

# The Root of Chinese Qìgōng

Third Edition

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Secrets  
for Health,  
Longevity, and  
Enlightenment

Dr. Yáng, Jwìng-Mǐng

**YMAA Publication Center**

PO Box 480

Wolfboro, NH, 03894

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

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## Introduction

Qìgōng (氣功) is the science of cultivating the body's internal energy, which is called Qì (氣) in Chinese. The Chinese have been researching Qì for the last four thousand years and have found Qìgōng 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, Qìgōng training was usually kept secret, especially within martial arts systems or religions such as Buddhism and Daoism. Only acupuncture and some health-related Qìgōng exercises were available to the general public. During the last forty years, these secrets have become available to the general public through publications and open teaching. Medical professionals have finally been able to test Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng, they have changed from being weak to strong, from depressed to happy, and from sick to healthy.

Since Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng research. I hope that other Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng 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, Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng for the Western mind, but it may also come up with the most efficient methods of practice. I feel certain that Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng science will soon become one of the major research fields in colleges and universities in this country.





## Foreword

Thomas G. Gutheil, M.D.

First Edition

When Nixon opened China to the West in the 1970s, 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, Tàijíquán, and the curious and puzzling notion of Qì, 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 Tàijíquán, 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 practices this exercise daily to apparently good effect, and in part by the fact that Tàijíquán 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 Gōngfū.

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, Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng 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 revelations 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 Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng principles.

A second factor is the absence at the present time of a “hard-science” physiology for Qì, 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 Qì 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 Qì and physical exercise techniques. To pick one example, a particular stance in Shàolín style Gōngfū 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. Yáng 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-cultural illumination as this book provides. Second, Dr. Yáng 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

Irwin H. Rosenberg, M.D.

Second 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 Qìgōng. 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. Yáng, Jwèng-Míng is a rare teacher/treasure who bridges the gap between Western science and the highest traditions of Eastern healing. This book on Qìgōng—literally the study, research, and practices related to Qì 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 Qìgōng and Tàijíquán.

*The Root of Chinese Qìgōng* 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. Yáng'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

Daniel Reid

Second Edition

Qìgōng 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, Qìgōng 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 Qì (energy) as a factor in human health, millions of people throughout the world have already begun to experience the power of Qìgōng 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 “Qì.” Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng* is one of the first books to explore the nature of Qì and explain the ancient practice of Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng 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. Yáng, Jwèng-Míng is uniquely qualified to explore the topic of Qìgōng in terms of Western thought. Backed by over thirty years of personal experience as both a practitioner and teacher of Qìgōng, trained in classical forms by traditional masters in Táiwān, and the founder of a school in America that transmits this ancient practice to contemporary Western students, Dr. Yáng 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 Qìgōng* 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 Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng 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 Qigōng, 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 facilities 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. Qigōng 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 Qigōng 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 Qigōng as a means of cultivating health and longevity, *The Root of Chinese Qigōng* 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

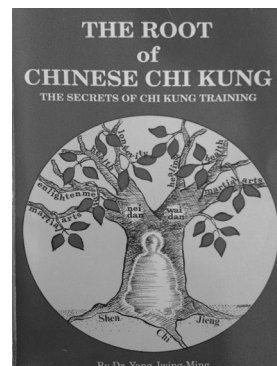
First Edition, as published 1989

Since my first Qìgōng book *Chì Kūng: 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 Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng experience and knowledge was obtained through my Tàijíquán and Shàolín practice, and was therefore limited to a few Daoist and Buddhist Qìgōng exercises, as well as some of the common Qìgōng exercises which are popular in China. Because of this limitation in my Qìgōng knowledge, I have spent a lot of time analyzing, researching, pondering, and experimenting with many other Qìgōng styles about which I have read in my collection of Qìgōng documents. This research has greatly increased my knowledge.

In August of 1986 I had a chance to go back to Táiwān to visit my family. This visit also gave me the opportunity to see what Qìgōng documents had been published since I left Táiwān 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 Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng. 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 Qìgōng knowledge and experience.



First edition, as published in 1989.

This approach will allow me to cautiously bring long-concealed Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng—Secrets for Health, Longevity, and Enlightenment*
2. *Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Qìgōng—The Secret of Youth* (*Yìjīnjīng* and *Xìsuijīng*, 易筋經、洗髓經) (published, new title: *Qìgōng—The Secret of Youth*, by YMAA Publication Center)
3. *Qìgōng Massage—Fundamental Techniques for Health and Relaxation* (Qìgōng Ànmó and Qìgōng Diǎnxuè, 氣功按摩、氣功點穴) (published by YMAA Publication Center)
4. *Qìgōng and Health—For Healing and Maintaining Health* (published by YMAA Publication Center)
5. *Qìgōng and Martial Arts—The Key to Advanced Martial Arts Skill* (Shàolín, Wūdāng, Éméi, and others) (published, new title: *The Essence of Shàolín White Crane*, by YMAA Publication Center)
6. *Buddhist Qìgōng—Chǎn, the Root of Zěn* (禪)
7. *Daoist Qìgōng (Dāndǐng Dàogōng, 丹鼎道功)*
8. *Tibetan Qìgōng (Mìzàng Shéngōng, 密藏神功)*

In this first volume we will discuss the roots of Chinese Qìgōng by dividing them into four parts. The first part will introduce the history of Qìgōng, the basic concepts and terminology commonly used in Qìgōng society and documents, the different Qìgōng categories, and the relationship between Qì and the human body, and fundamental Qìgōng training theory and principles. This first part will give you a general concept of what Qìgōng is and the various subjects that it includes. The second part will discuss the general keys to Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng training, so that you can choose your goal and the best way to get there. The third part will review the Qì circulatory system in your body, which includes the twelve primary Qì channels and the eight extraordinary Qì vessels. This part will give you a better understanding of how Qì circulates in your body.

Finally, the fourth part of the book will list some of the many questions about Qìgōng that remain unanswered.

The second volume in this series will cover Yìjīn and Xǐsuǐ Qìgōng (易筋經、洗髓經氣功), which are translated as “Muscle/Tendon Changing” and “Marrow/Brain Washing Qìgōng.” Marrow/Brain Washing is deep, and difficult to understand. It has been found in documents detailing both Buddhist and Daoist Qìgōng and meditation training, and it has been known in China since the Liáng dynasty (梁朝), 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 Qìgōng 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 videos will be easy to understand both in theory and in practice. The first book and tape are on the Eight Pieces of Brocade (Bādùànjīn, 八段錦), one of China’s most popular Qìgōng sets.



## Preface

Second Edition, as published 1997

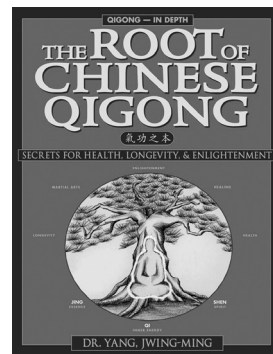
Since 1989, when this book was first introduced to the public, more than thirty thousand copies have been sold. This is better than I originally expected. The reason for this is simply because the subject of Qìgōng was still very new to Western readers, even though it has been studied and practiced in 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 Qìgōng. It is like a piece of classical music, instead of rock music, which can be understood and accepted easily by the general society.

Qìgōng today, like Tàijíquán in the early 1980s, 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 Qìgōng healing techniques have been widely accepted. Alternative medicine, as it was originally called, is now considered to be “complementary 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 ten more books and fifteen videotapes to introduce Chinese culture to the Western society. YOAA, Inc. (Yáng’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 thirty 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 Qìgōng books to the West. The books I wanted to write include:

1. *The Root of Chinese Qìgōng—Secrets for Health, Longevity, and Enlightenment*
2. *Qìgōng—The Secret of Youth (Dámó’s Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Classics) (Yìjīnjīng and Xǐsuǐjīng, 易筋經、洗髓經)*
3. *Qìgōng Massage—Fundamental Techniques for Health and Relaxation (Qìgōng Ànmó and Qìgōng Diǎnxuè, 氣功按摩、氣功點穴)*
4. *Qìgōng for Health & Martial Arts: Exercises and Meditation*



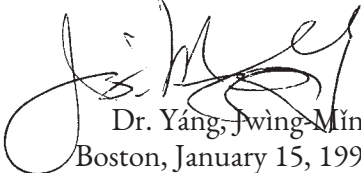
Second edition, as published in 1997.

