

Qìgōng Meditation Embryonic Breathing

Second Edition

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The Foundation
of Internal Elixir
Cultivation

Dr. Yáng, Jwìng-Mǐng

iv Qìgōng Meditation: Embryonic Breathing

YMAA Publication Center

PO Box 480

Wolfeboro, NH 03894

1-800-669-8892 www.ymaa.com info@ymaa.com

Second Edition Copyright ©2003, 2022

ISBN 9781594399145 (print)
ISBN 9781594399152 (ebook)
ISBN 9781594399169 (hardcover)

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First edition edited by Keith Brown and James O'Leary

Second edition copyedited by Doran Hunter

Cover design by Axie Breen

Photos by YMAA Publication Center unless otherwise noted.

20220831

Publisher's Cataloging in Publication

Names: Yang, Jwing-Ming, 1946- author.

Title: Qìgōng meditation embryonic breathing : the foundation of internal elixir cultivation / Dr. Yáng, Jwìng-Míng.

Description: Second edition. | Wolfeboro, NH USA : YMAA Publication Center, [2022] | Revises the 2003 first edition. | Includes bibliographical references, translation and glossary of Chinese terms, and index.

Identifiers: ISBN: 9781594399145 (paperback) | 978194399169 (hardcover) | 9781594399152 (ebook) | LCCN: 2022944129

Subjects: LCSH: Qi gong. | Qi gong--Therapeutic use. | Breathing exercises--Therapeutic use. | Mind and body. | Well-being. | Meditation. | Longevity. | Spirituality. | Medicine, Chinese. | BISAC: HEALTH & FITNESS / Longevity. | HEALTH & FITNESS / Tai Chi. | BODY, MIND & SPIRIT / Healing / Energy (Qigong, Reiki, Polarity) | SELF-HELP / Meditations.

Classification: LCC: RA781.8 .Y36 2022 | DDC: 613.7/148--dc22

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Foreword

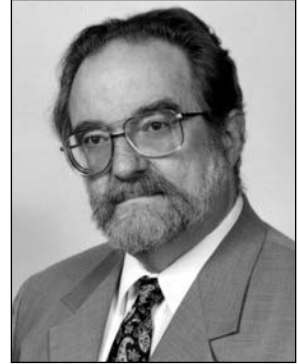
Thomas G. Gutheil, M.D.

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

—Genesis 2:7

The Bible in the above quote gives to breath the ultimate creative force, not only giving life, but creating all human life. For the ancient Greeks, “psyche” meant “breath-soul,” capturing how closely identified the breath of life is with life itself. For the ancient Romans, the term “inspired” literally meant “breathed into by a god or muse.”

The essential role of proper breathing is recognized in vocal and instrumental music, rhetoric, public speaking, athletics, meditation, yoga and all the martial arts. This central subject receives clarification in depth by Dr. Yáng, Jwìng-Míng, one of the most lauded and successful translators and



interpreters of ancient Chinese documents: lost works, ancient writings, mistranslated or never-translated archives and forgotten teachings that are as relevant and true today as in the remote past, when they were set down, often in secret. Bringing light to such dark corners has been a long-standing goal, even an obsession, of Dr. Yáng, a master and master teacher of martial arts with schools all over the world. His bibliography records a number of previous presentations of ancient Chinese classics now made available in English to the general reader. The present volume joins this distinguished list.

The effort to translate these arcane documents from the ancient Chinese faces formidable obstacles, each Chinese character—nay, each sound—can have multiple meanings and nuances, many totally dependent on context and many of those contexts lost. Further complicating the task are the often metaphoric and poetic imagery used instead of literal meanings and the fact that some expressions have specific meanings in Qì (energy) theory and nowhere else. Many of the writings make use of paradoxes familiar from Zen teaching: “doing without doing,” for example. It is only Dr. Yáng’s intimate familiarity with Qì Gōng (Qìgōng) theory and its extensive writing (many translated by himself) that permits his effort to succeed in bringing these old teachings to our present use.

One further point must be made. Few areas like the present topic so vividly demonstrate the separateness and compartmentalization of Western approaches to the mind-body synergy and the contrast with Eastern unity. We Westerners take our philosophy in school, our spiritual needs in houses of worship, our physical exercise in the gymnasium

and our mental or meditative needs in holistic classes. In this text, the mental, physical and spiritual aspects of a human being are combined, not separated, integrated, not divided.

Why “embryonic” breathing? As this volume describes breathing methods in relation to Qì theory aimed at longevity and health, imagery is invoked that is related to the effortless breathless breathing of the baby in the womb; but the essential idea of an embryo captures the vision of potential mental, physical and spiritual growth towards ultimate enlightenment. After a review of Qì and Qì Gōng theory, Dr. Yáng translates and then provides detailed and essential commentary on these writings to aid the modern reader to appreciate the valuable concepts therein. As future readers, you are invited to breathe in this rare opportunity.

(Dr. Gutheil is Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and a student at Yáng’s Martial Arts Association)

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Preface

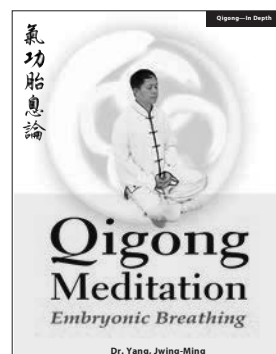
Chinese Qìgōng can generally be categorized into External Elixir (Wàidān, 外丹) and Internal Elixir (Nèidān, 內丹) Qìgōng. From External Elixir Qìgōng practice, a student learns how to build up the Qì to a higher level in the limbs and at the surface of the body. He then allows it to flow inward to the center of the body and the internal organs to nourish them. Through this practice, Qì circulation in the body can be improved and enhanced to achieve the goal of maintaining health.

In Internal Elixir Qìgōng practice, a practitioner will build up the Qì internally through correct breathing and meditation methods. When the Qì has been built up to an abundant level, this Qì will then be distributed outward to nourish the entire body and enhance its vital functions.

