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# Qigong

## Meditation

*Small Circulation*

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

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## About the Author

*Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming, Ph.D.* 楊俊敏博士

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming was born on August 11th, 1946, in Xinzhu Xian (新竹縣), Taiwan (台灣), Republic of China (中華民國). He started his Wushu (武術, Gongfu, 功夫) training at fifteen under Shaolin White Crane (Bai He, 少林白鶴) Master Cheng, Gin-Gsao (曾金灶, 1911-1976). As a child, Master Cheng learned Taizuquan (太祖拳) from his grandfather, and at fifteen started learning White Crane from Master Jin, Shao-Feng (金紹峰), following him for twenty-three years until Master Jin's death.



In thirteen years of study (1961-1974) under Master Cheng, Dr. Yang became an expert in the White Crane style of Chinese martial arts, including the use of barehands and various weapons such as saber, staff, spear, trident, two short rods and many other weapons. With the same master he studied White Crane Qigong (氣功), Qin Na (擒拿), Tui Na (推拿) and Dian Xue (點穴按摩) massage, and herbal treatment.

At sixteen he began the study of Yang Style Taijiquan (楊氏太極拳) under Master Gao, Tao (高濤). He later continued his study of Taijiquan with several masters and senior practitioners such as Master Li, Mao-Ching (李茂清) and Mr. Wilson Chen (陳威伸) in Taipei (台北). Master Li learned Taijiquan from the well known Master Han, Ching-Tang (韓慶堂), and Mr. Chen learned his from Master Zhang, Xiang-San (張祥三). Dr. Yang mastered the Taiji barehand sequence, pushing hands, the two-man fighting sequence, Taiji sword, Taiji saber and Taiji Qigong.

At the age of eighteen, he entered Tamkang College (淡江學院) in Taipei Xian (台北縣) to study Physics. In college he began studying traditional Shaolin Long Fist (Changquan, 少林長拳) with Master Li, Mao-Ching at the Tamkang College Guoshu Club (淡江國術社, 1964-1968), and became assistant instructor under Master Li. In 1971 he completed his M.S. degree in Physics at the National Taiwan University (台灣大學), then served in the Chinese Air Force from 1971 to 1972. There he taught Physics at the Junior Academy of the Chinese Air Force (空軍幼校) while also teaching Wushu. Honorably discharged in 1972, he returned to Tamkang College to teach Physics and resume study under Master Li, Mao-Ching. From Master Li, he learned Northern Style Wushu, including barehand and kicking techniques, and numerous weapons.

In 1974, he came to the United States to study mechanical engineering at Purdue University. At the request of a few students, he began to teach Gongfu, founding the Purdue University Chinese Gongfu Research Club in 1975. He also taught college-



credited courses in Taijiquan. In May 1978, he was awarded a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering by Purdue.

In 1980, Dr. Yang moved to Houston to work for Texas Instruments, and founded Yang's Shaolin Kung Fu Academy, now under the direction of his disciple, Jeffery Bolt. In 1982 he moved to Boston, and founded Yang's Martial Arts Academy (YMAA). In 1984 he gave up his engineering career to devote himself to research, writing and teaching. In 1986 he purchased property in the Jamaica Plain area of Boston for the headquarters of YMAA. The organization has grown, and in 1989 YMAA became a division of Yang's Oriental Arts Association, Inc. (YOAA, Inc.).

In summary, Dr. Yang has been involved in Chinese Wushu since 1961. He spent thirteen years learning Shaolin White Crane (Bai He), Shaolin Long Fist (Changquan), and Taijiquan. He has taught for more than thirty-six years, seven in Taiwan, five at Purdue University, two in Houston, and twenty-two in Boston.

He has presented seminars around the world, to share his knowledge of Chinese martial arts and Qigong. He has visited Argentina, Austria, Barbados, Botswana, Belgium, Bermuda, Canada, China, Chile, England, Egypt, France, Germany, Holland, Qatar, South Africa, Switzerland, and Venezuela.

YMAA is an international organization, including 56 schools in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Holland, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and the United States. Its books, videotapes, and DVDs have been translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Russian, Hungarian, and Farsi.

Dr. Yang has published thirty-one other books on martial arts and Qigong:

1. Shaolin Chin Na; Unique Publications, Inc., 1980.
2. Shaolin Long Fist Kung Fu; Unique Publications, Inc., 1981.
3. Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan; Unique Publications, Inc., 1981.
4. Introduction to Ancient Chinese Weapons; Unique Publications, Inc., 1985.
5. Qigong for Health and Martial Arts; YMAA Publication Center, 1985.
6. Northern Shaolin Sword; YMAA Publication Center, 1985.
7. Tai Chi Theory and Martial Power; YMAA Publication Center, 1986.
8. Tai Chi Chuan Martial Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 1986.
9. Analysis of Shaolin Chin Na; YMAA Publication Center, 1987, second Edition—Analysis of Shaolin Chin Na, 2004.
10. Eight Simple Qigong Exercises for Health; YMAA Publication Center, 1988.
11. The Root of Chinese Qigong—The Secrets of Qigong Training; YMAA Publication Center, 1989.
12. Qigong—The Secret of Youth; YMAA Publication Center, 1989.

13. Xingyiquan—Theory and Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 1990.
14. The Essence of Taiji Qigong—Health and Martial Arts; YMAA Publication Center, 1990.
15. Qigong for Arthritis; YMAA Publication Center, 1991, third edition—Arthritis Relief, 2005.
16. Chinese Qigong Massage—General Massage; YMAA Publication Center, 1992, second edition—Qigong Massage, 2005.
17. How to Defend Yourself; YMAA Publication Center, 1992.
18. Baguazhang—Emei Baguazhang; YMAA Publication Center, 1994.
19. Comprehensive Applications of Shaolin Chin Na—The Practical Defense of Chinese Seizing Arts; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
20. Taiji Chin Na—The Seizing Art of Taijiquan; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
21. The Essence of Shaolin White Crane; YMAA Publication Center, 1996.
22. Back Pain—Chinese Qigong for Healing and Prevention; YMAA Publication Center, 1997. 2nd edition—Back Pain Relief, 2004.
23. Ancient Chinese Weapons; YMAA Publication Center, 1999.
24. Taijiquan—Classical Yang Style; YMAA Publication Center, 1999.
25. Tai Chi Secrets of Ancient Masters; YMAA Publication Center, 1999.
26. Taiji Sword—Classical Yang Style; YMAA Publication Center, 1999.
27. Tai Chi Secrets of Wu and Li Styles; YMAA Publication Center, 2001.
28. Tai Chi Secrets of Yang Style; YMAA Publication Center, 2001.
29. Tai Chi Secrets of Wu Style; YMAA Publication Center, 2002.
30. Taijiquan Theory of Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming; YMAA Publication Center, 2003.
31. Qigong Meditation—Embryonic Breathing; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.

He has also published the following videotapes and DVDs:

Videotapes:

1. Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan and Its Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 1984.
2. Shaolin Long Fist Kung Fu—Lien Bu Chuan (Lian Bu Quan) and Its Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 1985.
3. Shaolin Long Fist Kung Fu—Gung Li Chuan (Gong Li Quan) and Its Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 1986.
4. Analysis of Shaolin Chin Na; YMAA Publication Center, 1987.
5. Eight Simple Qigong Exercises for Health (Wai Dan Chi Kung Vol. 1) The Eight Pieces of Brocade; YMAA Publication Center, 1987. 2nd Edition 2004.

6. The Essence of Tai Chi Chi Kung (Taiji Qigong); YMAA Publication Center, 1990.
7. Qigong for Arthritis; YMAA Publication Center, 1991. Arthritis Relief, 2005.
8. Qigong Massage—Self Massage; YMAA Publication Center, 1992.
9. Qigong Massage—With a Partner; YMAA Publication Center, 1992.
10. Defend Yourself 1—Unarmed Attack; YMAA Publication Center, 1992.
11. Defend Yourself 2—Knife Attack; YMAA Publication Center, 1992.
12. Comprehensive Applications of Shaolin Chin Na 1; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
13. Comprehensive Applications of Shaolin Chin Na 2; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
14. Shaolin Long Fist Kung Fu—Yi Lu Mai Fu & Er Lu Mai Fu; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
15. Shaolin Long Fist Kung Fu—Shi Zi Tang; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
16. Taiji Chin Na; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
17. Emei Baguazhang—1; Basic Training, Qigong, Eight Palms, and Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
18. Emei Baguazhang—2; Swimming Body Baguazhang and Its Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
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20. Xingyiquan—12 Animal Patterns and Their Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
21. 24 and 48 Simplified Taijiqian; YMAA Publication Center, 1995.
22. White Crane Hard Qigong; YMAA Publication Center, 1997.
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29. Chin Na in Depth—1; YMAA Publication Center, 2000.
30. Chin Na in Depth—2; YMAA Publication Center, 2000.
31. San Cai Jian & Its Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 2000.