5. *Qigōng and Martial Arts—The Key to Advanced Martial Arts Skill* (Shàolín, Wūdāng, Éméi, and others) (new title: *The Essence of Shàolín White Crane*, by YMAA Publication Center)
6. *Buddhist Qigōng—Chǎn, the Root of Zěn* (禪)
7. *Daoist Qigōng (Dāndǐng Dàogōng, 丹鼎道功)*
8. *Tibetan Qigōng (Mìzàng Shéngōng, 密藏神功)*

This is the first of those books. The second, *Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Chì Kūng* (new title: *Qigōng—The Secret of Youth*), was also published in 1989. The first half of the *Chinese Qigōng Massage, General Massage* was published in 1992. The second half, about Tuīná, Diǎnxuè, and Qì massage, is still being written. *Qigōng and Health* has not yet been started. *Qigōng and Martial Arts* has been written under the title *The Essence of Shàolín White Crane*, which was published in 1996. *Buddhist Qigōng* and *Tibetan Qigōng* have not yet been started. Currently, I am working on *Daoist Qigōng*, 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 Qigōng documents were released to the general public in the last ten years, both in China and Táiwān. 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 Qigōng 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 Qigōng healing and martial arts. As I pointed out in the original preface, the translation and interpretation of the Qigōng from Chinese to English is not easy. We will need an organization that has strong financial support and many Qigōng 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 Qigōng 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

## Publisher's Note on the 3rd Edition

This 3rd edition includes pinyin with tonal marks, a new Chinese character font (Biau-Kai), and selected illustration enhancements.

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

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

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

There are primarily four tonal categories written in pinyin.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

<https://dictionary.hantrainerpro.com/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinyin>

<https://ymaa.com/publishing/spoken-chinese-glossary>

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1. <https://www.mandarinintutor.com/resources/pinyinintro>  
2. <https://www.duchinese.net/blog/learn-to-read-chinese-tones/>





# Basic Concepts of Qìgōng

There are a number of special terms that are commonly used by Qìgōng practitioners and are found in the documents that have been passed down from generation to generation. Since most of these terms are key words that will help you to grasp the basic concepts of Qìgōng practice, it is important that you understand their real meaning. In this chapter we will discuss the major terms which are directly related to Qìgōng training. Other terms will be discussed in the appendix.

## 3-1. THE THREE TREASURES—JĪNG, QÌ, AND SHÉN (SĀNBĒN-JĪNG, QÌ, SHÉN, 三本-精、氣、神)

Understanding Jīng (essence, 精), Qì (internal energy, 氣), and Shén (spirit, 神) is one of the most important requirements for effective Qìgōng training. They are the root of your life and therefore also the root of Qìgōng practice. Jīng, Qì, and Shén are called “Sānbǎo” (三寶), which means “The Three Treasures,” “Sānyuán” (三元), which means “The Three Origins,” or “Sānběn” (三本), which means “The Three Foundations.” In Qìgōng training, a practitioner learns how to “firm his Jīng” (Gùjīng, 固精; Gù means to firm, solidify, retain, and conserve) and how to convert it into Qì. This is called “Liànjīng Huàqì” (煉精化氣), which means “to refine the Jīng and convert it into Qì.” Then he learns how to lead the Qì to the head to convert it into Shén (also called nourishing Shén). This is called “Liànqì Huàshén” (煉氣化神), which means “to refine the Qì and convert it into (nourish) the Shén.” Finally, the practitioner learns to use his energized Shén to govern the emotional part of his personality. This is called “Liànshén Liǎoxìng” (煉神了性), or “to refine the Shén to end human (emotional) nature.”

These conversion processes are what enable you to gain health and longevity. As a Qìgōng practitioner, you must pay a great deal of attention to these three elements during the course of your training. If you keep these three elements strong and healthy, you will live a long and healthy life. If you neglect or abuse them, you will be sick frequently and will age fast. Each one of these three elements or treasures has its own root. You must know the roots so that you can strengthen and protect your three treasures.

## Jīng (精)

The Chinese word Jīng means a number of things depending on where, when, and how it is used. Jīng can be used as a verb, an adjective, or a noun. When it is used as a verb, it means “to refine.” For example, to refine or purify a liquid to a high quality is called “Jīngliàn” (精煉). When it is used as an adjective, it is used to describe or signify something which is “refined,” “polished,” and “pure without mixture.” For example, when a piece of art work is well done, people say “Jīngxì” (精細), which means “delicate and painstaking” (literally, “pure and fine”), or “Jīngliàng” (精良), which means “excellent quality” (literally “pure and good”). When Jīng is used to apply to personal wisdom or personality, it means “keen” and “sharp.” For example, when someone is smart or wise, they are called “Jīngmíng” (精明), which means “keen and clever.” When Jīng is applied to a thought, it means “profound” or “astute,” and indicates that the idea or plan was well and carefully considered. When used as a noun for an object, Jīng means “the essence” or “the essentials.” When it is used for the energy side of a being, it means “spirit” or “ghost.” Since Chinese people believe that the male sperm or semen is the refined and the most essential product of a man, Jīng also means sperm or semen.

When Jīng is used as “essence,” it exists in everything. Jīng may be considered the primal substance or original source from which a thing is made, and which exhibits the true nature of that thing. When Jīng is used in reference to animals or humans, it means the very original and essential source of life and growth. This Jīng is the origin of the Shén (spirit) that makes an animal different from a tree. In humans, Jīng is passed down from the parents. Sperm is called “Jīngzǐ” (精子), which means “the sons of essence.” When this essence is mixed with the mother’s Jīng (egg), a new life is generated which is, in certain fundamental respects, an intertwining of the Jīngs of both parents. The child is formed, the Qì circulates, and the Shén grows. The Jīng that has been carried over from the parents is called “Yuánjīng” (元精), which means “Original Essence.”

Once you are born, Original Jīng is the fountainhead and root of your life. It is what enables you to grow stronger and bigger. After your birth you start to absorb the Jīng of food and air, converting these Jīngs into the Qì which supplies your body’s needs. You should understand that when Jīng is mentioned in Qìgōng society, it refers usually to Yuánjīng (Original Jīng, 元精). Qìgōng practitioners believe that Original Jīng is the most important part of you, because it is the root of your body’s Qì and Shén. The amount and quality of Original Jīng is different from person to person, and it is affected significantly by your parents’ health and living habits while they were creating you. Generally speaking, it does not matter how much Original Jīng you have carried over from your parents. If you know how to conserve it, you will have more than enough for your lifetime. According to Chinese medicine, you probably cannot increase the amount of Jīng you have. It is believed, however, that Qìgōng training can improve its quality.

In Qìgōng training, knowing how to conserve and firm your Original Jīng is of primary importance. To conserve means to refrain from abusing your Original Jīng through overuse.

For example, if you overindulge in sexual activity, you will lose Original Jīng faster than other people and your body will degenerate faster. To firm your Jīng means to keep and protect it. For example, you should know how to keep your kidneys strong. Kidneys are thought of as the residence of Original Jīng. When your kidneys are strong, the Original Jīng will be kept firm and will not be lost without reason. The firming of your Original Jīng is called “Gùjīng” (固精), which is translated “to make solid, to firm the essence.” Only after you know how to retain (meaning, to conserve and firm) your Original Jīng can you start seeking ways to improve its quality. Therefore, conserving and firming your Jīng is the first step in training. In order to know how to conserve and firm your Jīng, you must first know the root of your Jīng, where the Original Jīng resides and how Original Jīng is converted into Qì.

As mentioned, the root of your Original Jīng before your birth is in your parents. After birth, this Original Jīng stays in its residence, the kidneys, which are now also its root. When you keep this root strong, you will have plenty of Original Jīng to supply to your body.

If you look carefully at how you were formed, you can gain interesting insights into life. You started as one sperm which, because it managed to reach and penetrate the egg before any of the other millions of sperm could, was one of the strongest and luckiest sperm alive. Once this sperm entered the egg, one human cell formed and then started to divide, from one to two, and from two to four. Finally, the baby formed. All of the baby’s health depended on the sperm and egg that were generated from the Jīng of the parents. As the baby was being formed it was immersed in liquid, and it received all of its nutrition and oxygen from the mother through the umbilical cord. Notice that the umbilical cord connects at the navel, which is very close to both the Dāntián (丹田) and your body’s center of gravity. The umbilical cord is very long, and because it is hard for the mother alone to push the necessary supplies to the baby, the baby needs to help. The baby must draw the nutrients to itself with an in-and-out pumping motion of its abdomen.

Once you are born, you start taking in oxygen through your nose and food through your mouth. Since you no longer need the abdominal motion to pump in nutrients, it gradually stops, and, finally, you forget how to use it. In Qìgōng, the Lower Dāntián (Xià Dāntián, 下丹田) or abdomen is still considered the original Qì source because it is here that Qì is made from the Original Jīng that you inherited from your parents.

According to Chinese medical and Qìgōng society, the Original Jīng you obtained from your parents stays in your kidneys after your birth. This Original Jīng is the source of your life and growth. This Original Jīng is converted continuously into Qì, which moves into the Lower Dāntián and stays stored there in its residence for future use. The Dāntián is located on the Conception Vessel—one of the eight Qì “reservoirs” in the body which regulate the Qì flow in the other Qì channels (this will be discussed further in Part Three). Dāntiánqì is considered “Water Qì” (Shuǐqì, 水氣) and is able to cool down the “Fire Qì” (Huǒqì, 火氣) generated from the Jīng of food and air and that resides at the Middle Dāntián.

As you may realize from the above discussion, if you wish to stay strong and healthy, you must first conserve your Original Jīng. Remember that Original Jīng is like the principal in

your savings account in that it is an original investment that will continue to return interest as long as it is conserved. Jīng can produce Qì, so if you handle this Jīng carefully, you will continue to have Jīng and Qì. However, if you abuse yourself with an unhealthy lifestyle, you may damage and reduce your Original Jīng.