Experience teaches that, compared to Internal Elixir Qìgōng, External Elixir Qìgōng practice is simpler, easier, and also safer. However, the benefits that can be obtained from External Elixir practice are limited to enhancing the health of the physical body. If one wishes to reach the goal of longevity and spiritual enlightenment, Internal Elixir Qìgōng practice is essential.

The first step in practicing Internal Elixir Qìgōng is called “Small Cyclic Heaven Meditation” (Xiǎozhōutiān Jìngzuò, 小周天靜坐) or “Small Circulation Meditation.” This is also commonly known as “Microcosmic Meditation” in Indian Yoga (Yújiā, 瑜珈). Although many people have heard of it, not many practice this kind of meditation, due to the difficulties and dangers involved. The reasons for this are simple: 1. There are very few experienced and qualified teachers in Qìgōng society today who are willing to take the risk of being sued due to the dangers involved in the practice. 2. It is much harder to find a sincere and committed student given today’s lifestyle who will listen and last till the end of practice. The relationship between a teacher and a student is much shallower nowadays than before. This has downgraded the mutual trust between teacher and student. 3. To create a desirable environment for a profound level of meditation, such as “Small Circulation,” “Grand Circulation” (Dàzhōutiān, 大周天), and “Enlightenment Meditation” (Xiāndào Jìngzuò, 仙道靜坐), is very difficult in today’s society. So there are very few books or documents written and revealed to the general public. It is even harder to find any experienced teacher who is able to interpret the entire practice from a scientific point of view.

Through practicing Small Circulation Meditation, one can circulate the Qì (i.e., bioelectricity) smoothly in the Conception (Rènmai, 任脈) and Governing Vessels (Dūmai, 督脈), the two major Qì vessels which regulate the Qì circulating in the Twelve Primary



First edition, as published in 2003.

Qì Channels (Shìèrjīng, 十二經). In addition, a practitioner will also learn how to build up the Qì and store it to an abundant level in his Real Lower Dāntián (Zhēn Xiàdāntián, 真下丹田) (bio-battery). This enables the storage of a higher level of vital energy (i.e., Qì) in the body in order to strengthen the immune system and increase the lifespan. Furthermore, through practicing Small Circulation Meditation, a practitioner can find his peaceful mind and the spiritual center.

Success in Internal Elixir Qìgōng practice depends on whether a practitioner knows how to build up the Qì (i.e., Elixir) to a higher level and then store it inside his body. In order to store the Qì to an abundant level, a practitioner must locate the Dāntiáns (丹田) (i.e., Elixir Fields), and know how to build up and store the Qì. To reach this goal, a practitioner must first know the theory and techniques of Embryonic Breathing (Tāixí, 胎息). Usually, these theories and techniques were kept top secret in ancient Qìgōng society. It was not until the second half of the last century that documents on Embryonic Breathing were gradually revealed to the general public. This book covers most of the available documents. These documents have been translated and commented on from my personal point of view. I sincerely believe, for those who wish to study and practice Embryonic Breathing, that this book will provide them with an important guideline and crucial key to reach this goal. In “Grand Circulation Meditation” and “Spiritual Enlightenment Meditation,” Embryonic Breathing is a vital practice for those who wish to reach their final goal of spiritual cultivation.

Originally, this book was only one part of the book entitled, *Small Circulation Meditation*. However, after five years of writing, I began to realize that it was impossible to include Embryonic Breathing with thorough and detailed discussion and analysis in that book. Translations of the available ancient documents about Embryonic Breathing, together with a scientific commentary, took more than 150 pages. Therefore, I decided that Embryonic Breathing merited a book of its own. In this way, the subject of Embryonic Breathing can be treated independently. I believe that I have tried my best to convey the information with a thorough and scientific discussion of the subject.

In order to help those interested Qìgōng practitioners without general Qìgōng knowledge, the first part of this book will review and summarize important Qìgōng concepts. This is followed by the theoretical discussion of Embryonic Breathing.

In the second, core part of this book, the available documents are translated with commentary. However, before you read them, you need to understand a few important points. It is very difficult to translate these ancient Chinese writings. Because of cultural differences, many expressions would not make sense to the Westerner if translated literally. Often, knowledge of the historical context is necessary. Furthermore, since in Chinese every sound has several possible meanings, when anyone tried to understand a poem or write it down, he had to choose from among these meanings. For this reason, many of the poems have several variations. The same problem occurs when the poems are read. Many

Chinese characters have several possible meanings, so reading involves interpretation of the text even for the Chinese. Also, the meaning of many words has changed over the course of time. When you add to this the grammatical differences (generally no tenses, articles, singular or plural, or differentiation between parts of speech), you find that it is almost impossible to translate Chinese literally into English completely. In addition to all this, the translator must have had much the same experience and understanding, as well as similar intuitive feelings as the original author, in order to convey the same meaning.

With these difficulties in mind, I have attempted to convey as much of the original meaning of the Chinese as possible, based on my own Qìgōng experience and understanding. Although it is impossible to fully translate the original meaning, I feel I have managed to express the majority of the important points. The translation has been made as close to the original Chinese as possible, including such things as double negatives and, sometimes, idiosyncratic sentence structure. Words that are understood but not actually written in the Chinese text have been included in parentheses. Also, some Chinese words are followed by the English in parentheses, e.g., Shén (Spirit). To further assist the reader, I have included my personal commentary with each document.

Finally, in the third part of this book, I will summarize the methods of practice from translated documents and also from my personal practical experience. From this part, you will know how to practice correctly without too much danger.

After you practice Embryonic Breathing for a period of time, you will soon discover that it seems there is another world (i.e., spiritual world) which other regular people cannot reach. This world has not yet been understood by today's science. If you are able to step in and practice, you will become a pioneer of the study and practice of spiritual science. Compared to material science which has been well developed, spiritual science is still far behind. This is why we have encountered the biggest crises and challenges today. On one hand we have developed the material science which is able to destroy the entire world; on the other, we still don't know how to control human desires and temperament.