32. Kun Wu Jian & Its Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 2000.
33. Qi Men Jian & Its Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 2000.
34. Chin Na in Depth—3; YMAA Publication Center, 2001.
35. Chin Na in Depth—4; YMAA Publication Center, 2001.
36. Chin Na in Depth—5; YMAA Publication Center, 2001.
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38. 12 Routines of Tan Tui; YMAA Publication Center, 2001.
39. Chin Na in Depth—7; YMAA Publication Center, 2002.
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43. Chin Na in Depth—11; YMAA Publication Center, 2002.
44. Chin Na in Depth—12; YMAA Publication Center, 2002.
45. White Crane Gongfu—1; YMAA Publication Center, 2002.
46. White Crane Gongfu—2; YMAA Publication Center, 2002.
47. Taijiquan Pushing Hands—1; YMAA Publication Center, 2003.
48. Taijiquan Pushing Hands—2; YMAA Publication Center, 2003.
49. Taiji Saber and Its Applications; YMAA Publication Center, 2003.
50. Taiji Yin & Yang Symbol Sticking Hands—1; YMAA Publication Center, 2003.
51. Taiji Ball Qigong—1; YMAA Publication Center, 2003.
52. Taiji Ball Qigong—2; YMAA Publication Center, 2003.
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54. Taijiquan Pushing Hands—4; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.
55. Taiji & Shaolin Staff—Fundamental Training—1; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.
56. Shaolin Kung Fu—1, Fundamental Training; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.
57. Shaolin Kung Fu—2, Fundamental Training; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.
58. Taiji Ball Qigong—3; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.
59. Taiji Ball Qigong—4; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.
60. Advanced Practical Chin Na—1; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.
61. Advanced Practical Chin Na—2; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.
62. Taiji Yin & Yang Symbol Sticking Hands—2; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.

63. Taiji Chin Na In-Depth—1; YMAA Publication Center, 2004.
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70. Taiji Wrestling—1; YMAA Publication Center, 2005.
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DVD:

1. Chin Na in Depth—1, 2, 3, 4; YMAA Publication Center, 2003.
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17. Taiji Ball Qigong Courses 1&2—16 Circling and 16 Rotating Patterns; YMAA Publication Center, 2006.

## Editor's Note

*David Silver*

Master Yang, Jwing-Ming has made it his life's purpose to research and translate all of the available ancient documents pertaining to the subjects of Qigong and Internal Cultivation. His extensive scientific background, paired with his training in Soft (Taiji), Hard (Long Fist), and Soft-Hard (White Crane) martial arts, empowers him with a comprehensive insight on the subjects of human physiology, universal electromagnetic energy, and the relationship between them.

Ancient Buddhist, Daoist, Qigong, and Martial Arts documents are often fragments; each discussing a certain aspect of its training, from the author's unique perspective based on his or her experience and contemplation. These documents are truly among the most precious artifacts of human history, sometimes passed down in the form of songs and poems, transmitted from teacher to student. Because many documents are only a piece of the puzzle, Qigong and Meditation are frequently misunderstood, or passed-down in an incomplete form. In an effort to preserve this accumulated knowledge, most of Master Yang's works are written as a stand-alone document, offering readers worldwide a complete overview to the subject matter, as he works toward a 'Unified Theory' of Qigong.

Several chapters in this book offer information discussed in Master Yang's previous works. If you have truly assimilated this information already, you are encouraged to move on to later chapters. However, as Master Yang's tireless research continues, his insight expands, and it may benefit the reader to humbly read each chapter and again immerse oneself entirely in the subject, starting with its general concepts and theories. Master Yang is fond of scolding his students for neglecting fundamental training, saying "Don't be a Jedi too soon".

Many cultural and spiritual centers have been destroyed in times of war. It is impossible to know how much knowledge, and how many written works, have been lost forever. It is impossible to know what the future holds for humanity, what humanity holds for itself, or how much of today's scientific and spiritual information will survive.

I share Master Yang's hope that the interrelated subjects of Qigong, meditation, and human bioelectricity will continue to be researched, and will become an important focus of scientific, medical and spiritual study. In 100 or 500 years, the situation on Earth (and other planets) will be so different that it is nearly impossible to conceive. We must hope that by then things have changed for the better; that humanity has rediscovered its common spirituality, reopened our third eye, and created a balanced and peaceful global society.

If not, I hope someone finds this book.

David Silver

Boston, April 2005



## Foreword

*Thomas G. Gutheil, MD*

*“Qigong is a science of inner feeling which relates to spiritual cultivation.”*

This definition may strike the Western reader as somewhat strange, since it fuses an Eastern concept of biologic energy and the idea of science, together with feeling and spirituality – concepts which are usually quite separate in Western thinking. But the very essence of Qigong is its union of physical, mental and spiritual issues into one discipline.

Western medicine is just beginning to explore the role of meditation in various forms as a legitimate adjunct to other approaches. The concept known as mindfulness, in which meditation consists of focus on breathing and the attempt to empty the mind of linear thought, is one such modern application. Though not as popular as it once was, transcendental mediation represents another form. Taiji, sometimes described as moving meditation, is, of course, one of the oldest forms but one which is enjoying a modern resurgence, even in alternative medicine where it is used to aid with a number of medical problems such as high blood pressure and ulcers. Yoga has also been practiced, sometimes in conjunction with mindfulness practice, to achieve some of the same states of tranquility. Finally, in the scientific community, studies of the so-called relaxation response represents another form that this method may take in current practice. Producing results ranging from feelings of inner harmony and tranquility to actual decreases in blood pressure, these techniques have gradually found a place in popular awareness and fields of healing.

In this work Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming continues his astonishingly productive life-long endeavor of unearthing hidden, secret, lost and otherwise unavailable ancient Chinese texts and translating them for the world of readers. The present book also takes its place in a series of works that explore almost every aspect of Qigong from its roots to its practical applications (see bibliography). Moreover, the present volume represents an updating of understanding of the fundamental principles of Qigong since publication of the predecessor volumes.

Based on the foundation of Internal Elixir Qigong practice, this book takes the reader to the next level of spiritual cultivation. Moving from an overview of the topic, Master Yang takes the reader through meditation training; then the specifics of Small Circulation, and then a look toward the future development of the subject.





While retaining the colorful and highly metaphoric language of the original texts, Dr. Yang makes the complex subject accessible and useful to the interested reader or practitioner. A helpful glossary furthers this accessibility. The thoughtful reader may thus gain a deep understanding of the basic sciences of this aspect of Qigong practice.

Thomas G. Gutheil, M.D.  
Harvard Medical School

## Preface

Several friends have asked how I found time and energy to achieve proficiency in three Chinese martial arts styles, at the same time obtaining my Master's degree in Physics and Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering. The main reason I could achieve each goal I set, was that I learned how to concentrate through meditation. I have practiced and studied meditation since I was seventeen. I could relax whenever I was tense, and ponder profoundly when I needed to. Meditation brought me another world—the world of spiritual awareness, which enabled me to build up self-confidence, wisdom and a better understanding of the world.

Small Circulation Meditation (Small Cyclic Heaven or Microcosmic Meditation, Xiao Zhou Tian Jing Zuo, 小周天靜坐) has been well known for centuries throughout the East, including China, India, Indo-China, Korea, and Japan. According to ancient documents from Buddhist and Daoist monasteries, if one practices correctly under a master's guidance, it might take only 90 days to learn to circulate Qi in the Small Circulation path of the Conception and Governing Vessels. But I did not achieve this goal until I was 24 because I was young, and did not know the correct theory and technique. Documentary information was sparse, so I asked my White Crane and Taijiquan Masters. Due to lack of personal teaching experience, they refused to guide me. They simply advised me not to continue because of the danger involved. I could not calm down my mind to practice due to my school work and martial arts training. From the age of 15 to 19, in addition to school work, I trained Taijiquan in the early morning, and White Crane every evening. My meditation practice suffered as a result.

I finished my M.S. degree of science at Taiwan University. I was 23. Information was revealed to the public on meditation, and I could finally understand some theory. Then I was drafted into the Air Force as a military physics teacher. I had much time and little pressure, so I could calm my mind and put all my understanding into practicing every day for the whole year. I completed the Small Circulation path that summer, continuing until I married at age 27.

Being married, my life was very different and difficult, and my meditation was disrupted. I came to the United States in 1974 for Ph.D. study. I practiced a little, but could not advance further, due to the new environment and the pressure of studies. I only used meditation to calm my troubled mind. The following year, my wife arrived to join me from Taiwan, and in the year that followed, we lost our first child. Again I stopped meditating. I was sad and disappointed. Meditation had been part of my life and now I could not continue. After graduating with my Ph.D. from Purdue in 1978, my first son was born, then my daughter, followed by my second son. The financial pressure of supporting the family was so great, I almost forgot the pleasure and peace meditation could bring. But though I could not practice, I did not give up, and started collecting Qigong documents. Since 1980, many hidden

Qigong documents started to be revealed. I studied them and deepened my understanding of the subject.

To follow my dream, I resigned my engineering job in 1984 and dedicated my effort to writing and study. Life was great and the pressure of work was gone, but the financial reality of supporting my family worried me so much I could often not sleep at night. I developed pneumonia in the spring of 1984. Without health insurance, I did not see a doctor. One of my students studying as a medical doctor visited me and told me I had pneumonia for nearly two months, and was near death. My dentist brother in Taiwan sent me some antibiotics, and two weeks later my recurrent fever was disappearing. Three months later I published my first Qigong book, *Chi Kung—Health and Martial Arts*. The new edition is called *Qigong for Health and Martial Arts*. Surprisingly, this book started to bring some income, and I could smile again.

Since 1984, I continued to read, study and research. More books and ancient documents were revealed in Taiwan and mainland China. The second half of the 1980s became the most joyful of my life, as many more hidden documents were revealed. The most valuable to me were the secret classics, *Yi Jin Jing (Muscle/Tendon Changing, 易筋經)* and *Xi Sui Jing (Marrow/Brain Washing, 洗髓經)*, said to have been written by Da Mo (達磨) around 500 A.D. in the Shaolin monastery. These classics are very profound. To many Qigong practitioners, their theory remains obscure, but to me they were the most precious knowledge I had ever received.

