

EXCERPT FOR ‘TAI CHI CALEDONIA 2014’ FROM ‘*SINGING THE BAGUA CLASSIC*’

By BEN MORRIS

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM A FORTHCOMING BOOK FROM BJM PUBLISHING ENTITLED ‘*SINGING THE BAGUA CLASSIC*’. THIS SECTION WILL RELATE TO SKILLS THAT WILL BE COVERED IN THE BAGUA CIRCLE WALKING CLASS WHICH WILL BE HELD ON THE SUNDAY (CURRENTLY SCHEDULED FOR 10.50). THE BAGUA CLASSIC COMMENTED UPON HERE IS ADAPTED FROM “THE ESSENCE OF BAGUA ZHANG - TRANSLATION OF ANCIENT SECRETS – BAGUA ZHANG THIRTY-SIX AND FORTY-EIGHT SONGS” BY GRANDMASTER SHOU-YU LIANG, DR. JWING-MING YANG, AND MASTER WEN-CHING WU, AND CONFORMS TO THE THIRTY-SIX SONGS. WHERE APPROPRIATE EACH SECTION IS SUBDIVIDED INTO PARTS WHICH ARE NUMBERED THROUGHOUT THE TEXT.

*“EMPTY THE CHEST, PULL UP THE HEAD, AND SETTLE DOWN THE WAIST. FIRM THE THIGHS, CONTROL THE KNEES, AND GRAB THE GROUND STRONGLY. SINK THE SHOULDERS, DROP THE ELBOWS, AND EXTEND THE FRONT PALM. BOTH EYES MUST LOOK OUT THROUGH THE TIGER’S MOUTH.”*

**1.** THE CHEST IS EMPTIED. THIS SHOULD BE A FAMILIAR CHARACTERISTIC TO TAI CHI PRACTITIONERS AND MORE CLOSELY REFERS TO THE CHEST BEING RELAXED, BREATHING TO BE REGULATED AND INTENT TO BE SUNK DOWNTOWARDS. THAT IS TO SAY THE BREATHING IS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT TO THE ROOT WITH THE GROUND. THE SHAPE WE ARE AIMING FOR IN THE CHEST IS TO BE SLIGHTLY CONCAVE, WHICH ENABLES THE SHOULDERS TO CURVE AND THE BACK TO ROUND. IT IS ESSENTIAL HOWEVER THAT AN EXCESS IN THE BEND OF THE BACK NOT BE DEVELOPED. **2.** THE HEAD IS PULLED UP TO EXTEND THE VERTEBRAE OF THE NECK ENCOURAGING AN ELONGATION OF THE WHOLE SPINE. WE TRY TO AVOID TWISTING ANYONE SINGLE PART OF THE SPINE ANY MORE THAN ANY OTHER PART. THE CHARACTERISTIC TURN IS THUS SHARED ACROSS THE WHOLE OF THE BACK (HIGHER AND LOWER). WE FOCUS ON THE

PIVOTING/TURNING GENERATION FROM THE SPINE, AS THE SPINE IS THE CENTRE LINE. **3.** WAIST IS PLIABLE AND TENSIONED. PLIABILITY ALLOWS FOR MORE TENSION TO BE LOADED INTO THE WAIST WITHOUT DAMAGE. THE WAIST SETTLES DOWNWARDS SO THAT IT IS BASED FIRMLY USING THE HIPS AS A PLATFORM FOR MOVEMENT. TRY NOT TO SEE THE WAIST AS SIMPLY BEING ALONG THE ‘BELT-LINE’ AS THE MUSCLES OF THE BACK TRAVEL UP AS FAR AS THE SHOULDER BLADES. **4.** THIGHS SQUEEZE TOGETHER. AND POWER SHOULD BE DIVERTED TO THE VERY CENTRE OF THE THIGH. **5.** KNEES ARE OPEN AND RELAXED. KNEES ALLOW FOR THE COMPRESSION OF THE BACK LEG AND THE EXTENSION/REACH OF THE FRONT LEG. THEY BALANCE THE VERTICAL MOVEMENT OF STEPPING INTO A HORIZONTAL GLIDE. **6.** THE FEET PRISE THE GROUND IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN CONNECTION, AS ONE LEG IS MOVING FORWARD THE OTHER LEG ASSURES THE BODIES WEIGHT AS TO ALLOW MOVEMENT TO BE MEASURED, ROOTED AND POWERFUL. **7.** SHOULDERS DROP AS POWER IS ROOTED IN THE HIPS AND WAIST. ELBOWS FALL LOWER IN ORDER TO DEVELOP COILING POWER FROM DOWN TO UP AND OUT. **8.** EXTEND THE FRONT PALM FROM THE SHOULDER THROUGH THE ELBOW TO THE WRIST AND OUT THROUGH THE FINGER TIPS AND PALMS. FORM AND GAZE THROUGH THE TIGERS MOUTH. THE FINGERS EXTEND AND THE FINGER TIPS CURL AROUND AS IF HOLDING A BALL. THE PRESSURE SHOULD BE EVENLY EXPRESSED ACROSS THE WHOLE INSIDE OF THE PALM AND ALONG THE INSIDE OF ALL PARTS OF THE FINGERS. **9.** BOTH EYES GAZE SO ENSURE THE TORSO ALLOWS THIS TO HAPPEN. NECK DOES NOT TURN TO ACCOMMODATE THIS, AND STAYS SQUARE TO THE SHOULDERS.

