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QIGONG — IN DEPTH

THE ROOT OF CHINESE QIGONG

氣功之本

SECRETS FOR HEALTH, LONGEVITY, & ENLIGHTENMENT

MARTIAL ARTS

ENLIGHTENMENT

HEALING

LONGEVITY

HEALTH



JING
ESSENCE

SHEN
SPIRIT

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Introduction

Qigong (氣功) is the science of cultivating the body's internal energy, which is called Qi (氣) in Chinese. The Chinese have been researching Qi for the last four thousand years, and have found Qigong to be an effective way to improve health and to cure many illnesses. Most important of all, however, they have found that it can help them to achieve both mental and spiritual peace.

Until recently, Qigong training was usually kept secret, especially within martial arts systems or religions such as Buddhism and Daoism. Only acupuncture and some health-related Qigong exercises were available to the general public. During the last twenty years these secrets have become available to the general public through publications and open teaching. Medical professionals have finally been able to test Qigong more widely and scientifically, and they have found that it can help or cure a number of diseases that Western medicine has difficulty treating, including some forms of cancer. Many of my students and readers report that after practicing Qigong, they have changed from being weak to strong, from depressed to happy, and from sick to healthy.

Since Qigong can bring so many benefits, I feel that it is my responsibility to collect the available published documents and compile them, filter them, understand them, and introduce them to those who cannot read them in their original Chinese. It is, however, impossible for one person alone to experience and understand the fruit of four thousand years of Qigong research. I hope that other Qigong experts will share this responsibility and publish the information that they have been taught, as well as what they have learned through research and experimentation.

Even though Qigong has been researched in China for four thousand years, there are still many questions which can only be answered through recourse to today's technology and interdisciplinary knowledge. Contemporary, enthusiastic minds will have plenty of opportunity to research and promote the art. This is not a job that can be done through one individual's effort. It requires a group of experts including Western-style doctors, Qigong experts, acupuncturists, and equipment design specialists to sit down and work together and exchange their research results. A formal organization with adequate financial support will be needed. If this research is properly conducted, it should succeed not only in providing validation of Qigong for the Western mind, but it may also come up with the most efficient methods of practice. I feel certain that Qigong will become very popular in a short time, and bring many people a healthier and happier life. This is a new field for Western science, and it will need a lot of support to catch up to the research that has already been done in China. I hope sincerely that Qigong science will soon become one of the major research fields in colleges and universities in this country.

Foreword

First Edition

When Nixon opened China to the West in the 1970's, great interest was kindled in the possibilities of Americans learning many previously-hidden secrets of the "inscrutable" Orient. One of the realms of exploration most eagerly awaited, particularly by Western physicians, was the science of Oriental healing: exotic practices such as acupuncture, Shiatsu massage, Taijiquan, and the curious and puzzling notion of Qi, or vital energy. Popular magazines at the time featured arresting photographs of men and women lying calmly on operating tables, nearly disemboweled during major surgery, yet apparently requiring no more anesthesia than a few gleaming needles thrust into the skin of their foreheads.

Since these earliest dramatic harbingers, serious investigation of phenomena based on Chinese conceptualizations have both waxed and waned. Interest in Taijiquan, for example—a form of exercise, health maintenance, and combat—has risen steadily, especially in the western United States, stimulated in part by the fact that a large part of the Chinese citizenry practice this exercise daily to apparently good effect, and in part by the fact that Taijiquan masters, who regularly win mixed martial arts tournaments, seem to become better with age, rather than slower and weaker as do aging practitioners of other martial forms such as Gongfu.

In contrast, after a spate of studies and articles attempting to define the physiologic bases for the generally unchallenged efficacy of acupuncture, interest in this area has waned markedly. Most early investigators tended toward the beliefs either that some form of suggestibility was involved, like that of hypnosis, another time-honored and effective anesthetic; or else that some known neural mechanism was being employed, such as "gating," where stimulation of some nerves with acupuncture needles functionally blocked impulses (presumably pain impulses) in others.

At the present time in the public mind a mixed feeling, an ambivalence, seems to hold sway, between forces of acceptance and of resistance toward these oriental concepts. To place the value of the present book in some perspective, therefore, it will be useful to understand these opposing forces.

The current forces tending toward acceptance of Chinese healing theory and practice draw from multiple origins. The first is the upsurge of interest in physical fitness. A few years ago the "high energy, high effort" fitness wave swept over the country; thousands of formerly sedentary individuals ran, jogged, danced, pumped and stretched in search of greater health and strength or, at least, an improved silhouette. Then, as many would-be athletes nursed injured or over-strained muscles, bones and joints, interest in "low-impact" exercise surfaced. Ironically, Qigong practices were already providing this valuable type of conditioning centuries ago. Thus, the Westerner familiar with low-impact aerobics can readily understand the value of Qigong forms.

A second force tending toward acceptance is the average person's awareness of the link between mind and body; the concept of psychosomatic illness—mental conditions causing physical illnesses—is familiar from the popular press, from the rev-

elations of celebrities and from everyone's personal experience of tension headaches, stress ulcers, and the like. In a comparable fashion, some recent investigations by Herbert Benson, M.D. and others on the beneficial physical effects of mental calmness (as in the "relaxation response") have given solid support to the power of mental states to heal or harm. Thus the emphasis in Qigong practice on mental conditioning as a prerequisite and companion to physical improvement is not so foreign a notion at all.

On the other side of the ledger, certain factors tend to elicit resistance to these Eastern teachings and disbelief in both their relevance to modern persons and their scientific validity. One such factor is the radical interweaving in Qigong of what purports to be an essentially physiologic theory with philosophy and even religion or cosmology. Westerners used to partaking of their philosophy and science at separate tables may be alienated by their frank combination in Qigong principles.

A second factor is the absence at the present time of a "hard-science" physiology for Qi, its vessels and its actions. Some provocative preliminary findings have emerged correlating alterations in electric impedance in the skin at those points thought to be significant as acupuncture meridians and points; yet, alas, careful and replicable research with impeccable methodology has largely been lacking in this area. Instead, dubiously convincing, largely anecdotal material dominates the written works on the subject.

Another factor causing resistance is the tendency of writers in this field, following very ancient traditions and philosophical themes, to use the names of familiar body organs to describe conditions of the body related to Qi for which no other terminology exists. The Western reader becomes lost in the question of whether such phrases as "weakness of the liver" are meant to be metaphoric (that is, meaning, more literally, "a certain condition of bodily energy, otherwise indescribable, which affects those body sites which historical tradition has identified with the liver"); or whether the reader should, indeed, look to the condition of the actual liver to find some form of pathology, for which no clear picture comes to mind, since the liver performs so many different functions that "weakness" conveys nothing meaningful.

Finally, many Westerners appear to be put off by the inherently poetic and metaphoric terminology common in Chinese nomenclature for, say, types of Qi and physical exercise techniques. To pick one example, a particular stance in Shaolin style Gongfu is called "Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg"; such flowery language can have a jarring effect on the Westerner who is accustomed to such mundane descriptions as "side deltoid stretch."

For the Westerner who can bridge the gap between Western and Oriental conceptualizations, this book (and, indeed, the planned series) offers an exceptionally valuable resource in summarizing in a clear and straightforward way the historical development of this ancient field of learning. Through his exhaustive efforts to bring together ancient and more recent Chinese texts in this book, Dr. Yang has performed essential services in two ways. First, by tracing the history and evolution of these concepts, the reader can gain a sense of the development of ideas whose roots reach back over the centuries—ideas which are desperately in need of just such cross-cul-

tural illumination as this book provides. Second, Dr. Yang is issuing a challenge to others to bring the focus of careful research to this area to provide a durable empirical basis for both theory and practice of these sciences and arts. For both of these important steps, clearly, the time has come.

Thomas G. Gutheil, M.D.