Studying them, I discovered the missing part of Qigong practice, its Yin side. Part of the *Yi Jin Jing* (Yang side) secret had previously been revealed through Shaolin martial arts, but not the *Xi Sui Jing* (Yin side). These two classics are two sides, Yin and Yang, of the same Qigong training. Both are required to reach the enlightenment or Buddhahood. *Yi Jin Jing* builds up and circulates Qi throughout the body to strengthen it (Yang side). *Xi Sui Jing* leads accumulated Qi from the Real Lower Dan Tian (Zhen Xia Dan Tian, 真下丹田) to the bone marrow, and also up to nourish the brain cells for spiritual enlightenment (Yin side).

To accumulate abundant Qi for *Yi Jin Jing* and *Xi Sui Jing* training, Small Circulation Meditation must first be practiced. This is the foundation of Internal Elixir Qigong (Nei Dan Qigong, 內丹氣功), without which Qi would be too weak to build up physical strength or to nurture spiritual enlightenment.

To fully comprehend the theory and training in these documents, I had to devote all my effort to it. This meant writing books about it. Through translating the documents, I was forced to ponder the meaning of every word. It also forced me to find related information with which to unravel the knots. My efforts came to fruition with publication of the books, *The Root of Chinese Qigong*, and *Qigong—The Secret of Youth* (previously *Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Chi Kung*).

Since 1984, countless Qigong documents, written by hundreds of ancient Qigong experts during the last four thousand years, have been compiled and pub-

lished in mainland China. This has been a source of deep joy to me. I feel I am so lucky to have been born at this time, not only with access to these documents, but having a strong scientific background to understand and analyze them. Due to enhanced communication between East and West, great interest in this art of internal energy has also been aroused in Western society.

The more books I have written, the deeper I have understood this art. My mission in life is to present my Qigong knowledge in Western languages. All my children have grown up now, and my financial situation is stable. I resumed meditation practice in 1992, and can apply my understanding of Qigong theory in my practice. For the rest of my life I plan to enjoy reading and understanding these Qigong documents, the fruits of four thousand years of human feeling and spiritual cultivation. This will make my life meaningful and happy.

I have taught Small Circulation in the USA since 1981. After more than 20 years of teaching experience, I have modified some traditional practice methods, to make them safer and more suitable for practitioners in modern society. In this book, I share these methods with you. However, any book can only offer an opinion from the writer's point of view. You are the one who must collect more books, read and comprehend them, and finally arrive at a consistent scientific theory and method of practice, suitable to your lifestyle.

This book deals with vital new subject matter, including updated information and insights concerning subjects covered in earlier books. It focuses on profound discussion of the theory and practice of Small Circulation. Traditional training methods and modified ones are compared and analyzed. As long as you remain humble, and read and ponder carefully and sincerely, you should reach the goal of Small Circulation without risk. You should also discuss the subject with experienced practitioners.

The first part of the book reviews the general concepts and theory of Qigong. In the second part, traditional meditation training, procedures and theory are summarized, to show how traditional Qigong meditators reached the goal of enlightenment. The third part discusses the theory and practice of Small Circulation, especially Embryonic Breathing (Tai Xi, 胎息), the root of all Internal Elixir Qigong practice. More than 100 ancient documents discuss this important subject. For a deeper discussion of this subject, refer to my previous book, *Qigong Meditation—Embryonic Breathing*. In Part IV, we discuss the relevance of the subject matter to society.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming



# Theoretical Root of Small Circulation Meditation

## 小周天靜坐之理論根基

### 5-1. INTRODUCTION 介紹

There are six general purposes of Small Circulation Meditation:

1. Search for a peaceful mind.
2. Improve physical and mental health.
3. Find the center of self-being.
4. Comprehend the meaning of life.
5. Search for spiritual freedom.
6. Comprehend the meaning of the universe.

Through Small Circulation Meditation we rebuild the body from weak to strong and train the mind to be calm and focused. The Qi in the Eight Vessels and Twelve Primary Qi Channels becomes abundant, strengthening the immune system. Small Circulation is the first step in Internal Elixir practice, the foundation of Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Qigong.

There are various styles of Small Circulation, each with a different name. In Buddhist society it is called Turning the Wheel of Natural Law (Zhuan Fa Lun, 轉法輪). Every style has its own theory and method. Study and compare them, and take the best from each.

There is a Chinese story about six blind men who touch an elephant to know what it looks like. The first one touches the elephant's ear and says, "An elephant is like a large fan." The second one touches the side of its body and says, "No, it is like a wall." The third one describes the leg, "No, the elephant is like a pillar." The fourth one touches the nose and shouts, "The elephant is like a large moving branch of a tree." The fifth one touches the ivory, and says, "It is a large horn sticking out of a huge mouth." The sixth one who touches the tail says loudly, "An elephant is a large

swinging broom sticking out of the wall.” If they were to put all of the information together, they would have a reasonable description of the elephant. This story shows we should not stubbornly insist there is only one viewpoint, as we often see only part of the story.

When you practice, don't waste time in just theoretical research. Practice and theory should go together. From practice, you gain experience, and from theory, you have a clear guideline for practice. Some people hesitate due to the danger involved, accomplishing nothing and simply wasting time. Be cautious but determined, and learn from the experience of others, and you will find the right path.

A priest staying in a church is told the dam wall has broken, and the church will be flooded. He refuses to leave, and says God will save him. As water enters the church and rises quickly, he climbs up on the roof and prays for mercy and a miracle to save him. A boat comes to rescue him, but he refuses, waiting for God's miracle to save him. The boat leaves as the waters keep rising. Another boat comes to rescue him, but is again rejected. A third rescue boat receives the same answer. The waters engulf the church, and the priest drowns.

He blames God for not working a miracle to save him, but God says, “I sent three boats to save you but you rejected them all.” Will you wait for the perfect theory, or grasp the opportunity while you can?

When Buddha traveled the countryside, he came to a river. An old Qigong master lived there, who asked him, “You are the Buddha? If so, can you do the same thing I can? I cross the river by walking on top of the water.” Buddha said, “That is very impressive. But how long have you practiced it?” The old man replied, “It took me nearly forty years to achieve it.” The Buddha looked at him and said, “It took you forty years! It takes me only a few coins to cross it on the ferryboat.”

Often we spend too much time on unimportant things. Treat your time precious-ly and use it efficiently. Get rid of your dignity. If you take your dignity too seriously, you will not find a sincere teacher willing to teach from the heart.

A young Samurai swordsman entered the house of a famous Zen master. He looked at the master, bowed and said, “Master! I have reached a deep level of Zen, both in theory and practice. I have heard you are great so I come here to bow to you and hope you can teach me something.”

The Zen master looked at this proud young man. Without a word, he went into the back room and brought out a teapot and a teacup. He placed the cup in front of the young man and started to pour the tea into the cup. The tea filled the cup quickly and soon began to overflow. The young man looked at the old man with a confused expression. He said, “Stop, master! The teacup is overflowing.”

The old Zen master put the teapot down and smiled at him. He said, “This is you. You are too full already. I cannot teach you. If you wish to learn, you must first empty your cup.” Can you be as humble as an empty cup?

When you find a good qualified teacher or source of learning, treat it precious, so you don't miss the opportunity of learning. This chance may not come again. Traditionally, it was very difficult to find a qualified teacher. Even if you found one, you would not necessarily be accepted.

Today, it is easier to collect information since there are so many books, videotapes, and DVDs available. But the guidance of an experienced teacher is generally crucial to reach the final goal. Subtle advice can save you a great deal of time and effort. When you are lost in a big city, even though you have read the map, guidance from a passerby could save a lot of effort.

A young man had already spent more than seven years searching for a good master. He came to where a great teacher lived deep in the remote mountains with a few students. He was received kindly and expressed his intention of learning from the master. The master looked at him for a while, then brought out a teapot and a teacup. He poured tea into the cup, stopping when the tea reached the brim. He put the teapot down with a smile, hinting to the young man that the place was already full. He could not accept another student.

The young man looked at the cup and realized what it meant. He lowered his head in sadness. Noticing a rice straw on the floor, he picked it up and carefully stuck it into the tea. The tea did not overflow. He looked at the master's face with hope, showing him, “Look, there is still space for me. The tea did not overflow.”

Through this silent communication, the old master realized that the young man was one of those rare intelligent ones who could comprehend the profound feeling of the art. He accepted him with delight. It is very difficult to find an intelligent student able to comprehend the art deeply and to develop it. When a teacher finds this kind of student, it will be like a precious pearl in his hands.

In the next section, I review the history of Small Circulation practice. Then I summarize those acupuncture cavities related to the practice in section 5-3. We discuss the theory of Small Circulation in section 5-4. In section 5-5, crucial obstacles to Small Circulation, The Three Gates, are explained. We discuss different Small Circulation paths in section 5-6. Finally, an illustration of Internal Elixir meditation passed down from the Chinese Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D., 唐代) is introduced and interpreted.

## **5-2. SMALL CIRCULATION—PAST AND PRESENT** 小周天之過去與現在

After more than 1500 years of study and development, the practice of Small Circulation Qigong meditation has gradually evolved, from initial limited knowledge to a stage which allows practitioners to have a clear understanding of the practice.