In order to conserve your Jīng, you must first control your sexual activity. The gonads are called the “external kidneys” (Wàishèn, 外腎) in Chinese medical society. This is because Chinese doctors believe that sperm is a product of Original Jīng and the Jīng from food and air. The more ejaculations you have, the faster you will exhaust your Original Jīng, and the shorter your life will be.

Please understand that the Chinese doctors and Qìgōng practitioners are not saying that in order to conserve your Jīng, you must stop your sexual activity completely. As a matter of fact, they encourage the proper amount of sexual activity, believing that it will energize and activate the Jīng, which makes the Jīng-Qì conversion more efficient. Remember, Jīng is like fuel, and Qì is like the energy generated from this fuel. The more efficiently you can convert your fuel into energy, the less you will waste.

In addition, the proper amount of sexual activity will energize the Qì so that it nourishes the Shén (spirit). This will help you stay mentally balanced and raise your Shén. It is very important to keep your Shén raised, otherwise you will tend to get depressed and will be afraid to face life. It is very hard to define how much sex is the proper amount. It depends on the individual’s age and state of health. According to Qìgōng, the Jīng that resides in the external kidneys (gonads) is the main source of the Qì that fills up the four major Qì vessels in the legs. These four Qì reservoirs (vessels) keep the legs strong and healthy. Therefore, if you feel that your legs are weak due to the amount of sexual activity, you have lost too much of your Jīng.

The second thing you must do in order to conserve your Original Jīng is to prevent your Original Qì from leaking out of your body. There are two acupuncture cavities called “Shènshū” (B-23, 腎俞) or “Jīngmén” (Essence Doors, 精門). These two cavities are the doors through which the kidneys communicate with the outside, and they are used to regulate the Qì production in the kidneys. When Qì is converted from Original Jīng, most of it moves forward to the Dāntián. However, some Qì is lost backward through the Kidney Doors. If you lose too much Qì, your Jīng will be depleted as you try to make up for the loss. In Qìgōng practice, one of the major training goals is to learn how to lead the converted Qì from the kidneys to the Dāntián more efficiently.

## Qì (氣)

Since we have already discussed Qì at the beginning of this chapter in general terms, we will now discuss Qì in the human body and in Qìgōng training. Before we start, we would like to point out one important thing. At this time, there is no clear explanation of the relationship between all of the circulatory systems and the Qì circulatory system. The Western world knows of the blood system, nervous system, and lymphatic system. Now, there is the Qì circulation system from China. How are, for example, the Qì and the nervous system

# Regulating the Body

## 8-1. INTRODUCTION (JIÈSHÀO, 介紹)

In Qìgōng training, you need to know how to regulate five things: your body, breath, Xīn (emotional mind), Qì, and Shén (spirit). In addition, in order to keep up a steady, adequate supply of Water Qì, you must also learn how to regulate the essence from which it is converted. We will discuss them separately, but you must remember that in practice they are all closely linked together.

Before we continue with this chapter, you should first understand the word regulating. Regulating means to adjust and tune constantly until the goal is reached. However, you should also understand that the real regulating happens only when you don't need to consciously regulate. This means that if your mind has to pay attention to the regulating, you have not reached the final goal. The real regulating happens naturally, when you do not have to regulate it at all. It is just like when you are driving. Before you can drive, you must first learn how. While you are involved in the learning process, your mind will be on regulating your new skills. Once you have mastered the skill of driving, it isn't necessary for your conscious mind to actually be on the act of driving, and you will be able to drive without driving. It is the same with Qìgōng training. When you start regulating the above five elements of your training, you may have to place all of your attention on it. After you have practiced and mastered the skills, regulating will no longer be necessary. Then, you have reached the real regulating without regulating.

Regulating the Body is called Tiáoshēn (調身) in Chinese. It means to adjust your body until it is in the most comfortable and relaxed state. This implies that your body must be centered and balanced posturally. If it is not, you will be tense and uneasy, which will affect the judgment of your Yì and the circulation of your Qì. In Chinese medical society it is said: “(When) shape (i.e., body's posture) is not correct, then the Qì will not be smooth. (When) the Qì is not smooth, the Yì (mind) will not be at peace. (When) the Yì is not at peace, then the Qì is disordered.”<sup>1</sup> The relaxation of your body originates with your Yì. Therefore, before you can relax your body, you must first relax or regulate your mind (Yì).

1. 形不正，則氣不順。氣不順，則意不寧。意不寧，則氣散亂。

However, before you can do this, you must first regulate your Xīn (emotional mind). It is the main reason that your Yì has difficulty being calm and peaceful. When you have regulated both the emotional and the wisdom minds as well as the body it is called “Shēnxīn Píng héng” (身心平衡), which means “body and heart (mind) balanced.” The body and the mind are mutually related. A relaxed and balanced body doesn’t distract your attention, and lets your Yì relax and concentrate. When your Yì is at peace and can judge things accurately, your body will be centered, balanced, and relaxed.

## 8-2. RELAXATION THEORY (SŌNGCHÍ DE YUÁNĪ, 鬆弛的原理)

Relaxation is one of the major keys to success in Qigōng. You should remember that only when you are relaxed will all your Qì channels be open. Relaxation includes two major parts: the mind (Yì and Xīn) and the physical body. Generally, mind relaxation must come before the physical body is able to relax. We discussed before the two kinds of mind: Xīn (emotional mind) and Yì (wisdom mind). The emotional mind affects your feelings and the condition of your physical body. The wisdom mind is able to lead you to a calm and peaceful state, which allows you to exercise good judgment. Therefore, in order to be relaxed, your Yì must first be relaxed and calm. Then, Yì is able to control the emotional mind and let it relax too. Finally, when the peaceful Yì and Xīn coordinate with your breathing, the physical body will relax.

In Qigōng practice, there are three levels of relaxation. The first level is external, physical relaxation, or postural relaxation. This is a very superficial level, and almost anyone can reach it. It consists of adopting a comfortable stance and avoiding unnecessary strain in posture and movement. When you reach this level of relaxation, although you look relaxed, you are still tense internally. Of course, in order to reach this level of relaxation, the mind must first relax. Normally, your mind does not have to reach a very deep level to achieve this looking relaxed stage. Once you start to relax your mind, your body will follow naturally.

The second level involves relaxing the muscles and tendons. To do this, your meditative mind must be calm and peaceful enough to feel deep into the muscles and tendons. From this feeling, your mind will know how to gauge the level of your relaxation. Only when you have reached this level will your mind be able to feel the Qì flow in the muscles and tendons. This level of relaxation will help open your Qì channels, and will allow the Qì to sink and accumulate in the Dāntián.

The final stage is the relaxation which reaches the internal organs and the bone marrow, and every pore in your skin. In order to be relaxed in your internal organs, your Yì must first have reached a very deep level of calmness and peace. Only then will you be able to sense the organs and marrow. Remember, only if you can relax deep into your body will your mind be able to lead the Qì there.

Before we continue, you should understand the difference between feeling and sensing. The Chinese expression “Gǎnjué” (感覺) means “to feel” in the sense of touching and feeling something. The expression “Yìshì” (意識), which is translated “to sense,” literally means

“Yì recognition” or “to recognize with your Yì.” When you feel something, it happens physically. Feeling is direct and active, while sensing is more indirect. In feeling, your emotional mind is able to touch the object. When sensing, however, you must use your Yì to perceive the situation. To sense, therefore, you must collect the information generated by the object, and process it so that you can understand and realize what is happening. Sensing involves a deeper level of spiritual intuition, beyond feeling, in which the object and the mind can communicate directly.

In Qìgōng relaxation training, the deeper levels of relaxation include sensing the marrow and the organs. When you have reached this stage the Qì will be able to reach any point in your body. Then you will feel light and transparent—as if your whole body had disappeared. If you can reach this level of relaxation you will also be able to lead the Qì to your skin and strengthen your Guardian Qì. This will keep you from getting sick from outside causes. At this level of relaxation your Yì will also be able to adjust the Qì in your organs to cure Qì disorders. You will be able to protect your organs more effectively, and slow down their degeneration.

An important part of the training in Qìgōng involves “leading the five Qì’s toward their origins” (Wǔqì Cháoyuán, 五氣朝元). This involves adjusting the Qì in the five Yīn organs (lungs, heart, kidneys, liver, and spleen) to the appropriate levels. Generally speaking, you are able to sense or even to feel the lungs much more easily than the other four organs. This is because your lungs move when you inhale and exhale. This obvious movement makes it very easy to be aware of them. The second organ that you can sense, once you have relaxed your lungs, is your heart. When you relax the heart, you can clearly sense and even feel it beating. The third organ is the kidneys. The kidneys can be sensed more easily than the liver and the spleen because there is liquid flowing constantly through them. The liver will be next, and then the spleen. Because the liver is much bigger than the spleen, it is easier to sense any movement, such as blood, inside it. We will discuss this idea further when we cover the regulation of organ Qì.