Compared with the Western spiritual science and understanding, in my personal opinion, the East has developed far beyond the West. The reason for this is simply because of the involvement of politics in Western religion. Glory, dignity, power, and wealth have become the major concerns in Western religious societies. Although, of course, there have been examples of the same thing in Eastern religions, this has been more of an exception. For this reason, in Europe and the Americas, it was more common for those people who had natural inborn spiritual capabilities to be accused as witches and burned to death. In China, the situation was very different. Those spiritual people would usually hide themselves in the mountains for spiritual cultivation. Many of them would write their experiences down and these were passed down to us. In China, it was very common that when those spiritually talented people were found, they were said

to have affinity for Buddhahood (Fóyuán, 佛緣) or the Dào (Dàoyuán, 道緣). These people were usually sent to the monasteries for further training.

I sincerely believe that in order to promote human spiritual science to a higher level, the first priority is to translate these existing ancient documents written by those experienced spiritual practitioners. However, there are now too many documents available to society. In the last few years, I have realized that even having spent my last forty years collecting the ancient documents, studying and interpreting them, all my effort has only contributed probably less than 0.1 percent to the entire study. To expedite the spiritual study, we will need a well-funded non-profit organization to translate these documents which can thus allow the Western general public to study and practice them.

Before I finish this preface, I would like to point out an important fact. It does not matter how long a person has studied and practiced Qìgōng, still his knowledge, experience, and understanding of Qìgōng will be limited and shallow, compared with the vast and profound nature of Qìgōng itself. Therefore, there is no single person who is able to understand all of the practices and share them with you. If you are wise, you should remain humble and search for other sources of knowledge and experience. Only if you can keep an open mind, can you accept the nature of truth.

Publisher's Note on the 2nd Edition

This 2nd edition includes pinyin with tonal marks, a new Chinese character font (Biau-Kai), and selected illustration enhancements.

An important contribution to this new edition is the use of tonal marks on the pinyin. Pinyin is the current standard for Romanizing Chinese characters so they can be read by non-Chinese speaking readers. By adding tonal marks to the Romanized Chinese words (pinyin), we can have a guide for properly pronouncing these words.

Before we can begin learning how to pronounce pinyin words, we must recognize some common differences in how some letters sound.¹

- ü Start pronouncing “ee” in English and then round your lips to pronounce “oo”.
- q Pronounced like “ch” in chin.
- x Pronounced like a blend of “she” and “he”.
- z Pronounced like “ds” in kids.
- c Pronounced like “ts” in bats.
- zh Pronounced like “ger” in germ.
- ch Pronounced like “chur” in church.
- sh Pronounced like “sur” in sure.
- er Pronounced like “ar” in are.
- i When i follows z, c, s, it sounds like “zz”: *zzz, czz, szz*.
When i follows zh, ch, sh, r, it sounds like “rr”: *zhrr, chrr, shrr, rrr*.

There are primarily four tonal categories written in pinyin.²

1. mā 媽 (mom). Begins high and stays high.
2. má 麻 (hemp). Begins at mid-range and ends high.
3. mǎ 馬 (horse). Begins mid-range, dips low, ends mid-range.
4. mà 罵 (scold). Begins high and ends low.

There are many websites offering guides for the pronunciation of Chinese words and how to interpret and pronounce pinyin words with the tonal marks. We encourage readers to explore these valuable online tools. Some are provided below for your reference.

<https://dictionary.hantrainerpro.com/>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinyin>
<https://ymaa.com/publishing/spoken-chinese-glossary>

1 <https://www.mandarinutor.com/resources/pinyinintro>

2 <https://www.duchinese.net/blog/learn-to-read-chinese-tones/>

Translations and Commentaries of Ancient Documents

3.1 INTRODUCTION (JIÈSHÀO, 介紹)

More than 150 documents related to Embryonic Breathing practice, written throughout nearly four thousand years of Chinese Qigōng history, are now available. Many of these documents focus on theory, while others emphasize the general concept of the practice. Naturally, the contents of many of these documents are redundant or repetitious. I have read and filtered them, studied and experimented with them, and searched for possible explanations written in each document. With all of these efforts, I still believe that there are many more related documents that I have not yet discovered. However, through the available documents, I am able to conclude and formalize a clear idea of what Embryonic Breathing is, the theory behind it, and its practice methods.

From these ancient documents, we are able to see the verification and achievement of this spiritual practice. This provides us with encouragement, confidence, and inspiration to pursue our final goal of spiritual enlightenment. In order to benefit from these documents, we should have a correct attitude when we study them. We should remain humble, feel deep appreciation, and establish our confidence. We should be open-minded, yet we should not hesitate to challenge the statements in the documents, to test them, and to verify them. We should try to judge the entire practice from a logical and scientific point of view. Study these documents repeatedly and ponder them carefully. This will lead us to the path of profound internal feeling.

Such an internal sensitivity will enable us to find our true natural identity and the real meaning of our lives. It will also lead us to appreciate the greatness of the natural universe. We can free ourselves from the matrix of spiritual bondage that has been formalized over the course of human history. Only if we are able to liberate ourselves from this human spiritual matrix, can we expect to have a neutral mind to further develop our spiritual science. We must recognize that all religions created in the past are spiritual matrices which act against the true science which continues to pursue the truth of nature.

Most of these documents originated in Daoist and Buddhist society, with a few coming from Scholarly and Medical societies. Documents produced by martial arts society are very scarce. Even though there are some, their discussion and practice remains superficial.

The majority of the documents translated and commented upon in this book are from the following sources, 1–7:

1. *Dào Dé Jīng and Qigong* (道德經與氣功), by Dīng, Xīn-Bǎi (丁辛百) and Pān, Míng-Huán (潘明環), 安徽科學技術出版社, Ānhuī, China 1996.
2. *Chinese Qigong Dictionary* (中國氣功辭典), by Lǚ, Guāng-Róng (呂光榮), 人民衛生出版社, Běijīng, China, 1988.
3. *The Great Completion of Chinese Qigong* (中國氣功大成), by Fāng, Chūn-Yáng (方春陽), 吉林科學技術出版社, Jílín, China, 1989.
4. *The Study of Practical Chinese Medical Qigong* (實用中醫氣功學), by Mǎ, Jì-Rén (馬濟人), 上海科學技術出版社, Shànghǎi, China, 1992.
5. *The Complete Book of Nourishing the Life in Chinese Daoist Qigong* (中國道教氣功養生大全), by Lǐ, Yuǎn-Guó (李遠國), 四川辭書出版社, Chéngdū, Sìchuān, China, 1991.
6. *The Great Completion of Chinese Life Nourishing* (中國養生大成), by Fāng, Chūn-Yáng (方春陽), 吉林科學技術出版社, Jílín, China, 1992.
7. *Important Collection of Concealed Daoist Qigong* (道藏氣功要集), by Hóng, Pī-Mó (洪丕謨), 上海書店, Shànghǎi, China, 1991.

