

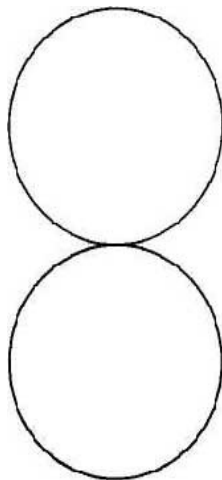


Source: <http://combatbaguazhang.com/NinePalaces.html>

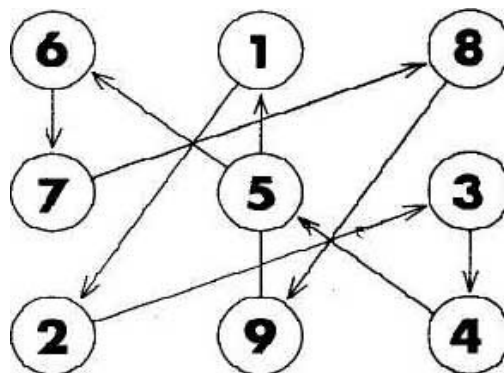
**NINE PALACES:**

The idea of "Nine Palaces" is both practical and esoteric. It derives from ancient Taoist cosmology and dance. Originally, it signified nine stations or portals that adepts would dance among, sealing off this dimension from evil outside influences. Nine is an auspicious number to Asians, and among the Cabalists is regarded as the number of powers under God. In Chinese boxing, the number nine is used in the names of boxing styles as diverse as Little Nine-Heaven Boxing (Hsiao Chiu T'ien Ch'uan) and Cheng Man-ch'ing's version of Yang-style T'ai-chi, in which emphasis is put on opening the nine joints or parts of the body (the top of the head, the neck, the wrists, the elbows, the shoulders, the hips, the sacrum, the knees, and the ankles), and in which the development of one's skill passes through nine phases.

The cosmic dance found its way into Bagua boxing as a practical means to develop footwork fluency while extending the exercise from a single circle to a figure-8 (Fig. 1) to a nine-station regimen (Fig. 2).



*Illustration 1:  
Bagua Figure 8  
(Fig 1)*



*Illustration 2: Nine Station Regimen  
(Fig.2)*

The nine palaces also portray the  $3 \times 3 = 9$  relativity of the body divided into three corresponding sets of bases, centers, and tips:

1. The upper body has the shoulders as the base, the elbows as the center, and the hands as the tip.
2. The lower body has the hips as the base, the knees as the center, and the feet as the tip.

3. The whole body has the tan-t'ien (seat of power) as the base, the heart (seat of emotion) as the center, and the head (seat of intelligence) as the tip.

	<b>Base</b>	<b>Center</b>	<b>Tip</b>
<b>Upper body</b>	Shoulders	Elbows	Hands
<b>Lower body</b>	Hips	Knees	Feet
<b>Whole body</b>	Tan-t'ien	Heart	Head

In Pa-kua, the sets are further tactically divided into the high, middle, and low techniques. The head is the high or "heavenly" tip penetrating the skies. The spirit rises and the essences can combine harmoniously in one place. The torso is the middle set: if it stays erect and does not lean, the nervous system can respond quickly and the ch'i can flow easily. The feet are the low or "earthly" base, so important for stability and agility. The student must distinguish three sections: the head is the tip; the torso, the center; and the feet, the base—the head must be sure; the body, well rooted; and the feet, fluent. If any are awry, the mind (i) cannot function properly. All is one. Pa-kua's power comes from all components of the body coordinating with the mind and with the ch'i. This coming together is the meaning of the old phrase, "The Nine Palaces return to one."

Sun Lu-t'ang, in his Pa-kua ch'uan hsueh [A Study of Pa-kua Boxing; Peking, 1916], touches on the esoteric aspect of the Nine Palaces as follows (paraphrased):

The Nine Palaces are a cosmological arrangement and are not unique to Pa-kua boxing. They are found in Chi Men Ch'uan (Mysterious Gate Boxing), which also has movements around nine stations.... The Nine Palaces are the points of integration whereby the prebirth (hsien-t'ien) and the postbirth (hou-t'ien) energies [those you are born with and those you develop] unite. The purpose of the Nine Palaces is to enable the student to obey the divine will (i). When the Nine Palaces are integrated, you are ready for the final stage, the "great awakening."

The Nine Palaces are realized best when the upper/lower and inner/outer aspects of a student are harmonized. As the years pass, his whole being is reformed. His sinews and membranes change continuously, coming under more direct control of his brain. In turn, his brain then is controlled by his spirit, and, ultimately, by the divine mind, or the tao.

As this process occurs, the student occasionally will glimpse his original or divine face for a moment. This moment must recur many times for him to be able to progress to the final phase, in which he can will the divine face to reappear. Therefore, one who trains at Pa-kua diligently for a considerable amount of time displays his nature at its best.

Do not be concerned if the subject of what Sun spoke of seems too esoteric or abstruse. It is not important that you understand every idea—especially at the beginning. Merely do the practice as set forth in Part Two, and, over time, your body will help your mind to come to an understanding.