### 8-3. RELAXATION PRACTICE (SŌNGCHÍ DE LIÀNXÍ, 鬆弛的練習)

Relaxation practice can be done anytime and anywhere. It can also be done in any posture. The first key to relaxation is your mind, and the second key is your breathing. Remember: when you relax, you must first relax your mind. Only when your mind is relaxed will your body start to relax and your lungs loosen. When your lungs are loose, you will be able to regulate your breathing and slow down your heartbeat. When this happens, your mind will reach to a deeper level of calmness and peace. This deeper mind will relax your lungs again, slowing down your heartbeat a further step. These processes will lead you to a deeply calm state which allows you to feel and sense every cell of your body and every function of the internal organs. Only then may you say that you have relaxed your body completely.

## Relaxing the Mind

The regulation of your mind and breathing will be discussed in detail later. At this point, in order to practice relaxation you must start to practice mind regulation. In practice, there are two steps in regulating your mind. The first step is to bring all of your thoughts from the outside world to your body. This is usually done by concentrating on your “third eye” or Upper Dāntián. Then regulate your concentrated mind until it is relaxed, easy, and natural.

First, let your thoughts be calm and peaceful, so that you can concentrate your mind on relaxing. Your wisdom Yì must be able to control the thoughts or ideas generated from the emotional Xīn. Only then will your mind be clear. Then you will be able to disregard surrounding distractions and focus on your body. When you have reached this stage, although your mind is clear, it may still be tense from concentrating. Therefore, you must learn to concentrate without mental tension. Remember: when your mind is tense, your physical body will also be tense. Therefore, the second step of practice is to relax your concentrated mind. Sometimes when people cannot sleep they concentrate all their attention on falling asleep. This only makes things worse. The trick is to concentrate on something else. Normally in Qigōng you concentrate your mind on your breathing and on the sensation of your lungs expanding and contracting. Every time you exhale, feel your physical body relax to a deeper level.

## Relaxing the Breathing

Once you have relaxed your mind, you will be able to relax your breathing. Your breathing is closely related to your thoughts, and especially to emotional feelings. Once the mind is calm and peaceful, breathing can be independent of thought. The first step toward relaxing your breathing involves neutralizing the effect your emotions have on the breathing process. Normally, once you have relaxed your mind, you have reached this stage. Next, you must understand that breathing is caused by the physical motion of the body. For the average, untrained person, this means moving the chest. Since it is the muscles of the chest and the diaphragm which draw the air into your body and push it out, you must learn to relax all of the muscles which relate to your breathing.

Bring your calm and concentrated mind to your chest. Take in air and push it out slowly without holding your breath. While you are doing this, pay attention to how the muscles of the diaphragm move. The more you can feel them, the more your Yì is able to lead the relaxation to a deeper level.

When you do this breathing training, you will notice that the area around your solar plexus starts loosening up. When your chest is loose, you have reached the fundamental stage of relaxation.

## Relaxing the Body

Relaxing the body is the first step in regulating your body. Only when your body is relaxed are you able to sense your physical body’s center, root, and balance, and reach the goal of body regulation.



Relaxing the body includes relaxing the muscles, skin, marrow, and organs. Remember: only when you are able to relax all of these will the Qì flow smoothly and freely. Then you will be able to lead the Qì and feel that your body is transparent.

Because you use your mind to control your muscles whenever you move, relaxing your muscles is easiest. Your mind is able to feel them. Once your mind is calm, the mind will be able to effectively lead the muscles into a state of relaxation.

Relaxing the skin is the next easiest. Your skin is the interface between your body and your surroundings. Every time your skin feels something, the message is sent to your brain for evaluation. Because communication between the skin and the brain is happening all the time, it is easy for your Yì to reach the skin and lead it to a relaxed state.

Relaxing the organs is the next step. In order to reach this stage, your mind must have reached a deeper level of calmness and peace. There are five Yīn organs which are most important in Qìgōng relaxation training. These organs are: lungs, heart, kidneys, liver, and spleen. Except for the lungs, which can be controlled by the mind directly, all the other organs must be reached or sensed indirectly. In order to sense the last four organs, you must first be able to feel the muscles surrounding them for clues about their condition. Once your mind is able to reach all of these muscles, your mind will be led to the organs and sense them clearly.

There is an important point to be aware of. When you practice communication between your mind and organs, the Qì will be led to those organs in order for your brain to sense them. If you are not careful, excess Qì will be led to them and make them too Yáng, which will cause problems. This is especially true of the heart. Your heart is very sensitive to Qì, so the Qì level must be correct. When you place your mind on your heart, the heart will become Yáng, and the heart beat will increase. Therefore, when you relax an organ, you must be very careful to avoid leading your mind directly to it. Instead, notice the area around the organ, as well as the organ itself. Do not zero in too intensely on an organ, or you will upset its natural balance. Organs must function normally while you are relaxing them. Organs are not like your skin or muscles. They are vital and more sensitive to Qì. You should be able to see from this why leading the five Qì's to their origins is considered one of the hardest and highest stages of Qìgōng practice.

Relaxing the bone marrow is the hardest relaxation exercise. Your mind does not communicate directly with it as it does with the skin and muscle. Also, since there are no muscles connected to the marrow, you cannot use motion to sense it. The hardest discipline in Chinese Qìgōng is Marrow/Brain Washing, because your mind has such great difficulty communicating with the marrow. This will be discussed in a later book.

### **Postures for Practicing Relaxation**

There is no specific posture which you must use for relaxation training. In fact, no matter which posture you use, part of your body will be tensed to support your body. For example, your legs will be tensed when you stand, your thighs are pressed when you sit down, your back is pushed down by your body's weight when you lie down. Obviously, there is no relaxation posture which is absolutely good for the entire body. The prerequisite to relaxing

your mind and body is feeling comfortable and natural. Your body should be centered and balanced. You also need to consider how the environment might affect you. Is it too noisy, or is the surface you are lying or sitting on too hard? For the beginner, we suggest that you lie on your back. When you are lying down, you don't have to pay attention to your root, center, and balance, so it is easier for you to regulate your mind. Lying down for relaxation practice also has a disadvantage. When you lie down, your back muscles are pressed down by your weight, which restricts their ability to loosen up.

Once you are familiar with the relaxation exercises, you should also learn to relax while you are sitting. This is harder than lying down because part of your mind must be kept in your body's center to prevent your falling over. Sitting relaxation, however, is better for your trunk and upper limbs. You can see that the different postures have their advantages and disadvantages. Remember, it does not matter which posture you are using, as long as you feel comfortable and natural.

### **Suggested Procedures for Relaxation Exercises**

There are many methods of relaxing. Once you have some experience with one method, you may find another exercise or set of exercises which are easier and better for you. Here, we will only suggest some procedures which will help you start out. We recommend that the beginner start lying down.

**Bring Your Mind to Your Shén.** Relax your body with a few comfortably deep breaths. Normally, most people can do this easily. Next, bring your mind from outside of your body to your Upper Dāntián, where your Shén resides. When your mind is on the Shén, your spirit will be centered, and thoughts generated by outside distractions will start to disappear. Your mind will now be able to concentrate on feeling your body.

**Relax Your Mind.** When you concentrate your attention on relaxing your mind, you will find that your mind stays tense. You have to relax it by moving the focus of your consciousness away from your mind. One of the best ways is to pay attention to your breathing.

**Feel and Sense Your Middle Dāntián.** Move your mind to the Middle Dāntián (Solar Plexus), which is the center and residence of your Fire Qì. Feel the physical location of your solar plexus, and sense the Qì there. Remember, Fire Qì stimulates the emotional mind and emotional feelings, and increases tension. When you move your mind to the Middle Dāntián, you will be able to feel what is happening with your Fire Qì.

**Use Breathing to Cool Down the Fire Qì.** In Qigōng, the lungs are considered Metal and the heart is considered Fire. Metal is able to absorb heat and cool down Fire. Whenever you have heartburn or an uneasy feeling in your chest, use deep breathing to cool down the Fire and release the pressure. Similarly, when you want to relax, you must first cool down your chest Fire and relax the chest area. Smooth, relaxed deep breathing will enable you to extend your relaxation from your chest to your entire body. When you reach this stage, you have completed the first step of relaxation.

**Use Your Mind to Direct the Body.** Once you have relaxed your body at the surface level, you must enter a deeper level of relaxation. At this level, use your concentrated mind

to feel and relax deep into the muscles and tendons. This stage allows you to open the Qi channels by relaxing any muscular tension which is constricting the channels and restricting Qi circulation. When you do this, your breathing is deeper, your pulse is slower, and your meditating mind reaches a deeper level.

When you relax your whole body, start at the toes. Concentrate your mind on each of your toes and relax them. Next, move your mind up to your feet, ankles, calves, thighs, and hips. You may feel your lower body disappear, and feel as if you were floating. Keeping your lower body relaxed, move your mind to your fingers and repeat the same procedure—from your fingers to the hands, wrists, forearms, elbows, and shoulders. Then concentrate your mind on your stomach, and move up to the chest and neck. Finally, focus on your head. After your head is relaxed, keep your mind relaxed while concentrating on feeling your whole body. When you have reached this level, you will be able to feel your muscles, tendons, and skin. The more you practice, the better your mind will be able to concentrate on the local areas and relax them. When you relax your body starting from the extremities, you are also relaxing and clearing the Qi channels. To relax the channels, you have to relax the ends first, then work your way down their length. If you start in the middle, you will relax in one direction, but the other side will be tense.