Before you read the next section, you should understand that it is very difficult to translate ancient Chinese writings. Because of the cultural differences, many expressions would not make sense to the Westerner if translated literally. Often, knowledge of the historical context is necessary. Furthermore, since in Chinese every sound has several possible meanings, when anyone tries to understand a poem or write it down, he has to choose from among these meanings. For this reason, many of the poems or articles have several variations. The same problem occurs when the poems or articles are read. Many Chinese characters also have several possible meanings, so reading involves interpretation of the text, even for the Chinese reader. Also, the meaning of many words has changed over the course of time. When you add to this the grammatical differences (generally no tenses, articles, singular or plural, or differentiation between parts of speech) you find that it is almost impossible to translate Chinese literally into English. In addition to all this, the translator must have much the same experience and understanding, as well as similar intuitive feelings as the original author, in order to convey the correct meaning.

With these difficulties in mind, I have attempted to convey as much of the original meaning of the Chinese as possible based on my own Qigōng experience and understanding. Although it is impossible to fully translate the original meaning, I feel I have managed to express the majority of the important points. The translation has been made as close to the original Chinese as possible, including such things as double negatives, and at times, idiosyncratic sentence structure. Words that are implied but not actually written in the Chinese text have been included in parentheses. Also, some Chinese words are followed by the English in parentheses, for example Shén (Spirit).

In order to assist your understanding, I have included commentaries from my personal understanding of the documents. Again, it is not easy to offer you a perfect commentary with 100% accuracy. Many specialized Qigōng terminologies were used in the past, and these terms can have different meanings depending on when, how, where, and by whom they were used. For example, the crown of the head is called “Bǎihuì” (Gv-20) (百會) (Hundred Meetings) by medical society, “Tiānlínggài” (天靈蓋) (Cover of Natural Spiritual Divine) or “Níwángōng” (泥丸宮) (Mud Pill Palace) by Daoists. In order to translate these terms correctly, I have consulted many Qigōng dictionaries and documents and searched for the best answer. Often, it does not make sense when you read the translation; however, after you read and understand the commentaries, the documents can be understood.

To make it easier for you, I have tried to classify these documents according to their main focus. Through this effort, I hope you can establish a structural sense from the beginning. In section 3–2, I have included those documents which talk about the general concept of Embryonic Breathing. Next, I have gathered those which talk about the Dāntián in section 3–3. Then, I have classified those related to the concept of regulating the breathing, the mind, and the spirit in section 3–4, 3–5, and 3–6, respectively. As to the training methods, I have included them in section 3–7. Finally, the last section includes a few documents that do not belong to any of the above categories.

3.2 GENERAL CONCEPTS (YĪBĀN GÀINIÀN, 一般概念)

1. DÀO DÉ JĪNG (CHAPTER 10)¹

《道德經·十章》

When bearing and managing the Pò (Vital Spirit) and embracing (maintaining) it to a singularity (simplicity), can it be not separating? When concentrating the Qì to reach its softness, can it be as (soft as) a baby? When cleansing the thought to reach its purity, can it be flawless? When loving the people and ruling the country, can it be no ruling? The opening and closing of the Heaven Gate, can it be (calm and tender) as a female? To comprehend (nature) and reach the four directions (everywhere), can

it be known without knowing? When bearing and raising, (if one can) bear without keeping it to self, raising without being meritorious, leading without controlling, then this is the way of “profound natural virtue.”

載營魄抱一，能無離乎？專氣致柔，能如嬰兒乎？滌除玄鑿，能無疵乎？愛民治國，能無為乎？天門開闔，能為雌乎？明白四達，能無知乎？生之畜之，生而不有，為而不恃，長而不宰，是謂玄德。

The book commonly known as *Dào Dé Jīng* (道德經), also called *Lǎozǐ* (老子), was written by Lǎozǐ (604–531 BCE) during the Chinese Zhōu Dynasty (周朝) (1122–255 BCE). Lǎozǐ was also named Liě (李耳) or Lǎodān (老聃), and nicknamed Bóyáng (伯陽). Scholarly Daoism originated from Lǎozǐ’s philosophy. Later, during the Chinese Eastern Hàn Dynasty (東漢) (25–220 CE), Zhāng, Dào-Líng (張道陵) combined Daoist and Buddhist philosophies and created a religious Daoism, called “Dàojiào” (道教).

In *Dào Dé Jīng*, there are many sayings related to Qìgōng practice, especially Embryonic Breathing and spiritual cultivation. Unfortunately, almost all of the interpretations of *Dào Dé Jīng* were done by Chinese scholars instead of Qìgōng experts, so there are very few Chinese books or English translations available that show the relationship of the *Dào Dé Jīng* to Qìgōng practice. This chapter is one of few which talk about the cultivation of spiritual life and Qì, as well as the purification of human nature and personality.

In the first sentence, you must first understand the meaning of Pò (魄). Pò is the vital spirit which is supported by vital energy (Qì) when a person is alive. When a person is dead, the Pò becomes Hún (魂) (Soul), which means the spirit after death. When we were born, the spirit incarnated into our physical body and, with Qì nourishment, became Pò. Pò enables us to manage our lives vigorously. However, in the process, we must keep our spirit in its spiritual center, and not allow it to be confused and influenced by the surrounding environment. This spiritual training, keeping the spirit in its original simplicity, is called “Bàoyī” (抱一), meaning “Embracing Singularity” or “Embracing Simplicity.” Therefore, the first sentence asks: when handling our spirit, can we keep it simple (pure) and maintain it at its residence without distraction?