### Small Circulation Practice in the Past

The practice of Small Circulation (Small Cyclic Heaven, Xiao Zhou Tian, 小周天) probably started in China around 500 A.D., when Da Mo's *Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Classic* (Yi Jin Jing, Xi Sui Jing; 易筋經·洗髓經) became available. There are a few reasons for this conclusion:

1. There are almost no Chinese documents available about the subject from before 500 A.D.
2. Small Circulation is a necessary prerequisite to reach advanced accomplishment in Muscle/Tendon Changing.
3. Da Mo (483-536 A.D., 達磨) was originally from India. When he arrived in China during the Liang Dynasty (502-557 A.D., 梁朝), Indian Yoga had already existed for 800 years. Small Circulation practice was an advanced level of practice in Indian Yoga, called Microcosmic Orbit Meditation.
4. Daoist practice of Small Circulation was originally from Buddhist society, called Turning the Wheel of Natural Law (Zhuan Fa Lun, 轉法輪). Even though Buddhism was imported into China during the reign of the Ming Emperor of the East Han Dynasty (58-76 A.D., 東漢明帝), documents on Qigong spiritual enlightenment practice were very scarce. It was not until Da Mo arrived, that actual Qigong practices were passed down.

Later, theory and practice of Small Circulation and Grand Circulation meditation were studied, researched, and developed in China. They blended with traditional Chinese Daoist theory based on the *Dao De Jing* (道德經), written by Lao Zi (老子, 604-531 B.C.), and a new understanding and practice developed. The most important influence from *Dao De Jing* was the theory of Embryonic Breathing (Tai Xi, 胎息). Without it, reaching the final goal of spiritual enlightenment would be very difficult.

With the addition of Chinese medical knowledge of Qi meridians and vessels, the theory and practice of Small Circulation were revised continuously and reached a profound level during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912 A.D., 清朝). Many documents were written about Small Circulation during this period. I present some of them here with commentary.

A Small Cyclic Heaven of Yin-Yang Circulation  
Antithetic writing of regulating the path  
(Wu, Shi-Ji, Qing Dynasty)

陰陽循環一小周天  
(理淪駢文·清·吳師機著)

*It (Small Circulation) is actually called 'Small Cyclic Heaven of Yin-Yang Circulation.' Close the eyes and sit quietly. The nose inhales clean air. Expand the abdomen to enable internal Qi to descend to the Lower Dan Tian under the navel. Transport Qi past Huiyin and up the Governing Vessel. Pass the Tailbone (Weilu), Squeezing Spine (Jiaji, between the shoulder blades) and Jade Pillow (Yuzhen), Three Gates. Reach Baihui (Gv-20) cavity on top of the head, follow the face to the tongue and connect with the Conception Vessel, descend down along the front of the chest, finally reach the Dan Tian and again circulate through the original path. Where there is a problem (Qi stagnation or pain), inhale and think of the place, and exhale to lead the Qi back to the Dan Tian. This strengthens the body and repels sickness. It is also named San Mei Yin.*

全稱為陰陽循環一小周天。閉目靜坐，鼻吸清氣，鼓腹使內氣下降臍下丹田，運氣過肛門，沿督脈尾閭、夾脊、玉枕三關，到頭頂百會穴，順面部至舌與任脈接，沿前胸而下，至丹田復順原徑路循行。患在何處，收氣即存想其處，放氣則歸於丹田。可強身卻病。又名三昧印。

This document, which was written by Wu, Ji-Shi (吳師機) in 1864, discusses a few key points. First, to meditate, close your eyes to cut off the connection between your eyes and your surroundings. Second, to circulate the Qi smoothly, sit quietly with your body calm and relaxed. This is the pre-condition for Qi circulation. Third, breathe correctly. Breathing is the strategy of Qigong practice. When breathing correctly, Qi can be guided efficiently. Fourth, generate and accumulate Qi at the Lower Dan Tian. Without abundant Qi stored there, the path of Qi circulating in the Conception and Governing Vessels cannot be widened, so regulating the Qi in the Twelve Primary Qi Channels will not be effective. Fifth, the path of Qi circulation is from the Lower Dan Tian, via the Huiyin, past the tailbone (Weilu, 尾閭, Changqiang, 長強), Jiaji (夾脊, Lingtai, 靈臺) and Yuzhen (玉枕, Naohu, 腦戶), the Three Gates (San Guan, 三關), then over the head, and down the front center line back to the Lower Dan Tian. Small Circulation practice is the foundation of Muscle/Tendon Changing, which can change your body from weak to strong. It is also called San Mei Yin (三昧印) in Buddhist society, or San Mo Di (三摩地, Samadhi) a special Buddhist term which means steadiness of the mind and body (Ding, 定).

Small Cyclic Heaven  
(Original truth of using no herbs)  
(Wang Yang, Qing Dynasty)

小周天  
(勿藥元詮·清·汪昂輯)

*First, stop the Nian (the thoughts lingering in the mind), calm the body and the heart, face east, and sit with crossed legs (Jia Zuo). The breathing is peaceful and harmonious. Use San Mei Yin and maintain it under the navel. Knock the teeth sixty-six times and gather your spirit in the whole body. The tongue circles the mouth sixty-six times both internally and externally, while you also circle both eyes following the circles of the tongue. The tongue touches the palate, count the breathing calmly until it reaches three hundred and sixty times. Wait until the spiritual water (saliva) is full, rinse (the mouth) several times. Use Four Secret Words (Si Zi Jue), lead Qi from the Conception Vessel, past the grain path (Huiyin), and reach the tailbone (Changqiang). Use Yi to transport, slowly lead Qi up to the central gate, Jiaji (Lingtai cavity). Gradually speed up. Close your eyes and look up, inhale but do not exhale through the nose, thrust through Yuzhen (Naohu cavity). Use the eye to lead it forward and pass Kunlun (Baihui), down to Que Qiao (magpie bridge, tongue), then divide the saliva and send it down the Chong Lou (throat), enter Li palace (heart, Middle Dan Tian), and finally reach the Qihai (Lower Dan Tian). Pause for a moment, use the same method and repeat it three times. Divide the saliva in the mouth into three gulps and send it down. This is what is called "reversed flow of heavenly river water."*

先要止念，身心澄清，面東跏坐，呼吸平和，用三昧印，按于臍下；叩齒三十六通，以集身神；赤龍攪海，內外三十六遍；雙目隨轉運，舌抵上齶，靜心數息，三百六十周天畢，待神水滿，漱津數遍；用“四字訣”，從任脈撮過穀道到尾閭，以意運送，徐徐上夾脊中關，漸漸速些；閉目上視，鼻吸莫呼，衝過玉枕，將目往前一忍，直轉崑崙，倒下鵲橋，分津送下重樓，入離宮，而至氣海；略定一定，復用前法，連行三次，口中之津，分三次咽下，所謂天河水逆流也。

This document was written by Wang, Ang (汪昂) in 1682 A.D. during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912 A.D., 清朝). The Qi path is the same as in the previous document, but it also describes the preparation for Small Circulation.

Nian (念) is the thought lingering your mind and hard to get rid of. Jia Zuo (跏坐) is a special Buddhist meditation term which means to sit with crossed legs. San Mei Yin comes from Indian Samadhi and means great steadiness of the mind and

body. Si Zi Jue (四字訣) means Four Secret Words, namely Cuo (撮), Di (抵), Bi (閉), and Xi (吸). Cuo means to condense, to focus, to concentrate. It implies the concentration of the mind and Qi. Di means to press up, namely the tongue is pressing up against the palate of the mouth. Bi means to close, as in close or hold up the Huiyin (perinium). Xi means to suck in, as in “leading the Qi up the spine in coordination with inhalation.”

Que Qiao (鵲橋) means magpie bridge, or tongue, which bridges the Conception and Governing Vessels. Chong Lou (重樓) means layers of stories, namely the throat area. Li Gong (離宮) means Li palace, or heart. In the Eight Trigrams (Bagua, 八卦), Li represents fire, and the heart belongs to fire in the Five Elements (Wuxing, 五行). Qihai (氣海) is the Lower Dan Tian (Xia Dan Tian, 下丹田), which belongs to water, and is called Kan palace (坎宮) in the Eight Trigrams.

To lead the Qi from Huiyin (Co-1, 會陰, perineum, sea bottom) up the back to the crown is called reversed flow of the heavenly river water (Tian He Shui Ni Liu, 天河水逆流).

*Sit quietly for a while. Let the left and right hand each rub the Lower Dan Tian one hundred and eight times, including the navel. Then cover the navel with clothes to keep the wind off. Rub the back of the thumbs until they are warm, and wipe the eyes with them fourteen times to get rid of (excess Yang) heart fire. Rub the nose thirty-six times to moisten the lungs. Rub the ears fourteen times to nourish the kidneys. Rub the face fourteen times to strengthen the spleen. Cover the ears with the hands and beat the heavenly drum (Ming Tian Gu). Raise the hands up gradually as if worshipping heaven, and repeat three times. Slowly exhale dirty air and inhale clean air. Hold the shoulders, move and shift the tendons and bones a few times. Rub Yuzhen gate twenty-four times, rub kidney eyes one hundred and eight times, and also the center of each foot one hundred and eight times.*

靜坐片時，將手左右擦丹田各一百八下，連臍抱住，放手時將衣被圍住臍輪，勿令風入；次將大指背擦熱，拭目十四遍，去心火；擦鼻三十六遍，潤肺；擦耳十四遍，補腎；擦面十四遍，健脾。雙手掩耳鳴天鼓，徐徐將手往上，即朝天揖，如此者三，徐徐呵出濁氣四、五口，收清氣；雙手抱肩，移筋換骨數遍；擦玉枕關二十四下；擦腰眼各一百八下，擦足心各一百八下。

This document describes the recovery Qigong exercises right after Small Circulation meditation. Ming Tian Gu (鳴天鼓) means to ‘beat the heavenly drum.’ Cover the ears with the palms, using the fingers to tap the base of the skull and the two major neck muscles. Refer to the YMAA book, *Eight Simple Qigong Exercises (The Eight Pieces of Brocade, Ba Duan Jin, 八段錦)*.