If you are able to practice twice a day, the Qi in your body will be able to rebalance itself easily and naturally. Your mind will be peaceful and you will be able to maintain your health. The best time to practice is two hours after lunch, when the Fire Qi is strongest at your Middle Dāntián. If you can practice your relaxation at this time, you will be able to cool down and help your body. The second best time is just before you sleep. After a long day of physical and mental exercise, you will be able to relax your mind as well as your body. This will enable you to have a more relaxing sleep, with fewer dreams, and you will be able to effectively recover from fatigue. If you would like to know more about the relaxation practice at this level, refer to the audio tape: *Self Relaxation—A Chinese Qigong Meditation* (YMAA Publication Center).

**Relaxing Your Organs.** If you are a Qigong practitioner, you will want to relax all the way into your organs in order to regulate the Qi in them. Generally, this stage is much harder for the person who does not know the theory and does not have the above relaxation training. In order for your mind to reach your organs, you will need to reach a much deeper level of meditation. The five Yin organs are considered the most vital. Generally speaking, to feel or sense the lungs is the easiest, followed by the heart, kidneys, liver, and spleen. When you are able to feel and sense these organs, you will be able to evaluate their status, and use your mind to regulate their Qi.

**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 Qì 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: *Qigōng—The Secret of Youth*, 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 Qì be able to flow smoothly and fluidly to every cell of your body.

#### **8-4. ROOTING, CENTERING, AND BALANCING (ZHĀGĒN, ZHŌNGDÌNG, PÍNG-HÉNG, 紮根、中定、平衡)**

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 Qigōng exercises you want to lead the Qì to your palms. In order to do this, you must image that you are pushing an object forward while keeping your muscles relaxed.<sup>2</sup> 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 Qì 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 (Gōngjiàn bù, 弓箭步) 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,

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2. The verb *image* as used here means to mentally create something that you treat as if it were real. If you image that you are pushing something heavy, you have to adjust your posture exactly as if you were in fact pushing something heavy. You must feel its weight and resistance as you exert force against it, and realize the force and counter force in your legs. If you mentally treat your actions as real, your body will too, and the Qì will automatically move appropriately for those actions. If you only “pretend” or “imagine” that you are pushing something heavy, your mind and body will not treat your actions as real, and the Qì will not move strongly or clearly.

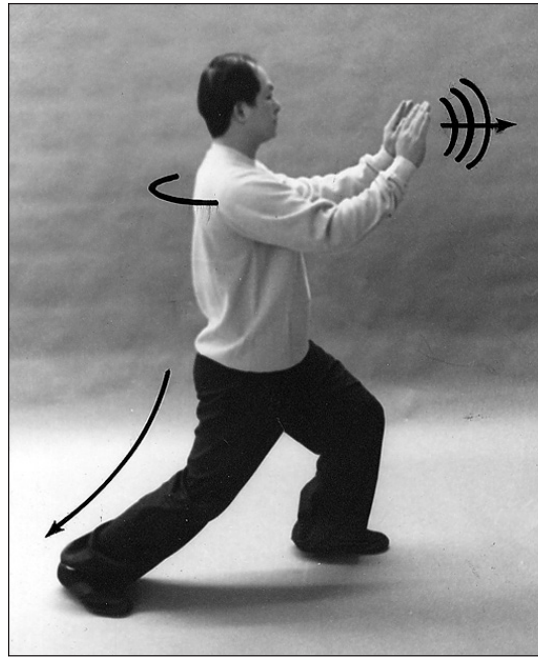


Figure 8-1. Feeling Qi on the palms by imagining pushing forward

your posture will be natural and comfortable, and your Yi will be strong enough to direct the pushing.

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 Dāntián and the Bubbling Wells (Yǒngquán, 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 your 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 Qigōng 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 Qigōng 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 Qigōng 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 Qigōng 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 (Mǎbù, 馬步)**

The horse stance is the most common stance used by Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng, 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 Qìgōng 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 Qìgōng 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 Qì 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 Qì to the bottom of your feet more easily. In Chinese internal martial styles such as Tàijíquán, when a beginner's Qì 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 Tàijíquán practitioner has reached a high level, he will stand higher and keep the leg muscles relaxed, allowing his Qì to reach the bottom of his feet.

In Qìgōng 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 Yì can exert the strongest push upward, and it can therefore also exert the strongest push

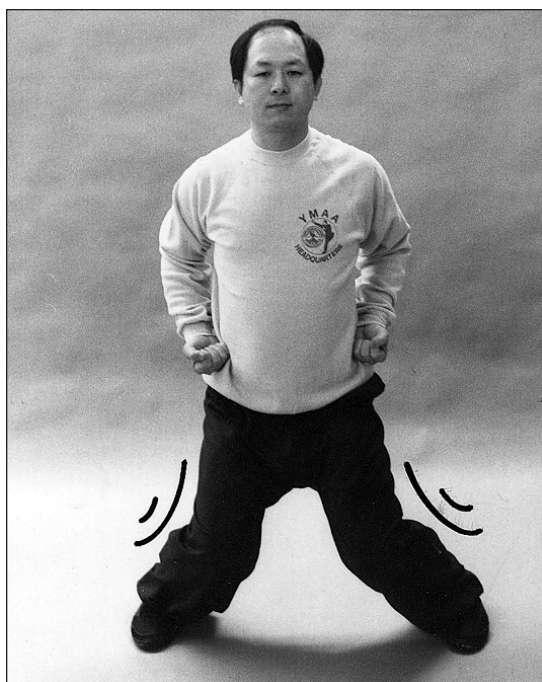


Figure 8-2. Horse Stance of the southern martial styles

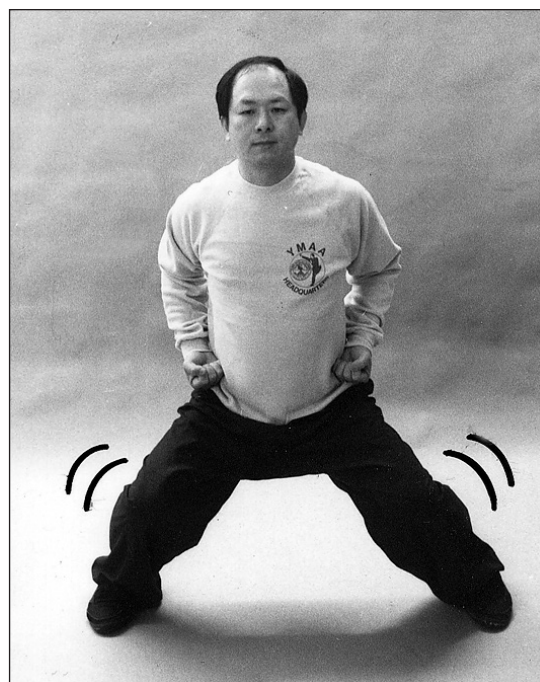


Figure 8-3. Horse Stance of the northern martial styles

downward. It is this downward pushing of your Yì that builds your root. If you keep practicing, you will eventually start to feel that your Yì is leading your Qì into the ground, and that your root is starting to grow.

To root your body, you must imitate a tree and grow an invisible root beneath your feet. Naturally, your Yì must grow first, because it is the Yì which leads the Qì. Your Yì must be able to communicate with the ground in order to lead your Qì beyond your feet and build the root. This means your Yì 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 Yì 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 Qì to the bottom more effectively. The Bubbling Well cavity is the gate which enables your Qì 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.



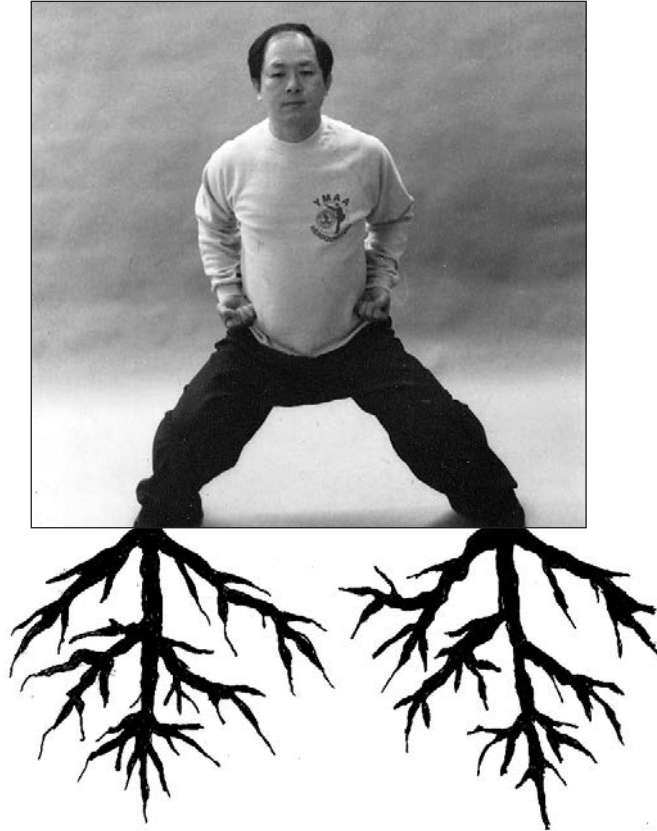


Figure 8-4. Horse Stance with the root growing like a tree's

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 over even when he is standing in a very awkward position. When you start practicing, stand so that you are physically centered and have a good root, and be centered mentally in the same way. After a while, change your stance slightly so that your physical stance becomes less centered and less stable, and practice maintaining your balance and stability mentally. Remember, if you are not centered physically or mentally, you will not be able to maintain your balance.