Not only that, Qì is the inner energy that supports our physical life and continues to nourish our spirit. Can the Qì circulation be as soft as a baby? Since the air (Kōngqì, 空氣) (External Qì) is related to the inner Qì, it is also commonly believed that when this chapter mentions Qì, it is referring to the breath. We know that the body’s inner energy is generated by metabolism, the conversion of glucose into bio-energy. During this process, an abundant oxygen supply is necessary. The greater the oxygen supply, the more energy can be produced. That is why when we lift weights or push a car, we must first inhale deeply in order to generate more power.

Summaries from Ancient Documents

4.1 INTRODUCTION (JIÈSHÀO, 介紹)

I would like to summarize a few general points from the documents translated and commented upon in the last chapter.

1. Many documents discuss the same things and emphasize the same practices, though the years of writing were different.
2. These ancient documents can only offer you some references and experiences. It is up to you to make a wise and clear judgment. Each document is like a road sign or map to the garden of Embryonic Breathing. Some of them are considered very important and crucial, some less so, and some others may lead you to the wrong path.
3. I have covered almost all of the available documents related to Embryonic Breathing in the previous chapter. Due to my limited knowledge and experience, there are some places which may be beyond my understanding. I hope those who have a deeper Qìgōng experience will fill up these voids.
4. Again, I would like to point out that it is not easy to translate these ancient documents. I have tried to translate them as close to the meaning as possible. Often, if you translate it word by word, the actual meaning will be distorted or lost.

In the next section, from my personal understanding, I would like to draw conclusions from the important concepts in the ancient documents. I hope this chapter will offer you a clear idea, both for understanding and for practice. This will provide you with a good foundation for your practice, which we will discuss in Part III of this book.

4.2 SUMMARIES OF IMPORTANT POINTS (YÀODIǎN ZǒNGJIÉ, 要點總結)

In this section, first I would like to review the body's energy structure briefly, which was already discussed in Chapter 2. If you still have questions concerning this brief summary, you should refer back to Chapter 2. Without this theoretical foundation, many of the summaries concluded from ancient documents will not make sense. After we have concluded those important theoretical and training points, we will list the benefits of Embryonic Breathing.

Two Qì Poles in a Human Body (Rénshēn Liǎngyí, 人身兩儀). As discussed in Chapter 2, we have three Dāntiáns. The top (Upper Dāntián) and the bottom (Real Lower Dāntián) ones establish a two-pole system which thus constitutes a human central energy line. These Two Poles, one Yīn and one Yáng, synchronize and harmonize with each other. They are just like the Poles of a magnet which cannot be separated. The Real Lower Dāntián (Human Gut or second brain) is the North pole that stores Qì and supplies it for the functioning of the entire body. The Upper Dāntián (brain) is the South pole that directs and governs the quality of Qì manifestation.

When we compare these Two Poles with the Tàijí Yīn-Yáng symbol, we can easily see that the spirit (Shén, 神) residing in the Upper Dāntián is classified as Yáng, since it manifests the Qì into action. That is why the spirit is called “Yángshén” (陽神) in Chinese Qìgōng society. However, the area located in the Real Lower Dāntián is called “Sea Bottom” (Hǎidǐ, 海底) where it is able to store Qì to an abundant level. The Qì stored in the Real Lower Dāntián is thus called “Yīnshuǐ” (陰水), which means “Yīn Water” (Figure 4-1). It was believed that this Yīn water originates from the Original Essence (Yuánjīng, 元精) stored in the internal kidneys (Nèishèn, 內腎) and external kidneys (Wàishèn, 外腎). “External kidneys” are testicles or ovaries. In fact, it is now understood that the “Original Essence” is actually the hormones produced by the adrenals of the internal kidneys and by the gonads (the testicles or ovaries). Due to this reason, the water (Qì) produced in these glands is often called “kidney water” (Shènshuǐ, 腎水).

However, from another point of view, we can see that since the Real Lower Dāntián supplies the quantity of Qì, it can be considered Yáng, while the spirit, which governs the quality of Qì manifestation, can thus be considered Yīn. From this, you can see how Yīn and Yáng are defined according to different points of view. If we take a closer look, we can see this viewpoint clearly.

Again, if you observe the Tàijí Yīn-Yáng symbol closely, you can see that there is a hidden Yáng fountain (Yángquán, 陽泉) in the center of the Yīn water, and a concealed Yīn spirit (Yīnshén, 陰神) in the center of the Yáng spirit. In fact, in Qìgōng Embryonic Breathing training, you train these two pole centers of hidden Yáng and concealed Yīn. For example, if you are able to keep your mind at the center of the hidden Yáng within the Yīn water, the Qì at the Real Lower Dāntián will continue to be stored and preserved,