These documents briefly describe the practice of Small Circulation, but without giving detail of how to build up Qi and the attendant dangers. The basic theory remains the same, though with different approaches to the final goal.

Small Circulation meditation is commonly practiced in Chinese martial arts society, as the foundation of Muscle/Tendon Changing, which strengthens martial power significantly. The common procedures as learned from a master are:

1. **Build up abundant Qi.** A master would teach how to build the Qi to a very high level at the Lower Dan Tian through abdominal breathing. The student would spend up to ten years building this Qi and conditioning the Lower Dan Tian.
2. **Circulate Qi in the Small Circulation path.** Since Qi is already abundant, it can be dangerous without correct technique. The crucial keys were often kept secret by the master, namely to control the Huiyin cavity in coordination with breathing and to touch the tongue to the palate of the mouth. Only when the student had earned his trust were these secrets revealed. There are three places, called Three Gates (San Guan, 三關), which are dangerous in practice. The student would obey the master's order step by step to get through these three gates. The danger of being unable to control this abundant Qi, is that it can enter the wrong path, called 'entering the fire' (Zou Huo, 走火). We discuss these three gates and their dangers in detail in section 5-5.

An important point is that Embryonic Breathing (Tai Xi, 胎息) is the Yin side of Internal Elixir (Nei Dan, 內丹) practice. It is the crucial key in practicing Marrow/Brain Washing and is unknown in secular society. Even in Buddhist and Daoist monasteries, only a few monks reach a profound level to understand it. Whenever stored Qi is built up to an abundant level at the False Lower Dan Tian, the excess is immediately distributed through the Conception and Governing Vessels and the Twelve Primary Qi Channels. The body, including the twelve internal organs, grows stronger. This is the fundamental concept of Muscle/Tendon Changing.

With Small Circulation training accomplished, the body and the manifestation of martial power are significantly enhanced. But too much Muscle/Tendon Changing training can also cause a serious problem called energy dispersion (San Gong, 散功). When the physical body has been over-energized, it can lead to high blood pressure and stroke. To balance this, practice the Yin side of training, Marrow/Brain Washing Qigong. The first step is Embryonic Breathing (Tai Xi, 胎息), described in detail in the previous book in this series, *Qigong Meditation—Embryonic Breathing*.

### Modified Practice in Present Day

Though Small Circulation has been known in Indian Yoga, Chinese Buddhist Chan (禪, Japanese Zen, 忍), and Chinese Daoist societies, still only a few Qigong practitioners dare to practice it, due to the following reasons:

1. **Lack of understanding of theory and practice.** There is very little information available to read and study.
2. **Dangers during practice.** The Three Gates (San Guan, 三關) are dangerous.
3. **Lack of an experienced teacher.** Often experience is essential for guidance, especially when there is a problem.

The following practice methods have developed from my personal practice, teaching, and study over more than 25 years. I believe this new approach has reduced the danger to the minimum.

1. **Teach theory first.** Theory is like a map of a city. Without it, the student can easily get lost, especially in today's environment where he does not live and practice together with the master. Most practitioners in the past did not know the theory, but this has now been understood and revealed. For any beginner, understanding the theory has become crucial for successful practice.
2. **Teach Embryonic Breathing first.** To prevent too much Yang developing and the problem of energy dispersion, a student should first learn the Yin side of training, namely the theory and methods of Embryonic Breathing. With this tool, he can manipulate the situation and balance the body's Yin and Yang easily and effectively.
3. **Build up Qi only as much as necessary.** Traditionally a student would build up Qi to a highly abundant level, encountering the attendant dangers. Before he has accumulated too much Qi, he should learn to circulate it. In this way, there is not enough Qi to cause the problem of 'entering the fire' (Zou Huo, 走火).
4. **Use the mind to circulate before the Qi storage reaches a harmful level.** Traditionally one accumulated abundant Qi, then learned to circulate it. If we reverse this procedure, before a student's Qi has reached a harmful level, he can already lead it smoothly. That is like teaching a beginner driver with a small car. Only when he is a skilled driver, is a bigger and more powerful car provided. The disadvantage of this is that weaker Qi takes longer to overcome blockages and widen its path. It is like opening a blocked water pipe.



5. **First practice Small Small Circulation** (Xiao Xiao Zhou Tian, 小小周天) **to avoid danger**, especially at the tailbone area, and circulate Qi in coordination with the breathing, abdomen, and perineum.
6. **Carefully select the Qi turning points to avoid the problem of Qi stagnation.** Before completing the whole small circulation, first train the correct turning points where Qi can be returned to the Lower Dan Tian. If the turning points are wrong, Qi stagnation can occur, and also ‘entering the fire’. These turning points were kept secret in the past. I have modified them, and believe these are safer than the traditional points used in the past. Once you understand the theory, you can modify the training path without causing any problem.

### 5-3. SMALL CIRCULATION AND QI NETWORK 小周天與經絡學

#### Qi Network

1. **Diaphragm** (Heng Ge Mo, 橫隔膜, Junction of Upper and Lower Level Qi)
  - A. The diaphragm is a good electric conductor sandwiched between fasciae, which are poor conductors. This area acts as a battery to store fire Qi (Huo Qi, 火氣), and is called the Middle Dan Tian (Zhong Dan Tian, 中丹田).
  - B. It divides the body into upper and lower bodies, in terms of Qi. The chest area above it is where the External Qi (Wai Qi, 外氣, oxygen and carbon dioxide) is exchanged. The diaphragm pumps the air in and out. The stomach and abdomen below the diaphragm constitute the biobattery where Internal Qi (Nei Qi, 內氣, bioelectricity) is stored. This Lower Dan Tian (Xia Dan Tian, 下丹田) produces Qi and stores it. The abdomen is the Qi pump, while the Huiyin (Co-1, 會陰, perineum) is the controlling gate which regulates its flow.
  - C. External Qi (air) and internal Qi (bioelectricity) are closely related to one other. Oxygen (air) and bioelectricity are proportional to each other. When oxygen supply is more abundant, more glucose will be converted into Qi to manifest as physical action, heat, and light.
  - D. When too much Qi accumulates at the Middle Dan Tian, the heartbeat will be faster and breathing heavier, disturbing the emotional mind.

## 2. Jing (經, Primary Qi channels)

- A. There are twelve primary Qi channels, six Yin and six Yang. They act as rivers which follow the limbs and distribute Qi throughout the body. Three Yang (large intestines, Triple Burner, and small intestines) and three Yin (lungs, pericardium and heart) channels connect six internal organs with the upper extremities. Another three Yang (stomach, bladder, and gall bladder) and three Yin (spleen, kidneys, and liver) channels connect the other six internal organs with the lower extremities. When Qi circulation stagnates in these rivers, sickness is initiated.
- B. The heart, lungs, and pericardium coexist and are isolated from the other organs by the diaphragm. These three Yin organs are closely related and harmonize with each other. For example, when the heart beats faster, the breathing is faster. When the breathing is slower, the heartbeat slows. The pericardium acts as a cooler for the heart which, like a car engine, needs a radiator to maintain its function. These three Yin organs are connected to the thumb (lungs), middle finger (pericardium), and pinky (heart) and to three Yang organs, namely large intestine (index finger), triple burner (middle finger), and small intestine (pinky).

## 3. Luo (絡, Secondary Qi channels)

- A. There are millions of secondary channels, called Luo, branching out like streams from the primary channels and distributing Qi throughout the body. They are like capillaries in the blood system. They branch out from the primary channels, circulating Qi laterally.
- B. Luo connect the primary channels to the skin surface and bone marrow, and to the organs. When more Qi is led out through the Luo from the primary Qi channels (Jing), the Guardian Qi (Wei Qi, 衛氣) is strengthened, Qi manifests more externally, so the body becomes warmer. When more Qi is led in through Luo from the primary Qi channels, the Marrow Qi (Sui Qi, 髓氣) is enhanced. More Qi is stored internally and physical manifestation is weakened, so you feel chilly.
- C. When exhalation is longer than inhalation, more Qi is led out and manifested. When inhalation is longer than exhalation, more Qi is led in and stored. With the sound of Ha (哈) and Hen (哼), manifestation and storage are more effective.