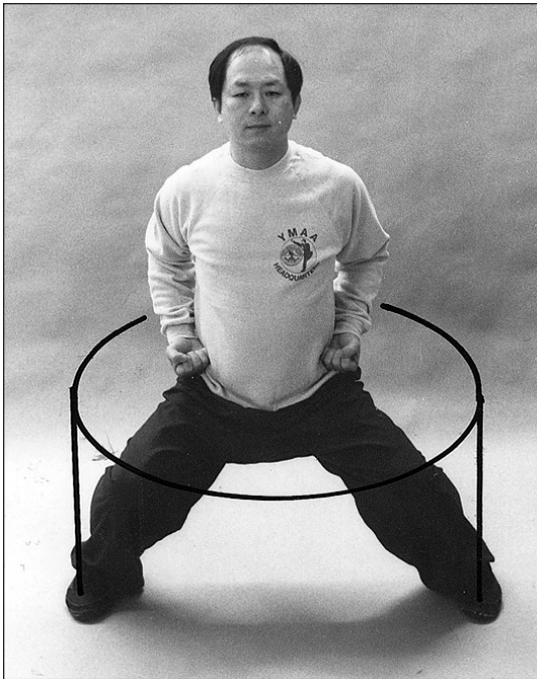


Figure 8-5. In a low stance, your body is stable within this area

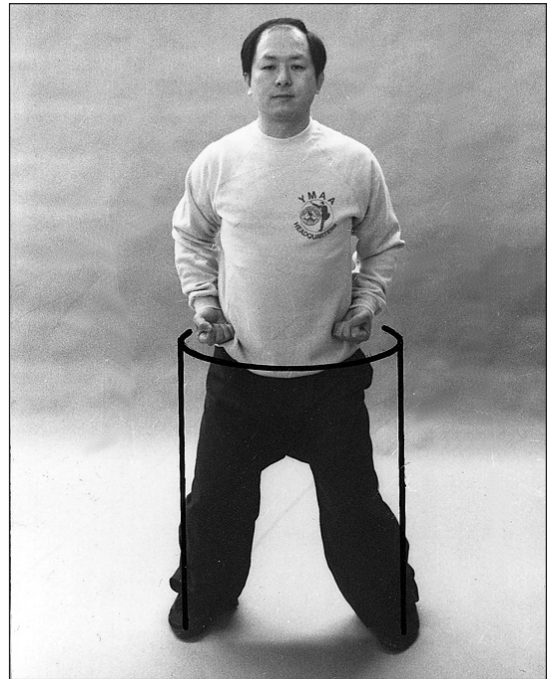


Figure 8-6. In a high stance, your body is stable within this area

The degree to which your physical body's center can be separated from the mind's center without losing balance depends on how you stand. Generally speaking, it depends on how wide you build your root. For example, if you stand low with a firm root, your body's center can be moved in the space between the two roots built by your feet (Figure 8-5). If you stand higher, the width is narrower, and the circle of movement you can allow your body will be smaller (Figure 8-6).

A highly skilled martial artist can defend himself even in a high, narrow stance. His range of movement is limited, but if he has strong Qì he will be able to build a strong root, and if his technique is good enough, he will be able to fight effectively. Remember, in order to reach this stage, you must start with a low, wide stance, and gradually narrow and raise it. The Chinese have a proverb: “Yǎngāo Shǒudī” (眼高手低), which means, “Eyes are high and the hands are low.” This scoffs at those people who keep dreaming of high levels of mastery while they are still at a very low level.

# Regulating the Essence

## 11-1. INTRODUCTION (JIÈSHÀO, 介紹)

Of the three roots—Jīng, Qì, and Shén—essence (Jīng) is probably the most important element in successful Qìgōng practice. To regulate your essence means to conserve it and convert it into Qì without any waste. You must learn how to keep your Original Essence in the kidneys, its residence, by strengthening the kidneys. You must also learn how to conserve the essence by not abusing it, and by learning how to convert it into Qì efficiently.

As mentioned, the essences which are converted into Qì can be classified as Fire Essence, which is obtained from food and air, and Water Essence, which you inherit from your parents. In order to reduce the Fire Qì, you must reduce the Fire Essence by taking in high quality food and air. There are many texts available which discuss this idea.

When Qìgōng practitioners refer to essence, they are usually referring to Original Essence, which is also called “Water Essence.” It is usually of more importance in Qìgōng training than the Fire Essence. It is easy to regulate Fire Essence, but you need a lot of understanding and training to regulate the Water Essence.

As mentioned in the third chapter, Chinese medical society calls two pairs of your body’s organs kidneys: your real kidneys (also called “the internal Kidneys”; Nèishèn, 內腎), and the testicles or ovaries (also referred to as the external kidneys; Wàishèn, 外腎). It is believed that after your birth, your Original Essence stays in your internal kidneys. The internal kidneys are closely related to the external kidneys. When the Original Essence in the kidneys is converted into Original Qì, part of it is used to nourish the external kidneys and enliven the production of sexual essence or hormones. Clearly, if your internal kidneys are weak and the Original Qì cannot be converted efficiently from the Original Essence, the production of hormones or essence by the testicles will also be reduced. Therefore, if you wish to regulate your essence, you must first learn how to regulate the Original Essence in the internal kidneys.

In Marrow/Brain Washing Qìgōng, the sexual essence is the main source that is converted into Qì to fill up the four Qì vessels (reservoirs) in your legs. It is also believed that part of this Qì is led through the Thrusting Vessel (Chōngmài, 衝脈) through the spinal cord to the brain to nourish it. When people get old and start to lose their sexual vitality, they often lose their memory and their legs become weak. This is simply because there is an insufficient amount of sexual essence to supply Qì to the brain and the four vessels in the legs. For this

reason, the main task in Marrow/Brain Washing Qigōng is to increase the production of sexual essence and convert it efficiently into Qì. If you are interested in knowing more about this subject, please refer to the book: *Qigōng—The Secret of Youth*, from YMAA Publication Center. Here we will discuss regulating the essence in the internal kidneys.

## 11-2. STRENGTHENING YOUR KIDNEYS (QIÁNGSHÈN, 強腎)

In order to regulate your Original Essence, you must first take care of its residence, the kidneys, so that the essence will be protected. The first step to strengthening the kidneys is to keep them healthy. This is called Gùshèn (固腎), which means “to firm and to solidify the kidneys.” To strengthen the kidneys is called Qiángshèn (強腎).

### To Firm and to Strengthen the Kidneys (Gùshèn and Qiángshèn, 固腎，強腎)

Several thousand years of study and experimentation have yielded many ways to maintain the health of and strengthen the kidneys. All of them work by maintaining the Qì in the kidneys at the proper level. In order to do this you need to know how the kidneys are affected by weather, food, and emotions (Table 11-1).

### Kidneys and the Weather

Your kidneys are Yīn organs. When the weather is cold, especially during the winter, the surrounding air is also Yīn, and the Qì level of the kidneys is diminished. When this happens, the Qì flow will be sluggish and the back will become sore and ache, especially the lower back. It is therefore important that the kidney area be protected so that Qì will not be lost out of your body. The best method is to wear warm clothes, especially around your waist. In addition, you should learn a few massage techniques to improve Qì circulation in the kidney area and to use the Qì in your hands to nourish the kidneys. We will now discuss a few massage techniques which are commonly used in Qigōng.

**Massaging the Kidneys Directly.** This is the most common technique. Use the center of your palms to rub the back over the kidneys with a circular motion. The tops of both circles should move inward toward each other. There is a Qì gate or cavity called Láogōng (P-8) 勞宮) in the center of your palm (Figure 11-1). This cavity belongs to the Pericardium. The Pericardium includes the blood vessel which enters into the heart and the membranous sac which encloses the heart. In the Chinese medical theory of the five elements, the heart is classified as Fire and the kidneys are classified as Water.