*Associate Professor of Psychiatry
Harvard Medical School*

Foreword

New Edition

As much of the world undergoes fundamental re-evaluation of methods and goals of health care in the face of the growing wave of older citizens, there has never been such openness to expanding our concepts of treatment and health promotion. The wisdom and experience of Eastern healing traditions, accumulated and enriched over millennia, is brilliantly presented in this text on Qigong. These Eastern healing traditions have added to the growing recognition that proper exercise is essential to health maintenance and amelioration of disease, and have expanded the scope and definition of healing. Perhaps, most importantly in the West, we are learning humility about the limits as well as the genius of Western scientifically-based medical techniques in relation to Eastern practices and learning.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming is a rare teacher/treasure who bridges the gap between Western science and the highest traditions of Eastern healing. This book on Qigong — literally the study, research, and practices related to Qi the energy circulating in our bodies and in the universe — is an accessible expression of the Chinese approach to the fusion of concepts of body and mind. The book is also a practical guide to the devoted trainee or practitioner of Qigong and Taijiquan.

The Root of Chinese Qigong is an archive which will help preserve as well as expand the use of time-honored healing traditions. In both the West and East, we are in Dr. Yang's debt for this definitive guide to better health and well-being.

Irwin H. Rosenberg, M.D.

*Professor of Medicine and Nutrition
Director of The Human Nutrition Research
Center on Aging, Tufts University*

Foreword

New Edition

Qigong is an ancient art and science of health care and energy management that has been practiced continuously in China for at least 5,000 years. Formerly reserved exclusively for members of the imperial family and aristocracy as a secret practice for preserving health and prolonging life, and for the most advanced adepts of Daoist and Buddhist sects as a means of attaining spiritual immortality, Qigong has in recent years become available to the general public as a simple but profoundly effective method of self health care. While Western medical science continues to question the very existence of Qi (energy) as a factor in human health, millions of people throughout the world have already begun to experience the power of Qigong both for curing disease and for preventing it, as well as for enhancing overall vitality, achieving emotional and mental equilibrium, and cultivating spiritual awareness.

Modern physics has already established the fact that all matter in the universe, from atoms and molecules to planets and stars, ultimately consists of nothing more or less than energy vibrating at various frequencies and in particular patterns of relationship. That energy, which is the fundamental "stuff" of the universe is what the Chinese refer to as "Qi." Qigong therefore is a system whereby each and every individual may learn to work with the energies of the body, the planet, and the cosmos itself, in order to achieve the optimum state of balance and harmony upon which health and longevity depend.

The Root of Chinese Qigong is one of the first books to explore the nature of Qi and explain the ancient practice of Qigong in the light of modern science while still remaining faithful to the original Daoist principles that gave birth to this profound system of health care and spiritual cultivation. Indeed, the author has clearly demonstrated that Qigong is based entirely on scientific principles of energy that were known to the ancient Daoist masters who developed it long before Einstein first informed Western science that energy and matter are relative and transmutable elements.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming is uniquely qualified to explore the topic of Qigong in terms of Western thought. Backed by over thirty years of personal experience as both a practitioner and teacher of Qigong, trained in classical forms by traditional masters in Taiwan, and the founder of a school in America that transmits this ancient practice to contemporary Western students, Dr. Yang has gained full command of both the classical Daoist principles and the modern science concepts required to elucidate this traditional Chinese practice in a way that is meaningful to contemporary readers without a prior background in Chinese studies. What distinguishes *The Root of Chinese Qigong* from so many other books that have appeared in recent years on the same subject is the scientific validity he bestows on the principles of Qigong practice, the simplicity and clarity of language used to present the traditional ideas involved, and the concurrent adherence to the original spirit, or "root" of Qigong in ancient China.

The West has long given lip service to the idea of imposing "mind over matter" but has never developed an effective method whereby this goal may be accomplished. That's because Western thought divided body and mind into two mutually exclusive realms. Matters of the body were approached either chemically or mechanically, while the mind became the domain of religion and later psychology. Traditional Eastern thought has always cited a third, pivotal element in the human system, and that element is energy, known as prana in ancient India, and Qi in China. Qi is the bridge that links body and mind into an integrated and functional system, and it is the medium through which the mind may gain command over the body. The method whereby the medium of energy may be utilized to gain control over the body is Qigong, or "energy-work."

According to the Daoist tradition of China, the Three Treasures of life are essence (the essential secretions of the body), energy (the vital energies that animate the body and may be controlled by proper breathing), and spirit (awareness, intent, and the various faculties of the mind). When these three aspects of existence are brought into balance and harmony, the health of the entire organism is protected and life prolonged. Qigong is the fulcrum of balance between the body and mind, with energy serving as the common force upon which both depend. Energy is also the medium through which the powers of nature and the cosmos enter and influence the human system, and Qigong provides a way whereby the practitioner may synchronize his or her system in order to harness those powers to promote human health and support human life.

For those who are interested in learning the basic concepts and practical applications of Qigong as a means of cultivating health and longevity, *The Root of Chinese Qigong* provides an excellent and comprehensive overview on the subject, a view that will no doubt awaken the reader's mind to the importance of energy as the most fundamental fact of life.

Daniel Reid

*Author of The Complete Book of
Chinese Health & Healing,
The Tao of Health, Sex, and Longevity,
and Chinese Herbal Medicine*

Preface

First Edition

Since my first Qigong book *Chi Kung — Health and Martial Arts* appeared, I have received many compliments and thank-you's, as well as numerous questions, and many valuable suggestions from doctors, readers with medical problems, and the general public. This has led me to believe that my introductory book has opened the door to Qigong for many people, and has brought health benefits to more than a few. This response has encouraged me to continue my research and publishing. However, most of my Qigong experience and knowledge was obtained through my Taiji and Shaolin practice, and was therefore limited to a few Daoist and Buddhist Qigong exercises, as well as some of the common Qigong exercises which are popular in China. Because of this limitation in my Qigong knowledge, I have spent a lot of time analyzing, researching, pondering, and experimenting with many other Qigong styles about which I have read in my collection of Qigong documents. This research has greatly increased my knowledge.

In August of 1986 I had a chance to go back to Taiwan to visit my family. This visit also gave me the opportunity to see what Qigong documents had been published since I left Taiwan in 1974. To my surprise, there are a great many new publications available. I was so happy to learn that many documents had been published which described training techniques heretofore kept secret. With my brother's encouragement and financial support, I was able to purchase all of the expensive documents which I found worthwhile. Once I returned to the United States, I started to read and study them, and to experiment with some of the methods. These documents made me realize how limited my knowledge was, and opened up a whole new field of Qigong study for me.

In my excitement and enthusiasm I decided to compile them, filter out the parts which seemed questionable, and introduce the results to my readers. An unfortunate problem arose in that most of the documents explain **what** to do, but do not explain **why**, and some will even just tell the process without explaining how to do it. Despite the obstacles, I decided to try my best, through research and contemplation, to determine the secrets of the techniques.

After two years of research and experimentation, I feel that it will take at least five years and eight volumes of introductory books to initiate the reader into the broad field of Chinese Qigong. Although these eight volumes will be based on the documents available to me, they will not be direct translations of these documents, except for the ancient poetry or songs which are the root of the training. This approach is necessary simply because these documents do not have any systematic introduction or way of tying everything together. What I can do is read them and study them carefully. Then I can compile and organize the information, and discuss it carefully in the light of my own Qigong knowledge and experience.

This approach will allow me to cautiously bring long-concealed Qigong knowledge to the reader. The only thing lacking is the experience. Many of the methods require more than twenty years of training to complete, and I would have to spend

more than three lifetimes studying the various methods before I could discuss them with authority. I realize that it is impossible for me alone to introduce the results of four thousand years of Qigong research with these eight books, but I would still like to share the knowledge which I have gained from these documents, and the conclusions which I have drawn from my training. Please take these books in the tentative spirit in which they are written, and not as a final authority or bible. I sincerely hope that many other Qigong experts will step forward and share the traditional teachings which were passed down to them, as well as the fruits of their experience.