*“THE REAR ELBOW FIRST FOLDS AND IT COVERS THE HEART. THE HANDS THEN TURN AND COLLAPSE TO FOLLOW THE FRONT. FOLLOW TO THE FRONT ELBOW WITH AN EMBRACING POWER. BOTH THE FRONT AND THE REAR HANDS HAVE A SOLE GATHERED SPIRIT.”*

THIS SECTION DISCUSSES THE CORRECTIONS FOR THE ARM POSITIONS DURING ‘DRAGON HOLDS PEARL’. OFTEN THIS IS THE FIRST PALM TO LEARN (BUT NOT ALWAYS). WE HAVE THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC OF SQUEEZING IN TO EXPAND OUTWARDS, AND ENCIRCLING A TARGET IN FRONT OF OUR GAZE. **1.** THE ELBOW IS PULLED INWARDS IN ORDER TO COVER THE HEART. **2.** THE ‘KNIFE EDGE OF THE PALMS TURN TO FOLLOW THE FRONT. **3.** FRONT ELBOW IS LIKE A BOW, BOTH EXTENDING OUTWARDS AND SQUEEZING **4.** THE WRISTS ARE RELAXED AND ‘OPEN’. WHEN WE CONNECT WITH OUR OPPONENT THIS IS OFTEN FIRST DONE THROUGH THE HANDS AND FINGERS. THE RELAXATION STARTING WITH THIS PART OF THE BODY IS OFTEN EASIEST TO DETECT AND ENABLES THE PRACTITIONER TO BEGIN TO FOSTER TING JING (SENSING ENERGY) THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF THE BODY. **5.** BOTH HANDS HAVE A SOLE IDENTITY (SHEN). IN ESSENCE THEY ARE JOINED BY THE SHOULDERS BUT ALSO WHEN CONNECTED WITH THE OPPONENTS’ BODY FORM A COMPLETE CIRCUIT.

*"STEP ALONG THE CURVE AND EXTEND FORWARD WITH STRAIGHT LEG. WHEN WALKING THE BODY IS ERECT LIKE A TURNING GRINDSTONE. BEND THE KNEES AND FOLLOW THE THIGHS, THE WAIST MUST BE SUFFICIENTLY TWISTED. THE EYES REACH THE THREE DIRECTIONS WITHOUT SWAYING THE BODY."*

THIS SECTION PRINCIPALLY LOOKS AT TAKING THE STATIONARY POSTURE OF THE PRECEDING SECTION AND ADDING THE ‘CLASSICAL’ CIRCLE FOOTWORK OF BAGUA ZHANG. **1.** THE FEET HAVE SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT FOOT WORK CHARACTERISTICS. THIS WILL DEPEND UPON WHICH FOOT IS ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE CURVE (CIRCLE) AND WHICH IS ON THE INSIDE OF THE CURVE (CIRCLE). THE OUTSIDE FOOT ALLOWS FOR THE DIRECTIONAL MOVEMENT THAT ENABLES THE BODY TO TURN ABOUT THE CIRCLE, WHEREAS THE INSIDE FOOT REINFORCES THE BODY AND WILL OFTEN CARRY THE MAJORITY OF THE BODY WEIGHT, IN MOVEMENT AND STILLNESS. **2.** ENSURE THE TORSO IS UPRIGHT — THIS IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT AND BECOMES EVEN MORE IMPORTANT IN APPLICATION. **3.** BEND THE KNEES. THERE ARE THREE LEVELS/HEIGHTS TO BAGUA CIRCLE WALKING AND THIS VARIATION IN HEIGHT IS DETERMINED BY THE BEND IN THE KNEES ... AND CERTAINLY NEVER WITH A BEND IN THE LOWER BACK **4.** THE THIGHS SQUEEZE TOGETHER, FOSTERING THE COIL IN THE STANCE WHICH MAKES THE ROOT VERY STRONG AND ROOTED INTO THE GROUND. **5.** THE WAIST IS COILED AND ACTS AS IF A GRINDSTONE WORKING CORN. AS THE FOOTWORK AROUND THE CIRCLE WILL INEVITABLY MOVE OUR ABILITY TO FACE CENTRE LINE, A CORRECTING MOVEMENT IN THE WAIST IS NEEDED. THIS SHOULD BE CONNECTED AND ASSURED OTHERWISE ANY CONTACT (WITH AN OPPONENT) DURING THIS CORRECTION WILL BE STRUCTURALLY WEAK. **6.** THE EYES GAZE, AS IS DESCRIBED IN PREVIOUS SECTIONS.