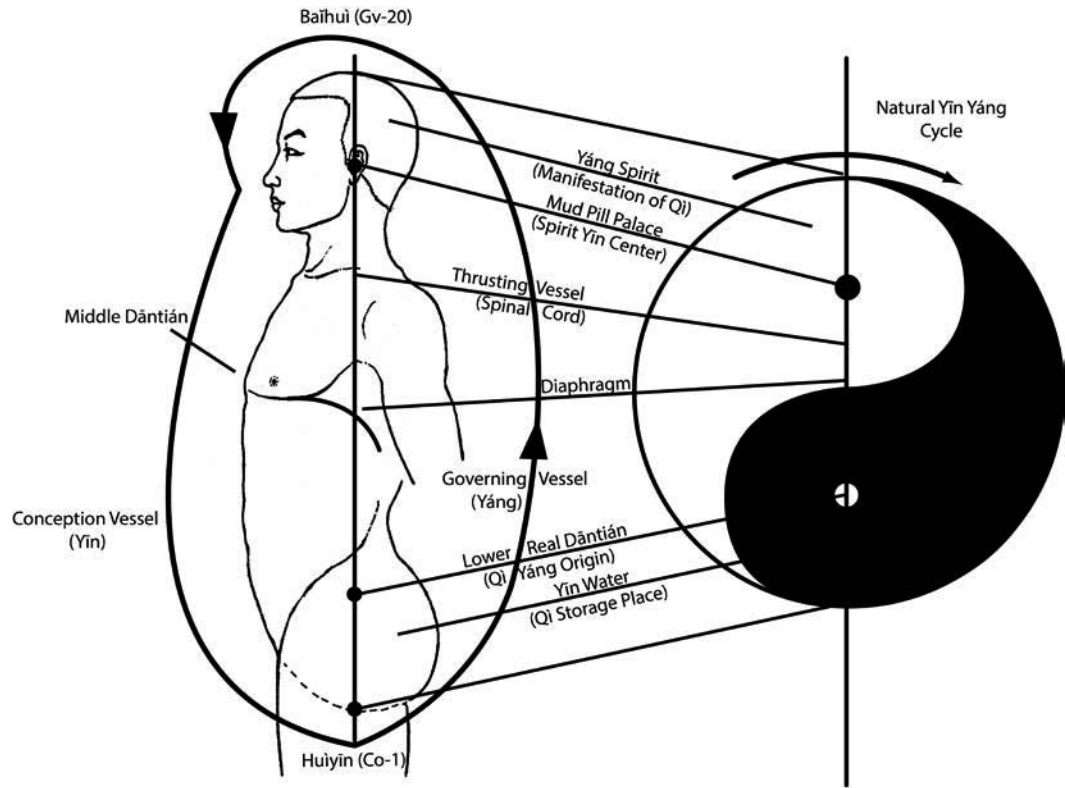


Figure 4-1. The Body's Yin and Yang, and the Two Polarity Centers

like a spring which is able to produce water continuously. Not only that, if you also know how to keep the spirit condensed at its center (concealed Yin), then the quality of Qi manifestation will reach a higher level of efficiency.

These are two concealed Poles, one at the center of the head (Mud Pill Palace) and the other at the center of the gut. Though they are two, they function as one. If you are able to keep your mind at these two poles, the spirit and the Qi will stay in their residences. This process is called “Embracing Singularity” (Bàoyī, 抱一).

The Spirit is the Master of the Body (Shénwéi Zhǔzǎi, 神為主宰). The Spirit is related to your mind. This mind is what is called “Tàijí” (太極) (Grand Ultimate) in Small Human Heaven and Earth (Small Universe or Nature). When this mind acts properly, the spirit can be raised up to a high level and when this mind acts strangely, then the spirit will be disordered and the quality of Qi manifestation will be poor. Therefore, in order to have a condensed and focused spirit, you must first regulate your mind. To achieve this, you must not be attracted by human affairs, emotions and desires. You must see through to the reality that the material world is only temporary. In order to reach the

goal of immortality or enlightenment, you must train to cultivate your spirit to a strong level so it can survive independently even when the physical body is dead. This is the concept of immortality (spiritual eternity).

In the Embryonic Breathing training, regulating your mind and spirit in the Upper Dāntián is more crucial than regulating your Qì. After all, it is your mind and spirit which govern your life and control the efficiency of Qì manifestation. When mind and spirit are strong and focused, the Qì can be stored to an abundant level. However, when the mind and spirit are scattered and confused, the spirit will become Yáng and naturally the Qì will also be manifested and wastefully consumed. In this case, the level of spiritual cultivation will be shallow.

However, regulating the mind and spirit is a very difficult and long process. Using your mind to deal with your mind is like trying to force yourself to fall asleep. The more you do so, the worse it will be. That is why nearly half of the available documents discuss the regulating of the mind and spirit. The key means of regulating the mind and spirit is through regulating the breathing.

Keep the Yì at the Dāntiáns (Yìshǒu Dāntián, 意守丹田). The first major key of Embryonic Breathing is to keep your Yì at the concealed Yīn located at the “Mud Pill Palace” (Níwángōng, 泥丸宮) in the Upper Dāntián, and also at the hidden Yáng in the center of the Real Lower Dāntián (Zhēn Xiàdāntián, 真下丹田). This training is called “the Yì is kept at the Dāntiáns” (Yìshǒu Dāntián, 意守丹田). When this happens, the spirit can stay at its residence (Shénshì, 神室) (Spiritual Residence or Upper Dāntián) and the Qì can be collected and stored at its center (Qìshě, 氣舍) (Qì’s Dwelling or Real Lower Dāntián).

In order to have a condensed and focused spirit staying at the “Mud Pill Palace” (Yīnshén, 陰神), you must first regulate your mind. That means you must first calm down your mind and withdraw it from the attractions of surrounding affairs and emotional disturbances. This means regulating your Emotional Monkey Mind, by first regulating your breathing. Breathing is like a banana which is able to lead the monkey Xīn into the cage. When your breathing is calm, the physical body can be relaxed and the mental mind can be peaceful. Therefore, if you are able to breathe softly, gently, slenderly and deeply, the mind can be calmed down. Then the spirit can be focused and condensed at its residence. Once you have reached a profound stage, the spirit and the breathing will mutually depend on and harmonize with each other. This is the initial state of Embracing Singularity (Bàoyī, 抱一).

Mutual Dependence of Shén and Breathing (Shénxī Xiāngyī, 神息相依) (Mǔzǐ Xiāngyī, 母子相依). Once you have reached this stage, you have established a close connection between your Shén and Qì through breathing. This kind of breathing is also called “Cavity Breathing” (Xuéwèi Hūxī, 穴位呼吸) or “Dāntián Breathing” (Dāntián Hūxī, 丹田呼吸), which means breathing with the Shén and Qì staying at their cavities (residences).

Then, you will bring the Shén down from the Upper Dāntián to the Real Lower Dāntián to unite the Shén and Qì together. This is the state of “Mutual Dependence of Spirit and Breathing” (Shénxí Xiāngyī, 神息相依) or “Mutual Dependence of Son and Mother.” “Son” represents “Shén” while “Mother” represents “Qì.” When this happens, you have traced back to the origin of your life—the Wújí state. Therefore, I have named it “Wújí Breathing” (Wújí Hūxī, 無極呼吸) (breathing with no polarities) or “second brain breathing.” In Wújí Breathing there is no discrimination of Yīn and Yáng either in Shén or Qì.