At present, the following books are planned:

1. ***The Root of Chinese Qigong — The Secrets of Qigong Training***
2. ***Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Qigong — The Secret of Youth (Yi Jin Jing and Xi Sui Jing)*** (易筋經、洗髓經)
3. ***Chinese Qigong Massage — Qigong Tui Na and Cavity Press for Healing*** (Qigong An Mo and Qigong Dian Xue) (氣功按摩、氣功點穴)
4. ***Qigong and Health — For Healing and Maintaining Health***
5. ***Qigong and Martial Arts — The Key to Advanced Martial Arts Skill*** (Shaolin, Wudang, Emei, and others)
6. ***Buddhist Qigong — Chan, The Root of Zen*** (禪)
7. ***Daoist Qigong*** (Dan Ding Dao Gong) (丹鼎道功)
8. ***Tibetan Qigong*** (Mi Zang Shen Gong) (密藏神功)

In this first volume we will discuss the roots of Chinese Qigong by dividing them into four parts. The first part will introduce the history of Qigong, the basic concepts and terminology commonly used in Qigong society and documents, the different Qigong categories, and will discuss Qi and the human body, and fundamental Qigong training theory and principles. This first part will give you a general concept of what Qigong is, and the various subjects that it includes. The second part will discuss the general keys to Qigong training, and give you the foundation of knowledge necessary for successful practice. This part serves as a map of the **what** and the **how** of Qigong training, so that you can choose your goal and the best way to get there. The third part will review the Qi circulatory system in your body, which includes the twelve primary Qi channels and the eight extraordinary Qi vessels. This part will give you a better understanding of how Qi circulates in your body. Finally, the fourth part of the book will list some of the many questions about Qigong which still remain unanswered.

The second volume in this series will cover Yi Jin and Xi Sui Qigong, which are translated as “Muscle/Tendon Changing” and “Marrow/Brain Washing Qigong.” Marrow/Brain Washing is deep, and difficult to understand. It has been found in documents detailing both Buddhist and Daoist Qigong and meditation training, and it has been known in China since the Liang dynasty, more than fourteen hundred years ago. Because, however, the training usually involves stimulation of the sexual

organs, it has traditionally been passed down only to a few trusted students.

In addition to the eight in-depth books, YMAA is also introducing a series of instructional books and videotapes on specific Qigong exercise sets. This series is designed for people who want to learn exercises that they can do on their own to improve or maintain their health. These books and tapes will be easy to understand both in theory and in practice. The first book and tape are on The Eight Pieces of Brocade, one of China's most popular Qigong sets.

Preface

New Edition

Since 1989, when this book was first introduced to the public, more than thirty thousand copies have been sold. This is better than I originally expected. The reason for this is simply because the subject of Qigong was still very new to Western readers, even though it has been studied and practiced in China, Japan, and India for many thousands of years. Therefore, the market is very small and restricted to those already interested in Chinese culture. In addition, this book is considered to be an in-depth theoretical treatise on Qigong. It is like a piece of classical music, instead of rock music, which can be understood and accepted easily by the general society.

Qigong today, like Taijiquan in the early 1980's, is being understood and welcomed in the West. I believe that there are a few reasons for this. First, since President Nixon visited mainland China in 1973 and opened the gates to the nation, there has been more and more culture exchange between China and the West. The Western world has a better understanding of Chinese culture. This has agitated and stimulated many Westerners to take an interest in Chinese culture, study it, and accept it. Second, Chinese acupuncture and Qigong healing techniques have been widely accepted. Alternative medicine, as it was originally called, is now considered to be "complimentary medicine." Finally, the general public is more open minded, and the bondage of tradition, especially religious tradition, has been reduced to its lowest point ever. This open-minded attitude has generated great interest in foreign cultures.

Since 1989, I have written and published 10 more books and 15 videotapes to introduce Chinese culture to the Western society. YOAA, Inc. (Yang's Oriental Arts Association, Inc.) was established to expedite this cultural exchange. YMAA Publication Center is the division that handles the publications. In addition, YMAA has also established more than 30 schools and three publication centers in Europe to translate these books into non-English languages. Currently, many YMAA books have been translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Russian, and Czech.

In 1989 when this book was written, I had a dream of introducing in-depth Qigong books to the West. The books I wanted to write include:

1. ***The Root of Chinese Qigong — The Secrets of Qigong Training***
2. ***Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Chi Kung — The Secret of Youth (Yi Jin Jing and Xi Sui Jing)*** (易筋經、洗髓經)
3. ***Chinese Qigong Massage — Qigong Tui Na and Cavity Press for Healing*** (Qigong An Mo and Qigong Dian Xue) (氣功按摩、氣功點穴)
4. ***Qigong and Health — For Healing and Maintaining Health***
5. ***Qigong and Martial Arts — The Key to Advanced Martial Arts Skill*** (Shaolin, Wudang, Emei, and others)
6. ***Buddhist Qigong — Chan, The Root of Zen*** (禪)
7. ***Daoist Qigong*** (Dan Ding Dao Gong) (丹鼎道功)
8. ***Tibetan Qigong*** (Mi Zang Shen Gong) (密藏神功)

This is the first of those books. The second, *Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Chi Kung*, was also published in 1989. The first half of the *Chinese Qigong Massage*, General Massage, was published in 1992. The second half, about Tui Na, Dian Xue, and Qi massage, is still being written. *Qigong and Health* has not yet been started. *Qigong and Martial Arts* has been written under the title: *The Essence of Shaolin White Crane*, which was published in 1996. *Buddhist Qigong* and *Tibetan Qigong* have not yet been started. Currently, I am working on Daoist Qigong which will be published as two new titles: *Small Circulation Meditation* and *Grand Circulation and Enlightenment Meditation*. I plan to complete these two volumes by 1999. The writing process is slow and time consuming. This is especially significant since almost all of the Qigong documents were released to the general public in the last ten years, both in China and Taiwan. This has provided me with ten-fold the amount of information. Naturally, this has also offered me a greater chance to make the future books more complete and in-depth.

There is another reason for the slow progress. The market for the in-depth books, especially those that relate to inner Qigong feelings and spiritual cultivation, is very limited. In order to prevent any financial difficulty in the publication business, I have also put a lot of time and effort into writing other smaller introductory books for Qigong healing and martial arts. As I pointed out in the original preface, the translation and interpretation of the Qigong from Chinese to English is not easy. We will need an organization that has strong financial support and many Qigong experts to do the job. I will just try my best to contribute what I can. I sincerely hope that the government, universities, or private organizations will sponsor this project to expedite this Qigong cultural exchange.

In this new edition, some new concepts have been added and some old concepts have been deleted. Not only that, for those readers who understand, the Chinese characters are immediately included in the text when the Chinese is mentioned. In addition, when this book was written, the Chinese romanization system called Pinyin was not yet popular. Therefore, an older system was used. However, Pinyin is now widely used in the West in both scholastic and lay societies, so this book follows the Pinyin romanization system. In addition, new typesetting has been done to make this book easier to read. Finally, the glossary and translation of Chinese terms have been combined, and an index has been added.



Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming
Boston, January 15, 1997

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1-1. Prelude

In their seven thousand years of history, the Chinese people have experienced all possible human suffering and pain. Chinese culture is like a very old man who has seen and experienced all of the pain of human life. Yet through his experience, he has also accumulated a great store of knowledge. Chinese culture, as reflected in its literature and painting, ranks among the greatest achievements of the human spirit. It reflects humankind's joy and grief, pleasure and suffering, peace and strife, vitality, sickness, and death.

Within this complex cultural and historical background, the Chinese people have long sought ways of living healthy and happy lives. However, as they looked for ways to better themselves and seek spiritual fulfillment, they have also tended to believe that everything that happens is due to destiny, and that it is prearranged by heaven. Despite this fatalistic belief, they have still looked for ways to resist the apparent inevitability of sickness and death.