#### 4. Mai (脈, Vessels)

Vessels (Mai, 脈) are like reservoirs which regulate Qi in the Twelve Primary Channels. One of the oldest Chinese medical books, *Nan Jing* (難經), said, “Mai includes strange meridians eight vessels, which do not belong to the Twelve Meridians.”<sup>1</sup> Li, Shi-Zhen (李時珍) also explains in his book, *The Study of Strange Meridians and Eight Vessels* (奇經八脈考), “Strange meridians include eight vessels which are not restrained like twelve meridians. There is no matching and coordination on the surface or internally, so they are called strange.”<sup>2</sup>

Chinese medicine recognizes the importance of the Conception and Governing Vessels (任脈·督脈) used in acupuncture practice. Due to limited understanding of the other six vessels, acupuncture usually does not manipulate them. That is why, together with the Twelve Primary Qi Channels (Shi Er Jing, 十二經), they are commonly called Fourteen Channels (Shi Si Jing, 十四經) in Chinese acupuncture. In the book, *The Study of Practical Chinese Medical Qigong* (實用中醫氣功學), it says, “Governing Vessel originates from Huiyin, Qi moves up the back of the body, and is the total governor of the Yang vessels. Therefore, it is called the ocean of the Yang vessel. Conception Vessel begins from Huiyin, (Qi) circulates along the abdomen up the front of the body and is responsible for all Yin vessels. Therefore, it is called ocean of the Yin vessels. If one circulates Qi smoothly in these two, then hundreds of vessels all transport. Qi circulates through the body without hindrance or stagnation. The Dao of longevity depends on this.”<sup>3,4</sup>

How do these two vessels control the Qi status of the whole body? Let us conclude this from available documents.

#### **Conception Vessel—Ocean of Yin Vessels (Ren Mai, 任脈) (陰脈之海) (Figure 5-1)<sup>4,5</sup>**

1. It circulates at the right center of the chest and abdomen to meet three Yin primary Qi channels of the feet (liver, spleen, and kidneys) at Zhongji (Co-3, 中極) and Guanyuan (Co-4, 關元) cavities. It joins Yang Linking Vessel (Yangwei Mai, 陽維脈) at Tiantu (Co-22, 天突) and Lianquan (Co-23, 廉泉) cavities, and connects with Thrusting Vessel (Chong Mai, 衝脈) at Yinjiao (Co-7, 陰交).
2. The three Yin primary Qi channels of the feet join the three Yin primary Qi channels of the hands (heart, lungs, and pericardium). Through this network, the Conception Vessel regulates all six Yin channels.

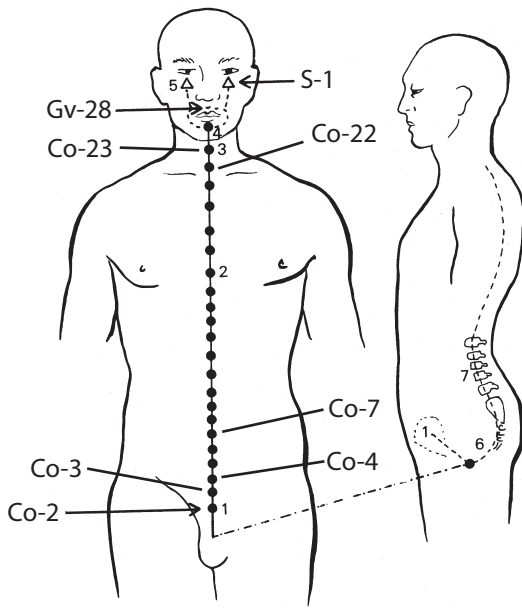


Figure 5-1. Conception Vessel (Ren Mai)—  
Ocean of Yin Vessels

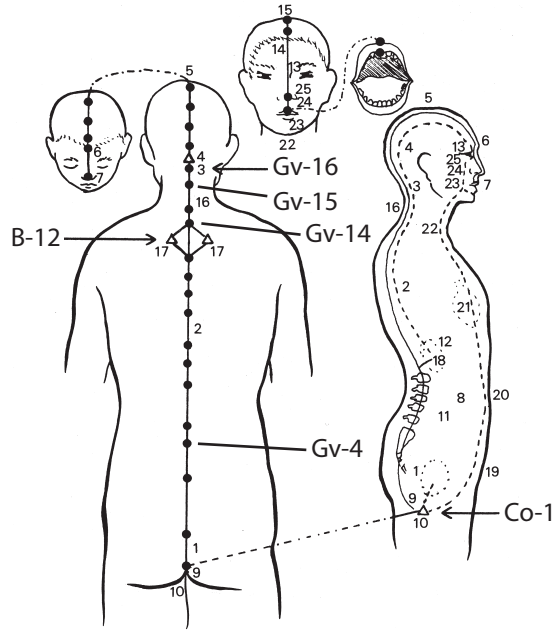


Figure 5-2. Governing Vessel (Du Mai)—  
Ocean of Yang Vessels

**Governing Vessel—Ocean of Yang Vessels (Du Mai, 督脈) (陽脈之海) (Figure 5-2)<sup>4,6</sup>**

1. This vessel circulates at the right center of the back. It meets several times with the six Yang primary Qi channels of the hands and feet. The most central place is Dazhui (Gv-14, 大椎) cavity. All three Yang channels of the hands and feet meet here.
2. The Girdle Vessel (Dai Mai, 帶脈) begins below the hypochondrium at the level of the 2nd lumbar vertebra connecting Mingmen (Gv-4, 命門) and encircles the waist like a girdle. Yang Linking Vessel (Yangwei Mai, 陽維脈) also connects the Governing Vessel (Du Mai, 督脈) at Fengfu (Gv-16, 風府) and Yamen (Gv-15, 啞門). In this way, the Governing Vessel governs the function of the Yang vessels.

**Mai and Internal Elixir Meditation**

How important are the vessels to Internal Elixir (Nei Dan, 內丹) practice? Li, Shi-Zhen (李時珍, 1518-1593 A.D.) explains this in his book, *The Study of Strange Meridians and Eight Vessels* (奇經八脈考), “The Eight Vessels introduced in all existing books are too brief and not understood in detail. So for those doctors who do not know them, it is harder to explore the origin of sickness. For

those immortal family (Qigong practitioners for enlightenment) who do not know them, it is hard to install the furnace and tripod (position spirit and Qi). Shi-Zhen is not wise, so refers to all available discussions and gathers information here, so those immortal family and doctors can use it. If those doctors know these Eight Vessels, then the major contents of Twelve Primary Qi Channels and fifteen secondary Qi channels can be understood. If those immortal researchers know these Eight Vessels, then the marvelousness of ascending and descending, tiger and dragon, and the hidden profound detail of Xuan Pin can be obtained.<sup>37</sup> Xuan Pin (玄牝) is what is called Taiji (太極, Grand Ultimate) in *Yi Jing (The Book of Change)*. This Taiji is the Dao (道) of lives in the great nature. Therefore, Xuan Pin can be called the root of creation, variation, bearing, and raising of millions of lives. It is the mother of millions of objects of heaven and earth, another name for Dao.

Finally, I summarize the key points of the Eight Vessels.

**1. Conception Vessel** (Ren Mai, 任脈)

- a. A Yin vessel which balances the Qi status of the Yang Governing Vessel.
- b. Responsible for regulating Qi in the six Yin primary channels. When Qi is abundant, it circulates smoothly in the six Yin primary Qi channels.
- c. With the Yang Governing Vessel, it completes the Small Circulation. When Qi circulates smoothly in Small Circulation, the physical body can be conditioned and health improved. Small Circulation is the fire path (Huo Lu, 火路) of Internal Elixir (Nei Dan, 內丹) practice. Qi circulates strongly in the fire path during the daytime.

**2. Governing Vessel** (Du Mai, 督脈)

- a. A Yang vessel which balances the Qi of the Yin Conception Vessel.
- b. Governs and regulates the Qi in the six primary Yang Qi channels. When Qi is abundant in this vessel, it circulates smoothly in the six primary Yang Qi channels.
- c. With the Yin Conception Vessel, it completes the Small Circulation.

**3. Thrusting Vessel** (Chong Mai, 衝脈)

- a. The main section of the Thrusting Vessel is the spinal cord, which connects the brain (Upper Dan Tian) with the second brain (Real Lower Dan Tian), constituting the central Qi system. Upper and lower brains are the two poles of this system.

- b. Qi circulates strongly at night, and the brain obtains its energetic nourishment at this time. Due to abundant Qi supply at night, hormone production is enhanced and the pituitary and pineal glands, adrenals, testicles, and ovaries function fully.
- c. This path is responsible for spiritual growth, while the Small Circulation accounts for physical life. So circulating Qi in the Thrusting Vessel (water path) is for spiritual cultivation (marrow/brain washing), while circulating it in the Small Circulation (fire path) is for physical conditioning (muscle/tendon changing).
- d. Among the Eight Vessels, this vessel is classified as extreme Yin and balances the Girdle Vessel which is classified as extreme Yang. When Qi accumulates here, the body is calm, and the marrow and brain obtain nourishment (marrow washing).
- e. This central energy line gives a feeling of being centered.

#### 4. Girdle Vessel (Dai Mai, 帶脈)

- a. Its Qi circulates strongly whenever you are standing up. This gives a feeling of physical and mental balance, from which you find your center. This vessel is classified as extreme Yang and balances the Thrusting Vessel. One provides balance, while the other provides centered feeling. That means though there are two vessels, they function as one.
- b. The Qi circulating in this vessel is responsible for the body's Guardian Qi (Wei Qi, 衛氣). When this Qi expands abundantly, you are more balanced and the immune system functions well.
- c. How much the Guardian Qi can expand depends on the abundance of Qi stored in the Real Lower Dan Tian. The more Qi stored in the Real Lower Dan Tian, the more healthy, balanced, and centered you are.

#### 5. Yin Heel Vessel (Yinqiao Mai, 陰蹻脈) and Yin Linking Vessel (Yinwei Mai, 陰維脈)

- a. These two vessels connect at the Huiyin (Co-1) (會陰) with the Conception and Thrusting Vessels. At the bottom, they connect to the concave area of the feet. When sexual energy is strong, the Qi stored in these two vessels is strong, manifesting as the strength of the legs. When sexual energy is depleted, the legs are weak.
- b. These two vessels balance the Qi status of the Yang Heel and Yang Linking Vessels. While the Yin vessels store the Qi, the Yang vessels manifest it.

