathing methods change with the movements, he should never depart from the basic requirement of “conserving the breath.” The skillful use of different methods for different exercises in different situations is a matter of importance in the *Chang Quan* routine exercise.

7. Concentration

Concentration training is one of the basic components of Wushu. *Chang Quan* exercises first of all call for concentration of the mind. You should cultivate your awareness of attack and defence skills and display bravery, alertness and fearlessness. Your facial expression should be natural.

You should display this inherent mental state not only in the attack and defence movements, but also in all other movements, not only in the facial expressions, but in the whole set of exercises.

8. Clear Rhythms

In *Chang Quan*, it is also very important to handle the rhythms of the movements, stillness, quickness and slowness. The traditional way is to simulate natural sights and animals in the rhythms, summed up in twelve forms; “move like waves, keep still as a mountain, rise like an ape, fall like a magpie, stand on one leg like a cock, stand on both legs like a pine tree, turn like a wheel, bend like a bow, be light as a leaf, be heavy as iron, move fast like the wind, and move slowly as a soaring eagle.” These metaphors vividly reflect the rhythms of the *Chang Quan* exercises.

In doing your exercises, you should move like waves upon waves, in clear rhythms, similar to the feeling of stability and clarity in a situation when thousands of horses are galloping. This is what we call “rhythms in moving” and “stillness in moving.” When you are in a state of “stillness,” you should stand as firm and powerful as a tall mountain, as if there is nothing powerful enough in the world that can move it.

In leaping, you should do it as cleverly, agilely and

quickly as a monkey. When falling, you must touch the ground as lightly and firmly as a magpie perches on a tree twig.

When you stand on one leg, especially when you change a moving exercise to a still standing exercise, you should perform like a cock when it hears something while walking and stops abruptly with one leg held off the ground; it shows stability of the movement. Standing on both legs, you should be as strong, powerful and firm as a pine tree. There should be a sense of movement when you stand still; i.e., "movement in stillness." Stillness must be closely related with movement.

In turning, you should move your body like a wheel around an axle, and be good at creating an axle centre for your movement, so that the body turns in a round circle. Bending movements include twisting, turning and bending the body. It requires the practitioner to do bending exercises like a bow with resilience. The more you bend the more resilient you become. For example, when you bend your body the either side, it is good if your waist is soft enough to be bent low; but if there is no power generated from the bending movement to enable you to do the immediate movements that follow, you will not be able to continue your exercises coherently. In doing the bending exercises, you should be resilient so as to demonstrate the changes in the movements.

"Light" movements must be made as light as a leaf as if your movements are floating in the air. Heavy movements like hammering and foot stamping must be as heavy and powerful as steel ingots, but there must be no sign of relentlessness in making heavy movements.

Quick movements must be made like a swift and strong gust of wind, but impetuosity should be avoided. If you are impetuous in making movements, the movements will

not be accurate, clean, neat and natural. A slow movement should look like an eagle circling slowly in the air. It is slow but not loose. There should be concentration.

If the rhythms of a routine are not well handled, the movements will look dull and uninteresting. If there are no "light" movements in a routine, it is difficult to tell which movements are "heavy" ones. If there are no soft movements, there will be no powerful movements. If there is no slow start, it is not possible to show the acceleration. If you cannot stop firmly and steadily, you cannot show your fast movements. The opposites of these contradictions exist in comparison. The more these contradictions are displayed in the movements, the stronger the rhythms.

There are also rhythms in a single exercise. Take the Thread Palm with Crouch Step (Figs. 2-136, 137, 138) for an example. When the practitioner falls suddenly, the speed changes from slowness to quickness. The body movements also change from time to time, sometimes powerful, sometimes soft; and sometimes open, sometimes drawn in. Only when the changes are clear, will people find the exercises interesting, attractive and lively.

The eight aspects described above are interrelated and closely coordinated. They constitute the basic elements of the routine skills of *Chang Quan*. They must all be mastered; only by so doing can you play *Chang Quan* with great proficiency.

Chapter Two

Basic Skills and Basic Movements

The basic skills and basic movements involved in *Chang Quan* include exercises for the shoulders, arms, waist, legs, hands and feet, as well as leaps and balances. In the course of practice, you can do some connecting combinations for bare-handed movements.