The Chinese have devoted a large part of their intellectual effort to self-study and self-cultivation in the hope of understanding the meaning of their lives. This inward-feeling and looking, this spiritual searching, has become one of the major roots of Chinese religion and medical science. Qi, the energy within the human body, was studied very carefully. As people perceived the link between the Qi in the human body and the Qi in nature, they began to hope that this Qi was the means whereby man could escape from the trap of sickness and death. Over the years, many different sectors of Chinese society have studied and researched Qi.

Of all the researchers, the scholars and the doctors have had the longest history, and they have brought the understanding of Qi to a very deep level. It was they who learned the methods of maintaining health and curing sickness. Chinese medical science has developed out of the Qi research of the physicians.

When Indian Buddhism was imported into China, it profoundly influenced Chinese culture. Naturally, Chinese Qigong was also affected by the Buddhist meditative practices. The Daoist religion was created out of a mixture of traditional scholarly Daoism and Buddhism. Since that time, Buddhist and Daoist Qigong have been considered among the greatest achievements of Chinese culture.

Daoism and Buddhism have not only brought the Chinese people a peaceful, spiritual mind which may untie the mystery of human life and destiny, they have also created a hope that the development of Qigong may give people a healthy and happy life while they are alive, and an eternal spiritual life after death. When viewed from this historical background, it is not hard to understand why a major part of Chinese culture in the last two thousand years, other than warfare and possibly medical science, were based on the religions of Daoism and Buddhism, and spiritual science.

The emphasis on the spiritual life, rather than the material, is one of the major differences between Eastern and the Western cultures. An example of this is in the maintenance of health, where the West emphasizes the physical body more, while the East tends to also treat the person's spiritual and mental health.

Most Westerners believe that if you strengthen your physical body, you also improve your health. They emphasize the exercising and training of the physical body, but they ignore the balancing of the body's internal energy (Qi), which is also related to the emotions and the cultivation of spiritual calmness. Daoists call this "Cong Wai Jian Gong" (從外健功) (building the strength externally) or "Yuan Xin Zhi Wai Gong Yun Dong" (遠心之外功運動) (distant mind's external exercises, meaning "external exercises without mental concentration or attention").

People who exercise a lot and whose bodies are externally strong are not necessarily healthier or happier than the average person. In order to have true good health you must have a healthy body, a healthy mind, and also smooth and balanced Qi circulation. According to Chinese medicine, many illnesses are caused by imbalances in your mind. For example, worry and nervousness can upset your stomach or harm your spleen.¹ Fear or fright can hinder the normal functioning of your kidneys and bladder. This is because your internal energy (Qi circulation) is closely related to your mind. In order to be truly healthy, you must have both a healthy physical body and a calm and healthy mind. True good health is both external and internal.

When someone gets involved in body building, he will emphasize building strong muscles. According to acupuncture and Qigong theory, he will also energize his body, stimulate his mind, and increase the level of the Qi circulation. If he trains properly, he will naturally gain physical health. However, if he exercises too much, he will over energize his body and over-excite his mind and Qi. This will make his physical body too Yang (positive). According to Chinese philosophy, too much of something is excessive Yang (陽) and too little is excessive Yin (陰), and neither extreme is desirable. When your body is too Yang or too Yin, your internal organs will tend to weaken and to degenerate sooner than they ordinarily would. A person who seems to be externally strong and healthy may be weak internally.

In addition, when a body builder gets older, his over-stressed muscle fibers may lose their elasticity and degenerate faster than those of the average person. This causes the Qi to stagnate in the Qi channels. This phenomenon is well known among older practitioners of external martial arts, where it is called “San Gong” (散功), meaning “energy dispersion.” The proper amount of exercise will generate only enough Qi to stimulate the organs and help them function normally and healthily. Overdoing exercise is like getting too much sunshine, which we now know will cause your skin cells to degenerate faster than the lack of sun.

Qigong practitioners believe that in order to gain real health you must not only do external exercises, but must also “Cong Nei Zhu Ji” (從內築基)(build the foundation internally), or do “Xiang Xin Zhi Nei Gong Yun Dong” (向心之內功運動)(literally “toward the mind’s internal exercise,” meaning internal exercise with mental concentration). Strengthening yourself internally and externally at the same time is called “Xing Ming Shuang Xiu” (性命雙修). Xing means natural characteristics, personality, temperament, or disposition. It is shown internally. Ming is life, and refers to the life or death of the physical body. Shuang Xiu means double cultivation. The expression therefore means that if you desire to gain real health, you must cultivate your character internally and strengthen your body both internally and externally. The internal side is approached through meditation and Qigong exercises.

Many people believe that Qigong is a product only of China, India, or other Oriental countries. As a matter of fact, internal energy cultivation has also been common in the Western world, usually within the context of religion. Many people have been able to find their internal foundation and strength through meditation or praying in their church, temple, or mosque. Through their devotions and the practice of prayer, they are able to build up their concentration, confidence, and will, all of which are prerequisites to internal strength. The practice of such disciplines allows the energy in the body to become balanced, bringing health and strength to some, and even, in some cases, seemingly supernatural powers. Jesus is credited with many miracles, but he told his disciples “He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do,” (John 14:12). All of the major Western religions have had branches or sects which used practices similar to the Oriental Qigong disciplines.

However, there have also been people without any particular religious belief who have meditated by themselves and, through the buildup and circulation of Qi, developed psychic or healing abilities. Unfortunately, in earlier times such people were often killed as witches or heretics, so people who found they had such powers tended to view themselves as freaks or worse, and hid their powers. These negative attitudes only kept people from researching and understanding such abilities.

Many people in China and India have developed amazing powers through their meditation training. Fortunately, these powers were understood as being a result of Qigong, and so people were encouraged to train and research the subject. Although Qigong is becoming a more acceptable subject in the West, the Chinese and Indians are still way ahead in this internal mental and physical science.

Since 1973, acupuncture has been widely accepted by the American people, and even by many in the medical establishment. More and more people are becoming familiar with the concept of Qi. Qi related arts such as Taijiquan and Qigong exercises are getting much more attention than ever before. Many people are learning that the study of Qi can be very beneficial, and I feel certain that in the next twenty years Qigong will become one of the hottest fields of research.

1-2. General Definition of Qi and Qigong

Before we define Qi and Qigong, you should understand that so far, there is no one scientific definition of Qi which is accepted generally by Qigong practitioners and Chinese medical society. The way people define Qi varies, depending upon their individual background and experience. Some people think Qi is an electric energy, others believe that it is a magnetic energy, and many others believe that Qi is heat or some other type of energy. However, anyone who has carefully researched the historical background of Qi would not define it by any one of these narrow definitions.

It is the same with Qigong. Qigong is often narrowly thought of as only exercises or meditations which can be used to improve one's health or to cure sickness. In fact, however, the range of Qigong and the scope of its research is much wider. You should understand this point so you will be able to view Qi and Qigong in an accurate and open way.

In this section we will discuss the general definition of Qi and Qigong. Specific terms concerning Qi and Qigong which are directly related to the human body will be discussed later in a separate section.

General Definition of Qi

Qi is the energy or natural force which fills the universe. Heaven (the sky or universe) has Heaven Qi (Tian Qi, 天氣), which is made up of the forces which the heavenly bodies exert on the earth, such as sunshine, moonlight, and the moon's affect on the tides. In ancient times, the Chinese believed that it was Heaven Qi which controlled the weather, climate, and natural disasters. In China, the weather is still referred to as Tian Qi (Heaven Qi). Every energy field strives to stay in balance, so whenever the Heaven Qi loses its balance, it tries to rebalance itself. Then the wind must blow, rain must fall, even tornadoes or hurricanes must happen in order for the Heaven Qi to reach a new energy balance.

Under Heaven Qi, which is the most important of the three, is Earth Qi (Di Qi, 地氣). It is influenced and controlled by Heaven Qi. For example, too much rain will force a river to flood or change its path. Without rain, the plants will die. The Chinese believe that Earth Qi is made up of lines and patterns of energy, as well as the earth's magnetic field and the heat concealed underground. These energies must also balance, otherwise disasters such as earthquakes will occur. When the Qi of the earth is balanced, plants will grow and animals thrive.