**6. Yang Heel Vessel (Yangqiao Mai, 陽蹻脈) and Yang Linking Vessel (Yangwei Mai, 陽維脈)**

- a. These two vessels balance the Qi status of the Yin Heel and Yin Linking Vessels. While the Yin vessels store Qi, the Yang vessels manifest it. When the Qi is strong, the lower part of the body will be strong.
- b. These two Yang vessels balance the above two Yin vessels. Though physically they are two, in function they are one.

**Zi and Wu Major Qi Flow (Zi Wu Liu Zhu, 子午流注)**

To understand the Qi network, recognize that the body is alive and the Qi circulation in it is affected by nature. This relationship with the cycles of nature is called Zi Wu Liu Zhu (子午流注), which you need to follow to circulate Qi efficiently.

Zi (子) is the period between 11 P.M. and 1 A.M., and Wu (午) between 11 A.M. and 1 P.M. Liu (流) means flow, and Zhu (注) means tendency. So Zi Wu Liu Zhu (子午流注) means ‘the major Qi flow tendency which follows the time changes’.

The *Inner Classic* (內經) calls this the correspondence of heaven and man.<sup>8</sup> The major Qi flows of the Twelve Primary Qi Channels differ from each other. Qi flowing in the Conception and Governing Vessels (fire path) is also affected by the natural cycle. As it circulates, the Qi level in one part of the path is always higher than elsewhere. This area of stronger Qi moves around the path regularly every twenty-four hours. It is this area of higher Qi potential which keeps the Qi flowing. Just as water only flows from a higher to a lower level, Qi only moves from a place of higher potential to one of lower potential.

*Great Collection of Golden Elixir* (金丹大成集) said, “Zi and Wu are the middle points of heaven and earth. In heaven, they are the sun and the moon; in humans, they are the heart and kidneys; in time, they are Zi (子, midnight) and Wu (午, noon); in the Eight Trigrams, they are Kan (坎, Water) and Li (離, Fire); in orientation, they are the south and the north.”<sup>9</sup> Also, Dr. Yang, Ji-Zhou (楊繼洲, 1522-1620 A.D.) explained in his book, *The Complete Book of Acupuncture and Moxibustion* (針灸大成), “Conception and Governing Vessels of a human body, back and front are analogous to nature’s Zi-Wu (子午, midnight-noon). If analogous to south and north, they can be divided and combined. When divided, Yin and Yang are not disordered, and when combined, they coordinate seamlessly with each other. One is two and two is one.”<sup>10</sup> In the Small Circulation fire path, Qi circulates more strongly in the Conception Vessel (Ren Mai, 任脈) than in the Governing Vessel (Du Mai, 督脈) during daytime, while it circulates more strongly in the Governing Vessel at night. It seems they are two vessels, but in function they are one, since they belong to the same circuit.

Li, Shi-Zhen (李時珍, 1518-1593 A.D.) discussed this in *The Study of Strange Meridians and Eight Vessels* (奇經八脈考), “Conception and Governing Vessels are

the body's Zi-Wu (子午). It is the Dao of ascending and descending of Yang-Huo (陽火) and Yin-Fu (陰符), used by the Elixir Family (Dan Jia, 丹家, Qigong society). It is the key place of Kan and Li."<sup>11</sup> Yang-Huo (陽火, Yang fire) means the way to increase the body's fire to make it more Yang. Yin-Fu (陰符, Yin magic water) is the way to enhance the body's water, making its Yang more Yin. Fu (符) is the magic water (Fu Shui, 符水) for curing disease.

In the Fire Path, the major Qi flow at noon is at the Middle Dan Tian (Zhong Dan Tian, 中丹田). It moves down to the Lower Dan Tian between 2 and 4 P.M. It goes down to Huiyin (Co-1, 會陰) at sunset and moves to the back in the evening, reaching the top of the Baihui (Gv-20, 百會) at midnight. At sunrise, the Qi is in the face, and by noon, it has reached the Middle Dan Tian to complete the cycle. This cycle is used by martial artists for vital cavity strikes (Dian Xue, 點穴) (Figure 5-3).

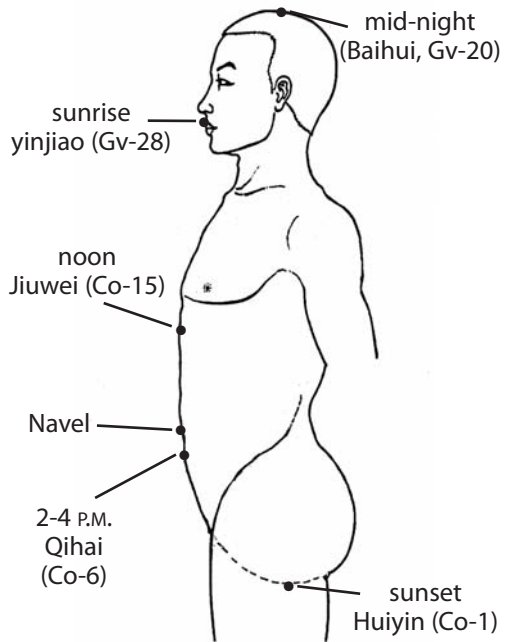


Figure 5-3. Natural Qi Circulation in the Fire Path

### Cavities Related to Meditation 靜坐有關之穴道

Let us summarize the important cavities used in Small Circulation practice, so it will be easier to follow the discussion in the rest of the book.

#### 1. Shang Dan Tian (上丹田, Upper Elixir Field)

The whole brain is regarded as the Upper Dan Tian. Brain cells are highly conductive and can store and consume a lot of electricity. The space between the two hemispheres of the brain is called the Spiritual Valley (Shen Gu, 神谷) where the Valley Spirit (Gu Shen, 谷神) resides. At the bottom center of the valley, where the pituitary and pineal glands are situated, is the Mud Pill Palace (Ni Wan Gong, 泥丸宮). The brain is responsible for conscious thought, while this space without any brain cells is related to your subconscious mind. It is where you connect with nature since birth. While your conscious mind is in the false human matrix, your subconscious mind is free and truthful.

Baihui (Gv-20, 百會) at the crown and Yintang (M-NH-3, 印堂, third eye) are the two gates where your spirit communicates with the natural

energy and spirit. Though Baihui is open, Yintang has been sealed in humans for a long time.

2. **Zhong Dan Tian** (中丹田, Middle Elixir Field)

There are different opinions about the location of the Middle Dan Tian. Some documents believe Shanzhong (Co-17, 膻中) is the Middle Dan Tian since behind it is the thymus gland, related to your heart (emotional mind). Others claim the heart itself is the Middle Dan Tian since it relates to your emotional mind and stores Post-birth fire Qi. Others again believe that Jiuwei (Co-15, 鳩尾, Wide Pigeon's Tail, lower sternum) is where it is located (Figure 5-4).

Looking at the body's structure, we see the diaphragm, a good electric conductor, sandwiched between fasciae (poor conductors) on both sides. This is like a battery, able to store charge to an abundant level. It is between the lungs where air is exchanged and the stomach where food is converted, so Post-birth Qi can be stored to a high level. Qi stored in this area also affects the emotional mind.

3. **Jia Xia Dan Tian** (假下丹田, False Lower Elixir Field)

The False Lower Dan Tian is located about two inches below the navel in the abdominal area. This is Qihai (Co-6, 氣海, Ocean of Qi) in Chinese medicine (Figure 5-5). Daoists call it Dan Lu (丹爐, Elixir Furnace). These names indicate that this area can produce Qi (grow elixir) as abundantly as the ocean.

When you move your abdomen up and down through abdominal breathing, you produce Qi. This movement is called Qi Huo (起火) and means to start the fire. Two ways of breathing build up the fire and store Qi. One is Normal Abdominal Breathing (Zheng Fu Hu Xi, 正腹呼吸), the other Reverse Abdominal Breathing (Fan, Ni Fu Hu Xi, 反·逆腹呼吸). The abdominal breathing is also called Returning to Childhood Breathing (Fan Tong Hu Xi, 返童呼吸) or Post-Heaven Breathing (Xian Tian Hu Xi, 先天呼吸). A fetus uses this pumping movement to suck in nutrition and oxygen from its mother through the umbilical cord. Most small children

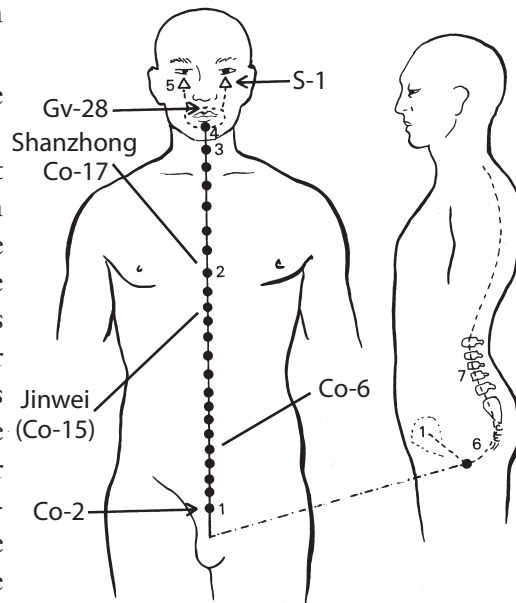


Figure 5-4. Shanzhong (Co-17) and Jiuwei (Co-15)



you. Such things can cause serious injury, especially when you are circulating Qi in Small Circulation or practicing other higher levels of practice where great concentration is necessary. Before you practice, you should prevent all possible disturbances.