The basic skills and basic movements are closely related. Practice of basic skills and basic movements helps to train all parts of the body and quickly build up the special physical qualities for the Wushu sport. This lays a good foundation for learning the routines of different schools of Chinese boxing, both bare-handed exercises and exercises with weapons, as well as improving the technical level.

Constant practice of basic skills and basic movements helps to strengthen the pliability and flexibility of the joints and ligaments, and improve the controlling ability and elasticity of the muscles. Practice of the turning exercises on the ground or in the air helps improve the quality of the movements and prevent injuries. Only persistent practice yields satisfactory results.

To help you grasp the basic skills and basic movements, I would first of all say a few words on the basic hand forms of *Chang Quan*.

Fist (Fig. 2-1): Keep the four fingers closely together and turn them into a fist. Press the thumb tightly on the second joint of the forefinger and middle finger. Keep the fist tightly closed and flat with a straight wrist.

Palm (Fig. 2-2): Keep the fingers together and straight with the thumb bent at the bottom of the forefinger.

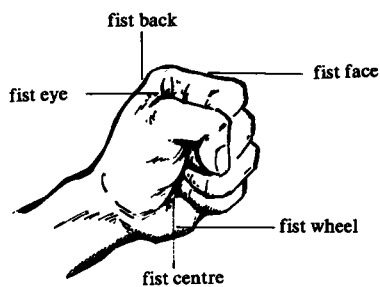


Fig. 2-1

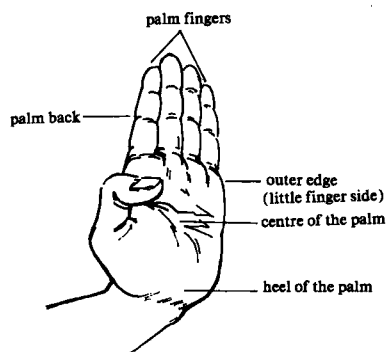


Fig. 2-2

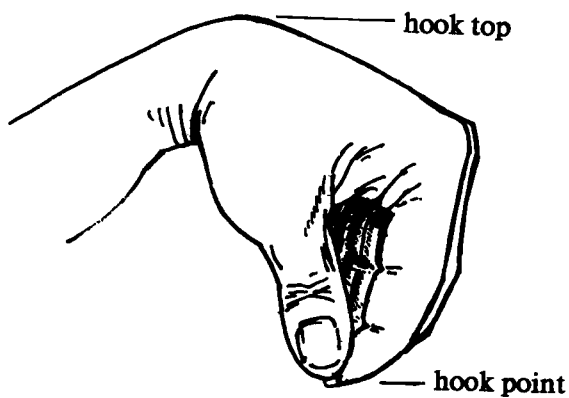


Fig. 2-3

Hook (Fig. 2-3): Keep the tips of the thumb and fingers together, and bend the wrist.

1. Shoulder and Arm Exercises

The shoulder and arm exercises are mainly intended to improve the pliability of the ligaments of the shoulder joints and enlarge the range of movement of the shoulder joints. These exercises will increase the power of the arms and improve the nimbleness of the upper limbs and their ability to extend and turn. This will provide the necessary special qualities for learning and mastering different fist and palm techniques. The common methods are shoulder stretch and arm circling.

Shoulder Stretch

Stand facing the stall bars (or an equivalent) a large step away, feet apart with the toes forward to shoulder width. There are three methods:

1. Grasp the bars with both hands, bend the upper part of the body forward (chest out, waist dropped and buttocks in), and keep stretching downward.

2. Ask an assistant to help stretch your shoulders and back rhythmically with both hands (Fig. 2-4).

3. Stand face to face with an assistant, with hands on each other's shoulders, bodies bent forward, and keep stretching each other's shoulders (Fig. 2-5).

Essentials: Keep both arms and legs straight, and shoulders relaxed. The frequency of stretching should increase gradually. Concentrate the stretch points on the shoulders. Auxiliary power should be increased gradually.

You can also stand with your back to the bars, hold the bars with both hands, squat down or lift the body up (Fig. 2-6).

Essentials: Keep the arms straight, shoulders relaxed. Keep the hands as narrowly apart as possible while holding