Finally, within the Earth Qi, each individual person, animal, and plant has its own Qi field, which always seeks to be balanced. When any individual thing loses its Qi

balance, it will sicken, die, and decompose. All natural things, including man, grow within and are influenced by the natural cycles of Heaven Qi and Earth Qi. Human Qi (Ren Qi, 人氣) is usually considered a separate type of Qi, different from the Qi of the earth, and of plants and animals. The reason for this is simply that because we are human, we are particularly concerned with Human Qi, and have devoted a great deal of study to it.

Qi can be generally defined as any type of energy which is able to demonstrate power and strength. This energy can be electricity, magnetism, heat, or light. In China, electric power is called “Dian Qi” (electric Qi, 電氣), and heat is called “Re Qi” (heat Qi, 熱氣). When a person is alive, his body’s energy is called “Ren Qi” (human Qi, 人氣).

Qi is also commonly used to express the energy state of something, especially living things. As mentioned before, the weather is called “Tian Qi” (heaven Qi) because it indicates the energy state of the heavens. When a thing is alive it has “Huo Qi” (vital Qi, 活氣), and when it is dead it has “Si Qi” (dead Qi 死氣 or “Gui Qi” (ghost Qi, 鬼氣). When a person is righteous and has the spiritual strength to do good, he is said to have “Zheng Qi” (normal Qi or righteous Qi, 正氣). The spiritual state or morale of an army is called “Qi Shi” (energy state, 氣勢).

You can see that the word Qi has a wider and more general definition than most people think. It does not refer only to the energy circulating in the human body. Furthermore, the word “Qi” can represent the energy itself, and it can also be used to express the manner or state of the energy. It is important to understand this when you practice Qigong, so that your mind is not channeled into a narrow understanding of Qi, which would limit your future understanding and development.

General Definition of Qigong

We have explained that Qi is energy, and that it is found in the heavens, in the earth, and in every living thing. In China, the word “Gong” is often used instead of “Gongfu,” which means energy and time. Any study or training which requires a lot of energy and time to learn or to accomplish is called Gongfu. The term can be applied to any special skill or study as long as it requires time, energy, and patience. Therefore, **the correct definition of Qigong is any training or study dealing with Qi which takes a long time and a lot of effort.**

The Chinese have studied Qi for thousands of years. Some of the information on the patterns and cycles of nature has been recorded in books, one of which is the *Yi Jing* (易經)(*Book of Changes*; 1122 B.C.). When the *Yi Jing* was introduced to the Chinese people, they believed that natural power included Tian (Heaven, 天), Di (Earth, 地), and Ren (Man, 人). These are called “San Cai” (The Three Natural Powers, 三才) and are manifested by the three Qi’s: Heaven Qi, Earth Qi, and Human Qi (Figure 1-1). These three facets of nature have their definite rules and cycles. The rules never change, and the cycles repeat periodically. The Chinese people used an understanding of these natural principles and the *Yi Jing* to calculate the changes of natural Qi. This calculation is called “Bagua” (The Eight Trigrams, 八卦). From the Eight Trigrams are derived the 64 hexagrams. Therefore, the *Yi Jing* was probably the

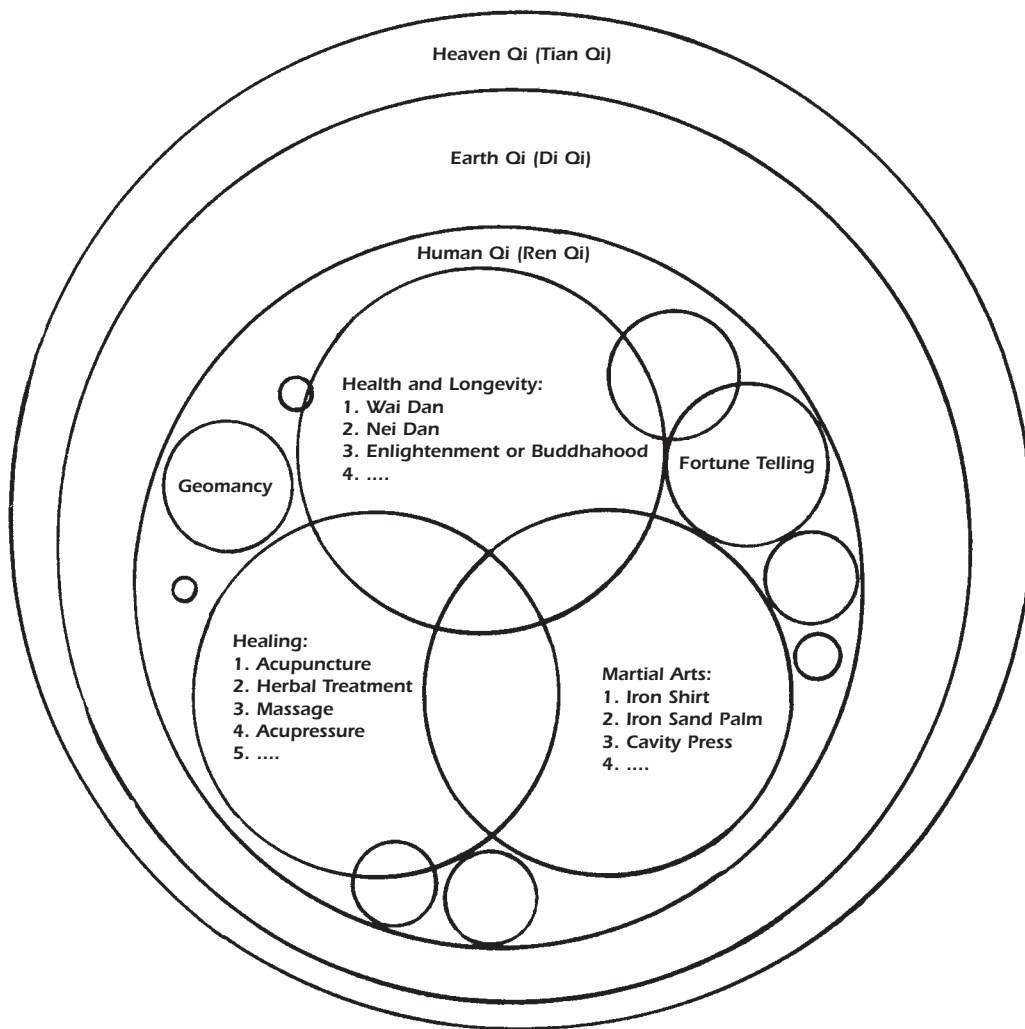


Figure 1-1. The three Qi's of Heaven, Earth, and Man

first book which taught the Chinese people about Qi and its variations in nature and man. The relationship of the Three Natural Powers and their Qi variations were later discussed extensively in the book *Qi Hua Lun (Theory of Qi's Variation, 氣化論)*.

Understanding Heaven Qi is very difficult, however, and it was especially so in ancient times when the science was just developing. But since nature is always repeating itself, the experience accumulated over the years has made it possible to trace the natural patterns. Understanding the rules and cycles of "Tian Shi" (heavenly timing, 天時) will help you to understand natural changes of the seasons, climate, weather, rain, snow, drought, and all other natural occurrences. If you observe carefully, you will be able to see many of these routine patterns and cycles caused by the rebalancing of the Qi fields. Among the natural cycles are those of the day, the month, and the year, as well as cycles of twelve years and sixty years.

Earth Qi is a part of Heaven Qi. If you can understand the rules and the structure of the earth, you will be able to understand how mountains and rivers are formed, how plants grow, how rivers move, what part of the country is best for someone, where to build a house and which direction it should face so that it is a healthy place to live, and many other things related to the earth. In China today there are people, called “geomancy teachers” (Di Li Shi, 地理師) or “wind water teachers” (Feng Shui Shi, 風水師), who make their living this way. The term Feng Shui is commonly used because the location and character of the wind and water in a landscape are the most important factors in evaluating a location. These experts use the accumulated body of geomantic knowledge and the *Yi Jing* to help people make important decisions such as where and how to build a house, where to bury their dead, and how to rearrange or redecorate homes and offices so that they are better places to live and work in. Many people even believe that setting up a store or business according to the guidance of Feng Shui can make it more prosperous.