Therefore, when you use the center of your palms to massage the kidneys, you are using fire to warm up the water, and are therefore nourishing the kidneys. When you massage the kidneys with a circular motion, the top of the motion should be inward (Figure 11-2) in order to nourish the kidneys. If you rub in the opposite direction, you are spreading the Qì away. When you rub the kidneys, you do not have to press heavily. Place your hands on the skin firmly and circle. In just a few minutes or so, you will feel the Qì inside near the kidneys circulating in the same direction. This means that you have improved the Qì circulation there. Naturally, you will be more relaxed and the massage will be more effective if someone

	WOOD 木	FIRE 火	EARTH 土	METAL 金	WATER 水
Direction	East	South	Center	West	North
Season	Spring	Summer	Long Summer	Autumn	Winter
Climactic Condition	Wind	Summer Heat	Dampness	Dryness	Cold
Process	Birth	Growth	Transformation	Harvest	Storage
Color	Green	Red	Yellow	White	Black
Taste	Sour	Bitter	Sweet	Pungent	Salty
Smell	Goatish	Burning	Fragrant	Rank	Rotten
Yin Organ	Liver	Heart	Spleen	Lungs	Kidneys
Yáng Organ	Gall Bladder	Small Intestine	Stomach	Large Intestine	Bladder
Opening	Eyes	Tongue	Mouth	Nose	Ears
Tissue	Sinews	Blood Vessels	Flesh	Skin/Hair	Bones
Emotion	Anger	Happiness	Pensiveness	Sadness	Fear
Human Sound	Shout	Laughter	Song	Weeping	Groan

Table 11-1. Table of Correspondences associated with the Five Phases

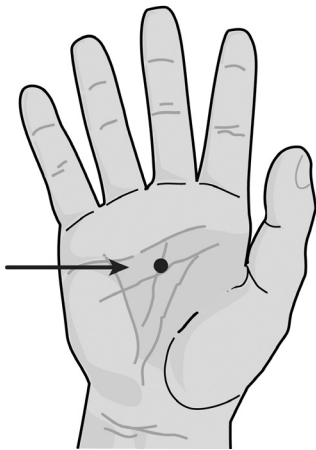


Figure 11-1. The Láogōng cavity (P-8)

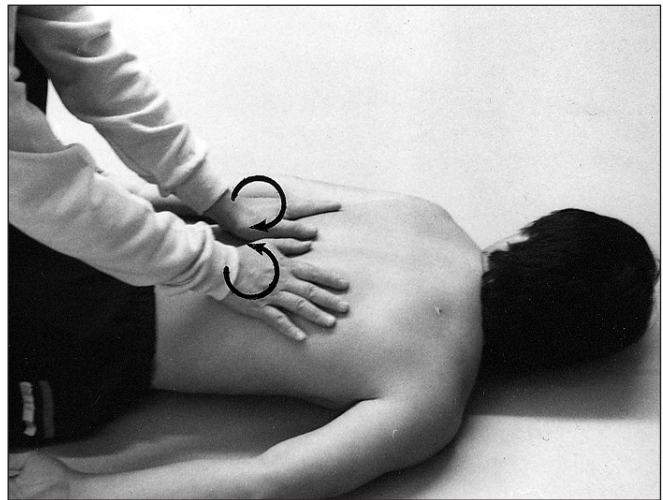


Figure 11-2. Massaging the kidneys

else can massage you. This direct massage is very effective and useful in winter time. Please remember that you should warm up your hands first; cold hands will drain Qì from the kidneys.

**Massaging the Bubbling Wells.** Massaging the Bubbling Well cavities (Yǒngquán, K-1, 湧泉) (Figure 11-3) is probably the second best techniques in nourishing the Qì and improving the Qì circulation around the kidneys. The Bubbling Well cavities belong to the Kidney Qì Channel. Usually the thumb is used to massage these two cavities with a circular motion (Figure 11-4). You may also use the center of your palm to rub the bottom of your feet (Figure 11-5). Alternatively, you may rub your palms against each other first until they are very warm, then place the centers of your palms (Láogōng cavities) on the top of the Bubbling Well cavities. In this case, you are using the Heart Fire to nourish the kidney water.

**Massaging with Movement.** Massaging the kidneys with movement is a common Wàidān Qigōng practice, and is used in such exercises as the Eight Pieces of Brocade (Bāduànjīn, 八段錦). The method is simple and very effective. Generally, there are two major movements which are able to massage the kidneys and improve the kidneys' Qì circulation. The first movement is bending forward (Figure 11-6). This stretches and tenses the two major sets of muscles on the sides of the spine, and presses down on the kidneys which are beneath them. You should stay there for about five seconds and then straighten your body. This releases the pressure on the kidneys and lets them return to their original state. Doing these movements repeatedly massages the kidneys.

# Regulating the Spirit

## 13-1. INTRODUCTION (JIÈSHÀO, 介紹)

There is one thing which is supremely important in battle, and that is fighting spirit. You may have the best general who knows the battlefield well and is also an expert strategist, but if his soldiers do not have high fighting spirit (morale), he may still lose. Remember, spirit is the center and the root of a fight. When you keep this center, one soldier can be equal to ten soldiers. When his spirit is high, a soldier will obey his orders accurately and willingly, and his general will be able to control the situation efficiently. In a battle, in order for a soldier to have this kind of morale, he must know how to fight, why he is fighting, and what he can expect after the fight. Knowing what he is doing and why will raise his spirit, strengthen his will, and increase his patience and endurance.

It is the same with Qigong training. In order to reach the final goal, you must have three basic moral virtues: will, patience, and endurance. You must also know what, why, and how. Only then will you be able to be sure of your target and know what you are doing.

Shén, which is the Chinese term for spirit, originates from Yì (the wisdom mind). When the Yì is firm, Shén will be steady and calm. When Shén is strong, the Yì is firm. Shén is the mental part of a soldier. When Shén is high, the Qì is strong and easily directed. When the Qì is strong, Shén is also strong.

In Qigong training, it is said: “Yìshén Yùqì” (以神馭氣), which means to use your Shén to govern the Qì. Shén is thought of as the headquarters that controls the movement of Qì, and it is able to raise or calm the Qì and move it wherever you desire. You may have noticed that when your spirit is high, you can somehow find enough energy to do just about anything. If your Yì is also concentrated and is able to control your Shén at its residence, your judgment will be clear and calm. It is believed in Qigong training that when your Shén is properly trained it can lead your mind to supernatural states.

It is also believed that when your Shén is high it is able to lead the Qì smoothly and fluidly to an injured place to speed healing. We have all heard of cases where the doctor felt that a patient was so sick that he would not be able to last for a month. The patient, however, felt differently, and was determined to survive. His spirit was so high that, through sheer force of will, he was able to far outlast the doctor’s prognosis. In such cases, some patients even

experience miraculous cures. According to Qìgōng theory, this patient's spirit led Qì to the damaged place and overcame the physical damage.

Many people have experienced another phenomenon. A man's boss tells him that if he completes a big project in a very limited time, he will get a week's vacation. The man concentrates totally on the project, working day and night with very little sleep. He is very enthusiastic about the job, finding it challenging and exciting, and is surprised at how healthy and energetic he feels. Finally the job is done. When the man finally gets to relax on his vacation, suddenly he becomes sick. According to Qìgōng theory, this is easy to explain. When you are deeply involved in something for which you are responsible, your spirit is high. This high spirit energizes the Qì in your body so that it flows strongly and smoothly and your Guardian Qì is strong. This keeps you from getting sick. Once you relax, your spirit is lowered and your Qì is not energized any more. Sickness will then be able to break through the shield of your Guardian Qì. Most often you catch a cold.

These two examples should give you an idea of how the Shén is able to affect your health and longevity. Because it plays such an important role, Shén training is considered one of the final stages of Qìgōng. Training and refining your Shén into a supernatural state is a necessary step in achieving Daoist enlightenment and Buddhahood.

### **13-2. REGULATING THE SPIRIT (TIÁOSHÉN, 調神)**

In general, there are four major tasks in regulating your Shén: 1. learning how to raise your Shén; 2. how to keep it at its residence and strengthen it; 3. how to coordinate it with your breathing; and finally, 4. how to use your Shén to direct your Qì effectively. All of these are called Liànshén (煉神) by Daoist Qìgōng practitioners. Lian means to refine, to train, or to discipline. In religious Qìgōng, there is another ultimate goal in regulating the Shén, and that is to train it to be independent enough to leave the physical body. This final goal will be discussed in books discussing religious Qìgōng.

#### **Raising the Shén (Yǎngshén, 養神)**

Yǎng means to nourish, to raise, or to nurse. Yǎngshén has been the main task for Scholars and Buddhists in their training to regulate the Shén. Shén needs to be nourished by Qì. Normally, the Fire Qì which comes from food and air is able to raise the Shén easily, however, this Fire Qì also increases emotional disturbance and therefore leads the Shén away from its residence. Using your Yì, which is nourished by the Water Qì, to raise your Shén is harder. However, if you are able to do it, this Shén can be stronger and more concentrated than when you use the Fire Qì. In Qìgōng practice, you are learning how to adjust your Xīn and Yì to raise your Shén. If you are able to use your Xīn and Yì properly, your Shén will be raised but not excited, and it will be able to remain at its residence.