Hold the Breathing to Conceal the Shén and Qì (Bixí Cángshén Yùncì, 閉息藏神蘊氣). The key to bringing the Shén down to unite with the Qì is correct breathing. There are two schools of thought on how to do it correctly. One group believes that in order to contain the Shén and Qì at the Real Lower Dāntián, you must inhale deeply and then hold the breath as long as possible while keeping your mind (spirit) there. When you inhale to your maximum and then hold the breath, you are allowing the Shén and Qì to combine to their maximum. It is just like when you push a car. First you inhale deeply to absorb abundant oxygen for the biochemical reaction, then you exhale while pushing. After you exhale to the maximum, you hold the breath so the Qì can manifest in its most extreme and efficient way. Embryonic Breathing is just reversing the process. First, you exhale and relax your body and mind, then you inhale deeply, softly, and slenderly. When the inhalation has reached its maximum, then you hold your breath while keeping your mind at the Real Lower Dāntián. When this happens, the Shén will be condensed and the Qì will be gathered at the Real Lower Dāntián.

Another group of documents argue that “hold the breathing” does not mean the process which actually “stops the breathing.” They explain that since the breathing is so slender, gentle, and soft, the breathing is as if it exists without existing. If you really hold your breath, your mental and physical bodies will be tensed. When this happens, the mind can be disturbed and the spirit and the Qì cannot be contained at the Real Lower Dāntián efficiently.

However, from my personal understanding, both sides have their good reasons and theories. The best way of breathing is inhaling slowly, slenderly, softly, and quietly as if the breathing does not exist. However, when you reach the final stage of inhalation, then you hold the breath. Begin with a few seconds only. Only after you have practiced for a long time and feel comfortable and natural holding it, can you then increase the length of time.

Unification of Shén and Qì (Shénqì Xiànghé, 神氣相合). There are two meanings to “Unification of Shén and Qì” (Shénqì Xiànghé, 神氣相合). One is that the mind stays at the Real Lower Dāntián so you are able to return yourself to the origin of life, as explained in the previous sub-section. That means the location where unification takes place is at the Real Lower Dāntián. This is the way of longevity. The other meaning is to

conceive a Spiritual Embryo (Shéntāi, 神胎) at the Huángtíng (黃庭). Then this Spiritual Embryo is led upward to reopen “the Third Eye.” Naturally, this second meaning is the first step towards reaching enlightenment.

In order to conceive a Spiritual Embryo, you must first learn how to lead the “Fire Qi” (Huǒqì, 火氣) or “Post-Heaven Qi” (Hòutiānqì, 後天氣) from the Middle Dāntián downward, and the “Water Qi” (Shuǐqì, 水氣) or “Pre-Heaven Qi” (Xiāntiānqì, 先天氣) upward, to meet each other at the Huángtíng cavity. This is the process of Kǎn-Lí (坎離) (water-fire). This process, also called “the intercourse of dragon and tiger” (Lóngǔ Jiāogòu, 龍虎交媾), will produce the “Water Mother” (Shuǐmǔ, 水母), which provides life for the Shén to reside and grow.

Therefore, you must also bring your Shén down to the Huángtíng. This Shén is considered the Son. Again this process is called “Mutual Dependence of Mother and Son” (Mǔzǐ Xiāngyī, 母子相依). When this happens, the Spiritual Embryo can be conceived. When this Spiritual Embryo has matured, then it is led upward to the Upper Dāntián for its birth (the reopening of the Third Eye). This is a necessary step for spiritual enlightenment.

To summarize this section, the important key theories and practicing methods are:

1. **To calm down the mind and physical body.** The first step of Embryonic Breathing is to keep the mind in a state of extreme calmness. In order to reach this goal, you withdraw from all of the surrounding emotional attractions, disturbances, and desires. When this happens, you are able to condense your spirit at the Mud Pill Palace at the center of the Upper Dāntián. Then the actions and excitement of the brain will gradually cease and the mind can be calmed, your physical body can be peaceful and relaxed, and you have found the way of Embracing Singularity (Bàoyī, 抱一).

To further calm the mind and physical body, you should bring your mind down to the Real Lower Dāntián, to lead the body’s Qi down to the lower section of the body. The brain cells will not be excited, and the mind can reach a calmer and more peaceful state. *Dào Dé Jīng* (道德經), Chapter 16, said: “Reach the extreme emptiness, and keep the profound calmness.”¹ This implies the extreme calmness of the mind and the body. This is the first step in leading the Qi to the Real Lower Dāntián and storing it there.

2. **To condition the Real Lower Dāntián (bio-battery) and improve the capacity for Qi storage.** In order to increase the storage capacity of Qi to a level higher than that of normal people, the Real Lower Dāntián must be conditioned. How to condition the Real Lower Dāntián will be explained briefly in the last section of this chapter. Even though this method is not explained in ancient Embryonic Breathing documents, the method of conditioning

the Real Lower Dāntián has specifically been discussed in Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Classic. For a more thorough discussion, please refer to the book: *Qigōng—The Secret of Youth*, published by YMAA Publication Center.

3. **To build up or store the Qi in the Real Lower Dāntián to an abundant level.** This is the process of charging the bio-battery. When Qi in the Real Lower Dāntián is charged to an abundant level, the practices of Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing are possible. The key to storing the Qi to an abundant level is practicing the correct ways of breathing.
4. **To stimulate hormone (Original Essence) production in the Adrenals and Testicles (or Ovaries).** Hormones act as catalysts in the body's biochemical reaction. When the hormone level is properly regulated, the body's biochemical reaction will be smooth and healthy. Naturally, the Qi production will be smooth and abundant. It is well known today that maintaining healthy hormone levels is the key to longevity.
5. **To strengthen the physical body and health (Muscle/Tendon Changing).** When the Qi is abundantly stored in the Real Lower Dāntián, the Qi in the eight vessels (Bāmài, 八脈) will be highly charged as well. Then the Qi circulation in the Twelve Primary Qi Channels (Shíèrjīng, 十二經) can be regulated efficiently. This is the crucial key to maintaining and conditioning our physical bodies.
6. **For longevity and enlightenment (Marrow/Brain Washing).** When abundant Qi is led inward to the bone marrow, the production of blood cells from the marrow will be smooth and healthy. Plenty of healthy blood cells in the body is the key to slowing the aging process. This is because blood cells are the main carriers of oxygen and nutrition for the body's metabolism. In addition, when the abundant Qi is led upward through the spinal cord (Chōngmài, 衝脈) to nourish the brain, the Spirit of Vitality can be raised and the Third Eye (Tiānyǎn, 天眼) can be reopened. This is the goal of Buddhahood or enlightenment in Buddhist and Daoist society.