Among the three Qi’s, Human Qi is probably the one studied most thoroughly. The study of Human Qi covers a large number of different subjects. The Chinese people believe that Human Qi is affected and controlled by Heaven Qi and Earth Qi, and that they in fact determine your destiny. Therefore, if you understand the relationship between nature and people, in addition to understanding human relations (Ren Shi, 人事), you will be able to predict wars, the destiny of a country, or a person’s desires and temperament and even his future. The people who practice this profession are called “Suan Ming Shi” (calculate life teachers, 算命師).

However, the greatest achievement in the study of Human Qi is in regard to health and longevity. Since Qi is the source of life, if you understand how Qi functions and know how to regulate it correctly, you should be able to live a long and healthy life. Remember that you are part of nature, and you are channeled into the cycles of nature. If you go against this natural cycle, you may become sick, so it is in your best interests to follow the way of nature. This is the meaning of “**Dao**,” which can be translated as “**The Natural Way**.”

Many different aspects of Human Qi have been researched, including acupuncture, acupressure, herbal treatment, meditation, and Qigong exercises. The use of acupuncture, acupressure, and herbal treatment to adjust Human Qi flow has become the root of Chinese medical science. Meditation and moving Qigong exercises are used widely by the Chinese people to improve their health or even to cure certain illnesses. Meditation and Qigong exercises serve an additional role in that Daoists and Buddhists use them in their spiritual pursuit of enlightenment.

You can see that the study of any of the aspects of Qi including Heaven Qi, Earth Qi, and Human Qi should be called Qigong. However, since the term is usually used today only in reference to the cultivation of Human Qi through meditation and exercises, we will only use it in this narrower sense to avoid confusion.

Before we finish this section, we would like to discuss one more thing. The word Nei Gong (內功) is often used, especially in Chinese martial society. “Nei” means “internal” and “Gong” means “Gongfu.” Nei Gong means “internal Gongfu,” as opposed to Wai Gong (外功) which means “external Gongfu.” Nei Gong is martial

arts training which specializes in internal Gongfu, which builds up the Qi internally first and then coordinates the Qi with martial techniques. Typical Chinese Nei Gong martial styles are Taijiquan (太極拳), Liu He Ba Fa (六合八法), Baguazhang (八卦掌), and Xingyiquan (形意拳). In contrast to Nei Gong, Wai Gong emphasizes developing the muscles, with some build up of Qi in the limbs. Typical Wai Gong martial styles are: Praying Mantis, Tiger, Eagle, White Crane, Dragon, and so on. Many of the external styles originated in the Shaolin Temple.

1-3. About This Book

I hope this book will lay down a theoretical foundation which interested Qigong practitioners can use in their training. Hopefully this book can explain to you the **How, Why, and What** of Qigong, and help you to avoid being confused and misled.

It is extremely difficult to write a book which covers more than four thousand years of study and research, especially since a large portion of the knowledge was kept secret until the last twenty years. Even though the study of Qigong has reached very high, there are still many questions which must be answered through recourse to today's technology and interdisciplinary knowledge. Contemporary, enthusiastic minds will have plenty of opportunity to research and promote the art.

One of the major purposes of this book is to stimulate Western scholars and medical society to get involved with and study this newly-revealed science. Hopefully other Qigong experts will be encouraged to share their knowledge with the public. I believe that in a short time Qigong will reach new and exciting heights in the Western world. This would be one of the greatest cross-cultural achievements since East and West opened their doors to each other.

Most available documents are not systematically organized and do not explain the subject very well. As I compile them and try to explain them in a logical and scientific way, I must use my own judgment, and I must explain them based on my personal Qigong background and my understanding of the documents. It is impossible for one person alone to do justice to this enormous field. You are encouraged to question everything stated in this text, and to always remember that many conclusions come from my own judgment. **The main purpose of this book is to lead you to the path of study — it is not meant to be the final authority.**

When you read this book, it is important that you keep your mind open, and let go of your habitual ways of thinking. When we find ourselves in a new environment or start studying something new, it is human nature to view the new from the standpoint of what we have already learned. Unfortunately, this tends to make us conservative and narrow minded. This is commonly seen in tourists who visit another country, but judge the local customs and behavior according to their own country's standards. This usually leads to a lot of confusion and misunderstanding. If, however, you try to understand other people according to their own culture and historical background, you will have a much better chance of understanding their behavior. Please do this when you start studying this science of Qigong. If you keep your mind open and try to understand it according to its historical background, you will find it

a fascinating and challenging subject.

It is true that it is very hard to break from tradition. In many old cultures, tradition must be obeyed absolutely. If anyone is against the tradition, he is considered a traitor to the culture. However, **the correct approach to research and study involves questioning tradition and proving its inaccuracies through the use of modern thought and technology.** This is especially necessary in regard to ancient sciences which were developed before this century. New study will allow us to prove and establish their accuracy. You should understand that this is not a form of betrayal. It is our responsibility to prove the truth and bring facts to light.

Many of the theories which have been passed down were based upon many years of experience. Regardless of how you modify a theory, the fact is, it is still the root of the entire science. Therefore, **the correct approach to study and research involves respect and study of the past.** From this respect and study, you will be able to find the root of the entire science. If you forget this root, which has been growing for thousands of years, you are studying only the branches and flowers.

You should judge this inner science of Qigong in a logical and scientific manner. Of course, the words “logic” and “scientific” are not absolute terms. They are relative to the science and understanding which we possess. Remember, though, that although science has been developing for thousands of years, it was only in the last hundred years or so that it suddenly began to swell in the width and depth of its understanding. We can be sure, therefore, that our understanding today is still in its infancy. There are many facts and phenomena which cannot be explained by today’s science. Therefore, when you read this new inner science, be logical and scientific, yet don’t reject explanations which lie outside of what you presently accept as true. What is accepted as true in a few years may be quite different from what we now accept.

All sciences were developed from daring assumptions which were then proven by careful experimentation. The results which we get from our experiments allow us to modify our assumptions and to create new experiments which explore our new hypotheses. This process enables us to develop a complete theory, and determine what next needs to be studied.

It is the same with Qigong practice. If you look and study carefully, you will see that, although many of the Qi-related theories were proven accurate and have been widely used in China, there are still many questions which still need to be answered.

During the course of study you must be patient and persevering. **Strong will, patience, and perseverance are the three main components of success.** This is especially true in Qigong training. Your will and wisdom must be able to dominate and conquer your emotional laziness. I believe that a person’s success depends on his attitude toward life and his moral character, rather than his wisdom and intelligence. We’ve all known people who were wise, yet ended up losers. They may be smart, and they pick things up more quickly than other people, but they soon lose interest. If they don’t persevere, they stop learning and growing, and they never achieve their goals. They never realize that success demands moral virtues, and not just wisdom. A person who is truly wise knows that he must develop the other

requirements for success.

In addition, a person who is truly wise will know when to start and when to stop. Many opportunities to succeed are lost by people who are too proud of their intelligence. There is a Chinese story about a group of people who competed in a snake-drawing contest. One man completed his drawing of a snake faster than anybody else. He was very proud of himself, and he thought “I’m so fast I could even draw four legs on the snake and still win!” So he drew the legs on, but when the judge chose the winner, it was somebody else. The man was very upset, and asked the judge why he didn’t win; after all, he had finished before everyone else. The judge said: “You were supposed to draw a snake. Since snakes don’t have legs, what you drew was not a snake.” So, as smart as the man was, he didn’t have the sense to know when to stop.