**Believing non-professional opinions.** A common failing is to believe and trust other people's judgment more than our own. We are especially open to advice from our friends. When you encounter a problem during practice, do not discuss it with anyone who is not experienced with Qigong. You can discuss it with your teacher or fellow students, but it is best not to talk about it with friends not practicing Qigong. You are likely to be much better qualified to evaluate things than they are.

**Not following advice and rules of the Masters.** At the end of this section, we discuss twenty-four rules you should observe while practicing Qigong, to avoid the most common and serious problems.

Though we have pointed out many possible sources of deviation and danger, you should not let this scare you away from practicing Qigong. Every practice always has some level of risk. For example, you would not ban swimming simply because some people drown, and you shouldn't refuse to drive a car even though many people are killed or injured by them. The proper approach to any of these things is to understand what you are doing, know the source of potential problems, define the training rules, and proceed cautiously.

Most deviations happen to those who generate a strong Qi flow, yet still do not understand and master the regulation of the body, breathing, and mind. Once you generate strong Qi in your body, you must know how to lead it, otherwise it may move into the wrong paths and affect normal Qi circulation. This is harmful and even dangerous. That is why they are called deviations rather than phenomena, the term used earlier to refer to common experiences.

#### **Deviations and corrections:**

**Headache.** Earlier we discussed the headaches beginners have. Here we discuss the potentially serious headaches caused by excess Qi and blood, or lack of oxygen in the brain. Excess Qi and blood is usually caused by forced concentration, which means the mind is not regulated properly. Even when concentrating, Yi and body should be relaxed. If you force yourself to concentrate, your mind leads Qi and blood to the head, and you will become more tense and get a headache. If you can't sleep, it's no good trying to force yourself to sleep, just relax and let it happen.

The headache caused by lack of oxygen usually occurs when your breathing is not regulated properly. Beginners frequently concentrate Yi so hard that they unconsciously hold their breath. This reduces oxygen supply to the brain and causes headaches or dizziness. So regulate the breath until it is smooth and natural, which is regulating the breath without regulating. Only then concentrate on leading Qi.





Figure 7-3

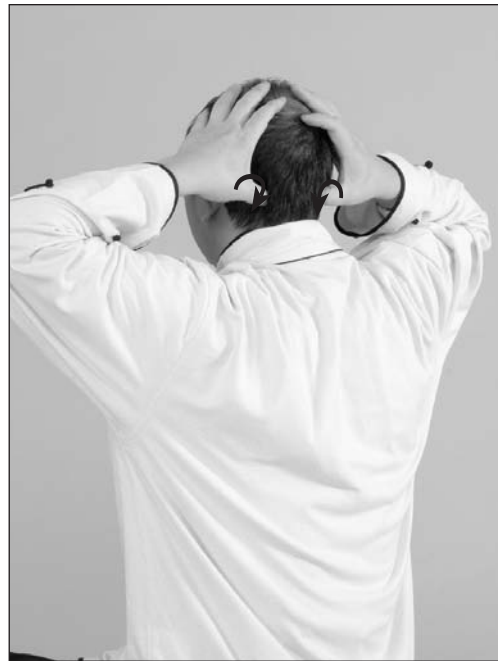


Figure 7-4

If you get a headache while practicing Qigong, immediately lead the Qi to the Real Lower Dan Tian, and stop training after a few breaths. With your breathing smooth, relax your body deeply. This opens the Qi channels in the neck, and excess Qi and blood in your head can disperse. Massage your temples (Figure 7-3), the Fengchi cavity (GB-20, 風池, Wind Pond)(Figure 7-4), and the muscles at the back of your neck, pushing downward to lead the blood and Qi out of your head. Finally, place the center of your palm on the Baihui cavity, lightly circle a few times and then follow the muscles down the back of the neck (Figure 7-5). Tap the head gently from the center to the sides and from the front to the back. This leads stagnant Qi out to the surface of the skin (Figure 7-6). Then use the palms to smooth the hair back from the forehead to the back of the neck (Figure 7-7). Naturally, you may also brush it forward and down the Fire Path with your palms (Figure 7-8).



Figure 7-5



Figure 7-6



Figure 7-7



Figure 7-8

**Stagnant Qi in the Upper Dan Tian.**

When Qi stagnates in your Upper Dan Tian, it feels like fly paper stuck to your third eye. This usually happens when you concentrate there very intensely. When you concentrate your spirit, your Upper Dan Tian usually feels comfortably warm. If you feel uncomfortable, it means the Qi is stagnant. When this happens, massage your third eye and lead the Qi past the temples and down the sides of the neck (Figure 7-9).

**False Lower Dan Tian feels distended and uncomfortable.** This is more common with beginners and usually happens when you force your abdominal muscles in and out. When the muscles are tired, you can't control them. When training abdominal movement, remain soft and relaxed so Qi does not stagnate there. If your abdomen feels uncomfortable and Qi stagnates, massage it in a circular manner (follow bowel system)(Figure 7-10), then open your hands and brush the Qi down to the thighs (Figure 7-11).

**Pressure and discomfort at the diaphragm.** This usually happens if you don't regulate your breathing correctly. Reverse Abdominal Breathing can cause a feeling of pressure and discomfort, so start the session on a smaller scale, with smaller movements of the abdomen. There is a limit to how far you can move your abdomen without feeling pressure on your diaphragm. Discomfort means Qi is stagnant from pressure around the diaphragm. Stop training, fold your hands, and gently press in on the solar plexus a few times (Figure 7-12), then brush down and to the sides (Figure 7-13).

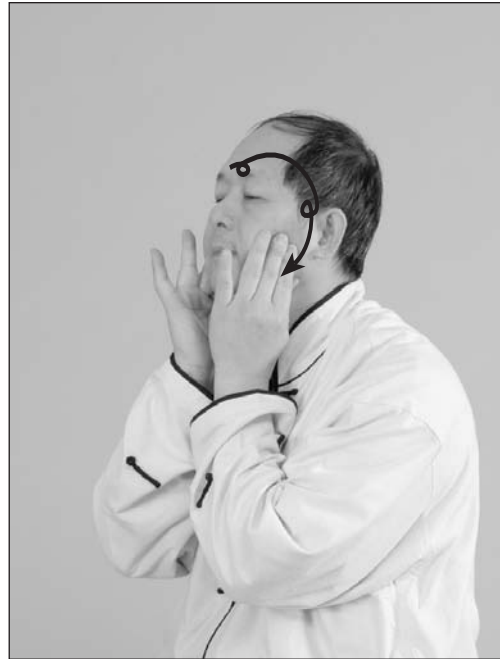


Figure 7-9

## BOOKS FROM YMAA

6 HEALING MOVEMENTS	B050/906
101 REFLECTIONS ON TAI CHI CHUAN	B041/868
108 INSIGHTS INTO TAI CHI CHUAN — A STRING OF PEARLS	B031/582
ANCIENT CHINESE WEAPONS	B004R/671
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ARTHRITIS RELIEF — CHINESE QIGONG FOR HEALING & PREVENTION, 3RD ED.	B015R/0339
BACK PAIN RELIEF — CHINESE QIGONG FOR HEALING & PREVENTION 2ND ED	B030R/0258
BAGUAZHANG	B020/300
CARDIO KICKBOXING ELITE	B043/922
CHIN NA IN GROUND FIGHTING	B064/663
CHINESE FAST WRESTLING — THE ART OF SAN SHOU KUAI JIAO	B028/493
CHINESE FITNESS — A MIND / BODY APPROACH	B029/37X
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COMPREHENSIVE APPLICATIONS OF SHAOLIN CHIN NA	B021/36X
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ESSENCE OF TAIJI QIGONG, 2ND ED.	B014R/639
EXPLORING TAI CHI	B065/424
FIGHTING ARTS	B062/213
HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF, 2ND ED.	B017R/345
INSIDE TAI CHI	B056/108
KATA AND THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE	B071/0266
LIUHEBAFA FIVE CHARACTER SECRETS	B067/728
MARTIAL ARTS ATHLETE	B033/655
MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTION	B072/024X
MARTIAL WAY AND ITS VIRTUES	B066/698
MIND/BODY FITNESS	B042/876
MUGAI RYU	B061/183
NATURAL HEALING WITH QIGONG — THERAPEUTIC QIGONG	B070/0010
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OKINAWA'S COMPLETE KARATE SYSTEM — ISSHIN RYU	B044/914
POWER BODY	B037/760
PRINCIPLES OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE	B053/99X
QIGONG FOR HEALTH & MARTIAL ARTS 2ND ED.	B005R/574
QIGONG FOR LIVING	B058/116
QIGONG FOR TREATING COMMON AILMENTS	B040/701
QIGONG MASSAGE—FUNDAMENTAL TECHNIQUES FOR HEALTH AND RELAXATION	B016R/0487
QIGONG MEDITATION — EMBRYONIC BREATHING	B068/736
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Small Circulation, or the Microcosmic Orbit, is the practice of circulating energy, within the human body, Qi, through the two main pathways, or “vessels” of the body. This practice is considered to be the foundation of Internal Elixir Qigong, and was a fundamental step on the path of meditation training in ancient times. Over the centuries, this practice has slowly been lost from many meditation traditions, and its importance has been forgotten.

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