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About the Author

Yáng, Jwìng-Mǐng, PhD (楊俊敏博士)

Dr. Yáng, Jwìng-Mǐng was born on August 11, 1946, in Xīnzhúxiàn (新竹縣), Táiwān (台灣), Republic of China (中華民國). He started his Wǔshù (武術) (Gōngfū or Kūng Fū, 功夫) training at the age of fifteen under Shàolín White Crane (Shàolín Báihè, 少林白鶴) Master Chēng, Gīn-Gsào (曾金灶). Master Chēng originally learned Tàizǔquán (太祖拳) from his grandfather when he was a child. When Master Chēng was fifteen years old, he started learning White Crane from Master Jīn, Shào-Fēng (金紹峰) and followed him for twenty-three years until Master Jīn's death.



In thirteen years of study (1961–1974) under Master Chēng, Dr. Yáng became an expert in the White Crane style of Chinese martial arts, which includes both the use of bare hands and various weapons, such as saber, staff, spear, trident, two short rods, and many others. With the same master he also studied White Crane Qìgōng (氣功), Qín Ná or Chín Ná (擒拿), Tuīná (推拿), and Diǎnxué massage (點穴按摩) and herbal treatment.

At sixteen, Dr. Yáng began the study of Yáng Style Tàijíquán (楊氏太極拳) under Master Kāo, Táo (高濤). He later continued his study of Tàijíquán under Master Lǐ, Mào-Chīng (李茂清). Master Lǐ learned his Tàijíquán from the well-known Master Hán, Chìng-Táng (韓慶堂). From this further practice, Dr. Yáng was able to master the Tàijí bare-hand sequence, pushing hands, the two-man fighting sequence, Tàijí sword, Tàijí saber, and Tàijí Qìgōng.

When Dr. Yáng was eighteen years old, he entered Tamkang College (淡江學院) in Taipei Xiàn to study physics. In college, he began the study of traditional Shàolín Long Fist (Chángquán or Cháng Chuán, 少林長拳) with Master Lǐ, Mào-Chīng at the Tamkang College Guóshù Club (淡江國術社), 1964–1968, and eventually became an assistant instructor under Master Lǐ. In 1971, he completed his MS degree in physics at the National Táiwān University (台灣大學) and then served in the Chinese Air Force of the Republic of China from 1971 to 1972. In the service, Dr. Yáng taught physics at the Junior Academy of the Chinese Air Force (空軍幼校) while also teaching Wǔshù (武術). After being honorably discharged in 1972, he returned to Tamkang College to teach physics and resumed study under Master Lǐ, Mào-Chīng. From Master Lǐ, Dr. Yáng learned Northern Style Wǔshù, which includes both bare hand and kicking techniques, and numerous weapons. In 1974, Dr. Yáng came to the United States to study mechanical engineering at Purdue University. At the request of a few students, Dr. Yáng began to teach Gōngfū, which resulted in the establishment of the Purdue University Chinese

Kūng Fū Research Club in the spring of 1975. While at Purdue, Dr. Yáng also taught college-credit courses in Tàijíquán. In May of 1978, he was awarded a PhD in mechanical engineering by Purdue.

In 1980, Dr. Yáng moved to Houston to work for Texas Instruments. While in Houston, he founded Yáng's Shàolín Kūng Fū Academy, which was eventually taken over by his disciple, Mr. Jeffery Bolt, after Dr. Yáng moved to Boston in 1982. Dr. Yáng founded Yáng's Martial Arts Academy in Boston on October 1, 1982.

In January of 1984, he gave up his engineering career to devote more time to research, writing, and teaching. In March of 1986, he purchased property in the Jamaica Plain area of Boston to be used as the headquarters of the new organization, Yáng's Martial Arts Association (YMAA). The organization expanded to become a division of Yáng's Oriental Arts Association, Inc. (YOAA).

In 2008, Dr. Yáng began the nonprofit YMAA California Retreat Center. This training facility in rural California is where selected students enroll in a five to ten-year residency to learn Chinese martial arts.

Dr. Yáng has been involved in traditional Chinese Wǔshù since 1961, studying Shàolín White Crane (Báihè), Shàolín Long Fist (Chángquán), and Tàijíquán under several different masters. He has taught for more than forty-six years: seven years in Táiwān, five years at Purdue University, two years in Houston, twenty-six years in Boston, and more than eight years at the YMAA California Retreat Center. He has taught seminars all around the world, sharing his knowledge of Chinese martial arts and Qìgōng in Argentina, Austria, Barbados, Botswana, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, China, Chile, England, Egypt, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland, and Venezuela.

Since 1986, YMAA has become an international organization, which currently includes more than fifty schools located in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Venezuela, and the United States.

Many of Dr. Yáng's books and videos have been translated into many languages, including French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Russian, German, and Hungarian.

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VADIM GORETSKY

Dr. Yáng, Jwìng-Míng is a world-renowned author, scholar, and teacher of Qìgōng and Chinese martial arts. He has been involved in martial arts since 1961 and maintains over fifty-five schools in eighteen countries. Dr. Yáng's writing and teaching include the subjects of Qìgōng, Kūng Fū, Tàì Chí Chuân, massage, and meditation. He is the author of over thirty-five books and eighty videos. Dr. Yáng, Jwìng-Míng teaches and resides in McKinleyville, California.



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