A person who is really wise understands that real success depends not only his wisdom but also on his moral character. Therefore, he will also cultivate his moral character and develop his good personality. Confucius said: “A man who is really wise knows what he knows and also knows what he does not know.”² Too often people who are smart become satisfied with their accomplishments and lose their humility. They feel that they know enough, and so they stop learning and growing. In the long run they will only lose. Remember the story of the tortoise and the hare. If the rabbit had not been so proud and satisfied, he would not have lost the race.

Once you understand what has been passed down to you, you should be creative. Naturally, this creativity must be under one condition: that you must understand the old way clearly and thoroughly. Only after you understand the old knowledge to a deep level will your mind be qualified to think “what if...” Then you will be able to come up with good ideas for further study and research. If all Qigong practitioners only practice the old ways and never search for new ones, the science of Qigong will stagnate at its current level. In that case, we will have lost the real meaning of and attitude toward learning.

This book is the most fundamental of the YMAA Qigong book series. It offers you the foundation of knowledge and training practices which is required to understand subsequent YMAA Qigong books. This book consists of four major parts. The first part will briefly summarize Qigong history, explain the necessary Qigong terminology, and discuss the major Qigong categories. The second part will discuss the theory and major keys to Qigong training. This will enable the Qigong beginner to enter the door to the Qigong garden, and will offer the experienced practitioner a directory to the various types of Qigong. The third part will review the Qi channels and vessels to help you understand the Qi circulatory system in the human body. Finally, the fourth part will conclude the discussion in this book, and list some of the many questions I have about Qigong.

References

1. When Chinese medicine refers to an organ, such as the spleen, kidney, or bladder, they are not necessarily referring to the physical organ, but rather to a system of functions which are related to the organ.
2. 孔子曰：“知之為知之，不知為不知，是智也。”

Relaxing Your Marrow. After you have reached the level of organ relaxation, you have come to the third level of relaxation. This final stage involves relaxing your body deep into the marrow. Your marrow manufactures your blood cells. The marrow is alive, and must have a constant supply of Qi to keep functioning. Your conscious mind does not normally sense the Qi in the marrow and control it. In Marrow/Brain Washing Qigong training, however, you want Qi to be supplied to the marrow with maximum efficiency so that the blood will be kept fresh and healthy. In order to do this, your mind must be able to reach the marrow. Again, you may refer to the book: *Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Chi Kung*, available from YMAA Publication Center.

You can see that relaxation is not as simple as many people think. Your final goal is to relax until you feel transparent. Only when you are at this stage will your Qi be able to flow smoothly and fluidly to every cell of your body.

8-4. Rooting, Centering, and Balancing

When you regulate your body, in addition to relaxing it you are also seeking its root, center, and balance. In order for you to feel natural, comfortable, and stable you must first have a firm root. The way of rooting for standing and sitting are different. When you stand, you build your root from your feet into the ground, while when you are sitting on a chair you build your root from your hips down to the ground. In every posture or movement, there is a root for that form or movement. Rooting includes rooting not just the body, but also the form and movement. Every posture or form has its unique way of rooting which is determined by its purpose or principle.

For example, in certain Qigong exercises you want to lead the Qi to your palms. In order to do this, you must image that you are pushing an object forward while keeping your muscles relaxed.² In this exercise, your elbows must be down to build the sense of root for the push. If you raise the elbows, you lose the sense of **intention** of the movement because the push would be ineffective if you were pushing something for real. Since the intention or purpose of the movement is its reason for being, you now have a purposeless movement, and you have no reason to lead Qi in any particular way. In this case, the elbow is the first root of the movement. This root must be connected to the root of your body which is in the ground in order to be firm and complete. Therefore, the root of the arms is built upon the body's root. In order to connect these two roots strongly, your chest must be arched in to form the support (Figure 8-1). Furthermore, your stance cannot be straight up. When you push a heavy object, you have to lean slightly forward. When you are standing up, you will not have a pushing root. You must have a bow-and-arrow stance in order to push backward and generate forward pushing power. When you have all of these, you can say that you have a firm root for pushing. In order to push with maximum power, you must also seek your center and balance. When you have your root, center, and balance, your posture will be natural and comfortable, and your Yi will be strong enough to direct the pushing.

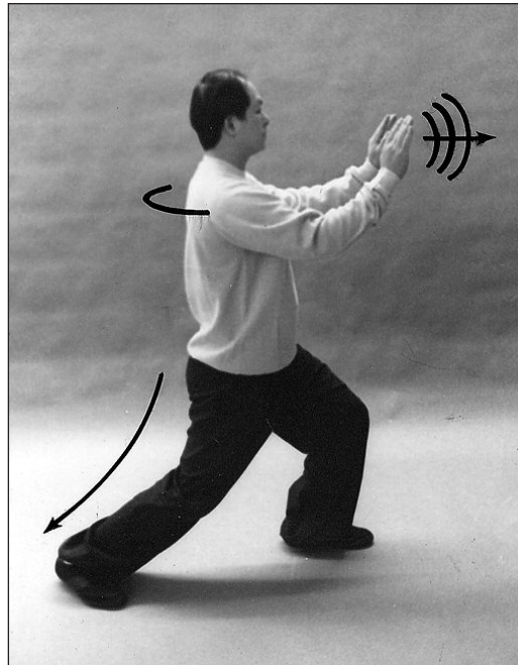


Figure 8-1. Feeling Qi on the palms by imagining pushing forward

You can see that in order for a posture to have a root, you must first understand the purpose of the posture. When you understand the **Why** of the posture, your mind will not wander and you will know what you are looking for. Understanding the purpose and the theory is the root of everything. It firms your mind so that it can lead your body to a posture which offers you the best root, center, and balance. Naturally, in order to reach this stage, you must first have a relaxed mind and body.

Before you can develop your root, you must first relax and let your body **settle**. As you relax, the tension in the various parts of your body will dissolve, and you will find a comfortable way to stand. You will stop fighting the ground to keep your body up, and will learn to rely on your body's structure for support. This lets the muscles relax even more. Since your body isn't struggling to stand up, your Yi won't be pushing upward, and your body, mind, and Qi will all be able to sink. If you let dirty water sit quietly, the impurities will gradually settle down to the bottom, leaving the water above it clear. In the same way, if you relax your body and let it settle, your Qi will sink to your Dan Tian and the Bubbling Wells (Yongquan cavity, K-1, 湧泉) in your feet, clearing your mind. Then you can begin to develop your root.

After you have gained your root, you must learn how to keep your center. The center includes the mind's center and the physical body's center. You must have your mind centered first in order to lead your body to its center. Naturally, in order to have your mind centered, you must first relax your body, which allows your mind to feel and sense every part of it. Although root is important to the process of locating your center, many times you are able to find your center without even having a

root. For example, when you ski you do not have a root but you must have your center in order to balance. In stationary Qigong practice, however, having a root will help you to locate your center more easily; and when you have the center, the root will be even firmer. Both of them are related and cannot really be separated.

A stable center will make your Qi develop evenly and uniformly. If you lose this center, your Qi will not be led evenly. In order to keep your body centered, you must first center your Yi, and then match your body to it. It is very important for you to understand that very often your mind's center and your body's center do not match each other. For example, while standing in a bow and arrow stance you may lean slightly forward so that the center of your body is over your front foot. If you keep your mental center back further, you can still keep you body centered, even though someone looking at you would think that you are off balance to your front. If, however, your mental center is also off and moves forward, you will lose your center and balance. Naturally, if your physical center is off too much, you will not be able to use your mental center to balance it. The closer together your mental and physical centers stay, the more stable you will be. In Qigong practice, your mental and physical centers are keys which enable you to lead your Qi beyond your body.

Finally, after you have a relaxed body, firm root, and center, you will be able to balance your Yi, Qi, and physical body. Balance is the product of rooting and centering. Regardless of which aspect of balance you are dealing with, you must balance your Yi first. Only then can you balance your Qi and your physical body. If your Yi is balanced, it can help you to make accurate judgments, and to correct the path of the Qi flow. When your Yi is balanced, your Qi will be led evenly. Remember the trick to expanding your Qi is to expand it evenly. It is like when you push a car, you need a backward force in order to generate forward power.

Normally, a person's Qi is not balanced in both sides of the body simply because he uses one hand more than the other. For example, if you are right handed, your mind can lead the Qi to the right hand much more easily than it can to the left hand. You will find sometimes that one side of the sole of your shoe is flatter than the other. As a Qigong practitioner, you are looking for your mental center in this unbalanced situation. In order to do this, your mind must be very clear and able to judge the environment and your body's condition. For example, if you place your right arm into warm water and your left arm into cold water for three minutes, and then place both hands immediately into another container of water, one hand will feel warmer than the other. This kind of outside influence scatters your Yi and causes it to lose its center. In Qigong practice, therefore, you are looking for the practice which develops the Yi and body evenly. For example, practice the same form with both hands the same number of times.

In order to help you analyze rooting, centering, and balancing, we will discuss two of the most common stances. Once you understand these two, you should be able to use the same method to analyze any other stance.

Horse Stance (Ma Bu, 馬步)

The horse stance is the most common stance used by Qigong practitioners and martial artists. The horse stance is used by martial artists to develop their root, center, and balance, as well as to strengthen the legs. For the non-martial Qigong practitioner, however, although rooting is important, it is not as critical as it is for martial artists who need a strong root for fighting. In Qigong, rooting is helpful in finding your center and balance, which in turn lets you feel relaxed, natural, and comfortable. Since the martial arts horse stance is harder and is the basis for the non-martial horse stance, we will discuss it here. Once you understand it thoroughly, you may adjust it to fit your situation.

There are many ways to stand in the horse stance. For example, the width of the feet in the horse stance used by Southern Chinese martial styles is narrower than the one used in Northern styles (Figure 8-2). This is because the Southern styles emphasize short range fighting, and the wider stance is more open and dangerous in short range techniques. The situation is different for the Northern styles. Because they emphasize long range techniques, a larger posture is more advantageous, so they use a much wider horse stance (Figure 8-3). You should understand that regardless of which style of horse stance is trained, the purpose, training principles, and theory remain the same.

In the horse stance, both legs share your weight equally. In Qigong training, the width of the stance depends on your feeling. If you are standing too narrow or too wide, you will have a uncomfortable feeling. You should try different widths to see which one is most comfortable and natural for you. Remember, when you feel comfortable and natural you will be able to relax and find your center and balance more easily.

If you are training a martial arts horse stance, how high you stand depends upon the style. For Qigong practice, how high you stand depends on your feeling. For example, if you stand lower, your leg muscles will be more tensed and it will be harder for the Qi to flow to the bottom of your feet. If you stand too high, your center of gravity is higher and your root will be shallower and less stable. However, since the leg muscles are more relaxed, you can lead the Qi to the bottom of your feet more easily. In Chinese internal martial styles such as Taijiquan, when a beginner's Qi cannot be efficiently directed to the bottom of the feet, the stance is lower. In this case, the beginner is able to lower his physical center of gravity to increase his root. When, however, a Taiji practitioner has reached a high level, he will stand higher and keep the leg muscles relaxed, allowing his Qi to reach the bottom of his feet.

In Qigong horse stance training, the best way to build a firm root is to begin with a height at which you get the strongest feeling of pushing upward. In other words, try out different heights, and at each one pretend you are pushing a heavy object upward. At one particular height you will feel that you can push upward most strongly. At this height your Yi can exert the strongest push upward, and it can therefore also exert the strongest push downward. It is this downward pushing of your Yi that builds your root. If you keep practicing, you will eventually start to feel that your Yi is leading your Qi into the ground, and that your root is starting to grow.

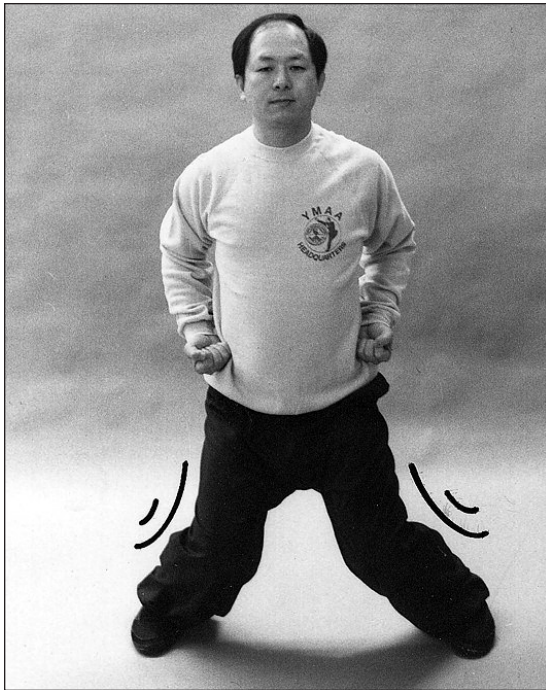


Figure 8-2. Horse Stance of the southern martial styles

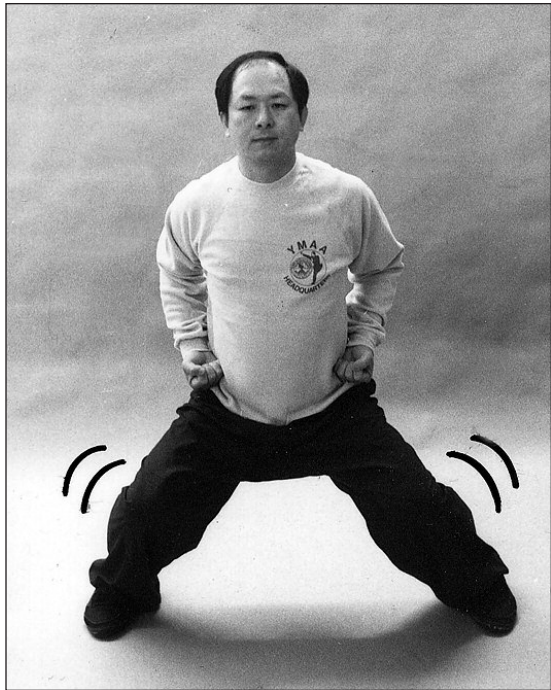


Figure 8-3. Horse Stance of the northern martial styles

To root your body, you must imitate a tree and grow an invisible root beneath your feet. Naturally, your Yi must grow first, because it is the Yi which leads the Qi. Your Yi must be able to communicate with the ground in order to lead your Qi beyond your feet and build the root. This means your Yi must feel or sense the ground, noticing whether it is soft or hard, how flat the ground is, how slippery it is. Try different ways of standing, shift your weight on your feet, and notice the ground. With practice your Yi will be able to sink further into the ground, and you will develop a strong root. The more you practice, the deeper the root will grow (Figure 8-4). After practicing for a period of time, you will start to stand higher in order to relax the leg muscles more. In turn, this will help you to lead the Qi to the bottom more effectively. The Bubbling Well cavity is the gate which enables your Qi to communicate with the ground.

There is one more thing to remember when you build your root. A tree's root is very strong because it has many branches and spreads out far to the sides. You must do the same thing, and spread your roots to the sides as well as downward.

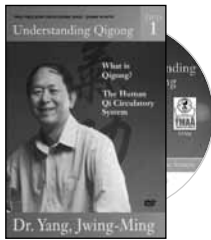
Once you have built your root, you can consider being centered and balanced. You can be centered physically and you can be centered mentally. When you are centered physically, a vertical line from your center of mass falls between your feet, so your root comfortably supports your weight. Being centered mentally is a matter of feeling. If you are mentally centered, you can be physically **balanced** even when you are not physically **centered**. An example of this is the person who cannot be pushed

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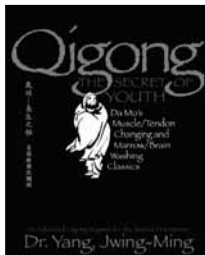
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