Learning how to raise the Shén the right way is almost like raising a child. You need a great amount of patience and perseverance. One way to raise a child is to help him restrain his attraction to the seven emotions and six desires. Another way is to let him keep this contact with his human nature, yet educate him and help him to develop his wisdom so that



he can make clear judgments. It is a long process, and demands a lot of understanding and patience. In Qìgōng, raising the Shén is not a question of increasing your emotional excitement. This would scatter the Yì, and your Shén would become confused and lose its center. Yǎngshén training builds a strong center for your spirit, and helps the spirit take control over a larger part of your life.

### Keeping the Shén in Its Residence and Training It

After raising your Shén, you must learn how to keep it at its residence and train it. As with a child of a certain age, you must be able to keep his mind in the family instead of straying outside and running wild. Then you will be able to educate him. In Qìgōng training, to keep and train the Shén includes four major steps:

**To Protect the Shén (Shǒushén, 守神).** “Shǒu” means “to keep and to protect.” The very beginning of the training involves learning how to keep your Shén at its residence. While it is relatively easy to raise your spirit, it is much harder to keep it in its residence. In Shǒushén training, in order to keep the Shén in its residence you must use your regulated mind to direct, to nurse, to watch, and to keep the Shén there. It is just like keeping your child at home instead of letting him leave home and run wild. You must be patient and control your temper (regulate your mind). You can see, therefore, that the first step in regulating your Shén is to regulate your Xīn and Yì. If you lose your patience and temper, you will only make the child want to leave home again. Only when you have regulated your Xīn and Yì will you be able to watch and to keep your Shén effectively.

**To Firm the Shén (Gùshén, 固神).** “Gù” means “to solidify and to firm.” After you can keep your Shén in its residence, you then learn how to firm and solidify it (Gùshén). Gùshén means to train your Shén to stay at its residence willingly. After you are able to control your child in the house, you must make him want from his heart to stay. Only then will his mind be steady and calm. Naturally, in order to reach this stage, you will need a lot of love and patience to educate him until he understands how important it is for him to stay home and grow up normally and healthily. Qìgōng training operates on the same principle. The second step of Shén training is to make the Shén willing to stay in its residence. In order to do this, your mind must be able to regulate all emotional thoughts. Only then will your Shén be able to stay in its residence in peace.

**To Stabilize the Shén (Dìngshén, 定神).** “Dìngshén” means “to stabilize and to calm the Shén.” When you have brought your child into the stage of peace, he will not be as excited by and attracted to outside emotional distractions. In regulating your Shén you must learn to calm down the Shén so that it is energized but not excited. Then the mind will be peaceful and steady.

**To Focus the Shén (Níngshén, 凝神).** “Níng” means “to concentrate, to refine, to focus, and to strengthen.” You can see from the above three processes that keeping, firming, and stabilizing are the foundation of the cultivation of your Shén. It is like a child who is able to stay at home willingly with a calm and steady mind. Only then will you be able to teach and train him. In Qìgōng, once you have passed these three initial steps, you will learn to

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# General Concepts

## 15-1. INTRODUCTION (JIÈSHÀO, 介紹)

In this chapter we will explain a number of concepts and terms which are used in discussing Qì. You will find that many of the terms have already been discussed in previous chapters. We believe however, that it will be helpful to refresh your memory, as well as introduce new terms, to help you understand later discussions. Chapter 16 will review the twelve Qì channels and their relationship to health and Qìgōng, and Chapter 17 will discuss the eight extraordinary vessels.

### Qì

Qì is the energy which circulates within the body. As we noted in chapter 3, your entire body is like a factory and your organs are like many machines operating inside this factory. Your brain is like management, directing the entire operation. In order to keep the factory functioning properly, you need a power supply. The power supply is connected to each machine with many wires and cables. Each machine must receive the appropriate level of power; too much power will damage the machine and shorten its life, and too little power will not enable the machine to function properly. You can see that without a proper power supply in the factory, production will be off, and if the power supply stops, the entire factory is dead. It is the same with your body. When your body does not have a normal energy (Qì) supply, the organs will not function properly, and you will become sick; and if the Qì circulation stops, you will die.

You should realize that your entire body is alive, including every blood cell, every nerve tissue, and every muscle fiber. All of these physical, fundamental structures of the body need Qì to maintain their existence and their ability to function. The system which distributes Qì throughout your body is much like the wiring system in a factory, connecting the power source to the machines.

From the viewpoint of function, Chinese medical science classifies Qì in the following ways:

1. **Organ Qì.** This Qì is responsible for the functioning of the organs.
2. **Channel Qì.** This Qì is responsible for the transportation and moving functions of the channels.
3. **Nourishing Qì.** The main responsibilities of this Qì are transforming and creating blood. Nourishing Qì also moves with the blood and helps the blood to nourish the tissues of the body.
4. **Guardian Qì.** (also commonly translated as Protective Qì). This Qì circulates outside the channels and the organs. Guardian Qì's responsibilities are to warm the organs, to travel between the skin and the flesh to regulate the opening and closing of the pores, and to protect and moisten the skin, hair, and nails. This Qì is able to provide the body with a defense capability against external negative influences such as cold weather.
5. **Ancestral Qì.** This Qì gathers (resides) in the chest with its center at the Shānzhōng cavity (Co-17) (膻中). Ancestral Qì is able to travel up to the throat and down to the abdomen. It is responsible for breathing and speaking, regulating the heart beat, and, when cultivated through meditation, Ancestral Qì can strengthen the body.

## Blood

The Western concept of blood is only part of the Chinese conception of blood. Although blood is seen as a red fluid, in Chinese medical science it is also regarded as a force which is involved with the sensitivity of the sense organs and the inner vitality of the body. Since the main responsibility of blood is to carry nourishment to every part of the body, it clearly is closely related to Nourishing Qì.

## Qì and Blood

In Chinese medicine, Qì is considered Yáng and blood is considered Yīn. Qì is said to be the “commander” of blood because blood relies on Qì for its generation out of food and air, and for its power to move through and remain in the blood vessels. It is also said that blood is the “mother” of Qì because the strength of Qì depends upon the nutrition and moisture carried in blood. Therefore, Qì and blood are believed to complement each other.

## Organs (Viscera)

The concept of the Organs in Chinese medicine differs significantly from that of Western medicine. In Chinese medicine the Organs are systems of functions, and not mere physical objects. Generally, this means that within the description of the Organs, almost all of the body's functions can be defined and explained.

In Chinese medical science, the Organs are divided into two main groups: the Yīn (Inner) and Yáng (Outer) Organs. There are six Yīn organs and six Yáng Organs. Five of the Yīn organs (excluding the Pericardium) are called “Zàng” (臟), which means viscera. These

	WOOD 木	FIRE 火	EARTH 土	METAL 金	WATER 水
Direction	East	South	Center	West	North
Season	Spring	Summer	Long Summer	Autumn	Winter
Climactic Condition	Wind	Summer Heat	Dampness	Dryness	Cold
Process	Birth	Growth	Transformation	Harvest	Storage
Color	Green	Red	Yellow	White	Black
Taste	Sour	Bitter	Sweet	Pungent	Salty
Smell	Goatish	Burning	Fragrant	Rank	Rotten
Yin Organ	Liver	Heart	Spleen	Lungs	Kidneys
Yáng Organ	Gall Bladder	Small Intestine	Stomach	Large Intestine	Bladder
Opening	Eyes	Tongue	Mouth	Nose	Ears
Tissue	Sinews	Blood Vessels	Flesh	Skin/Hair	Bones
Emotion	Anger	Happiness	Pensiveness	Sadness	Fear
Human Sound	Shout	Laughter	Song	Weeping	Groan

Table 15-1. Table of correspondence associated with the Five Phases

five (Liver, Heart, Spleen, Lungs, and Kidneys) are considered the core of the entire system. Usually, when a discussion involves the channels and all the Organs, the Pericardium is added; otherwise it is treated as an adjunct of the Heart. According to Chinese medicine, the Yīn Organs “store and do not drain.” That means that their functions are directed toward sustaining homeostasis, both physically and mentally.

The six Yáng Organs are called “Fǔ” (腑), which means ‘bowels’, and include the Gall Bladder, Small Intestine, Large Intestine, Stomach, Bladder, and Triple Burner. According to Chinese medicine, these Yáng Organs “drain and do not store.” This refers to their responsibility in the transformation and the disposal of food and waste. All the Yáng Organs receive food or a by-product of food, and then pass it along.

In Table 15-1, you will notice that each Yáng Organ is associated with a Yīn Organ by a special Yīn/Yáng relationship (or Inner/Outer relationship). Pairs of related Yīn and Yáng Organs belong to the same Phase, and their Qì channels are sequential to each other in Qì circulation. They are so closely linked that a disease in one will usually affect the other.

### Yīn and Yáng

We have discussed the concept of Yīn and Yáng in chapter 7. Yīn and Yáng are not contradictory. Nor is one considered “good,” and the other “bad.” To obtain health, a harmony is sought between them and any imbalance is avoided. Remember, Yīn and Yáng are relative, not absolute.

### Five Phases (or Five Elements) (Wǔxíng, 五行)

The Five Phases are Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water. They are also commonly translated as the “Five Elements.” In Chinese, “Xíng” means “to walk or to move”; probably more

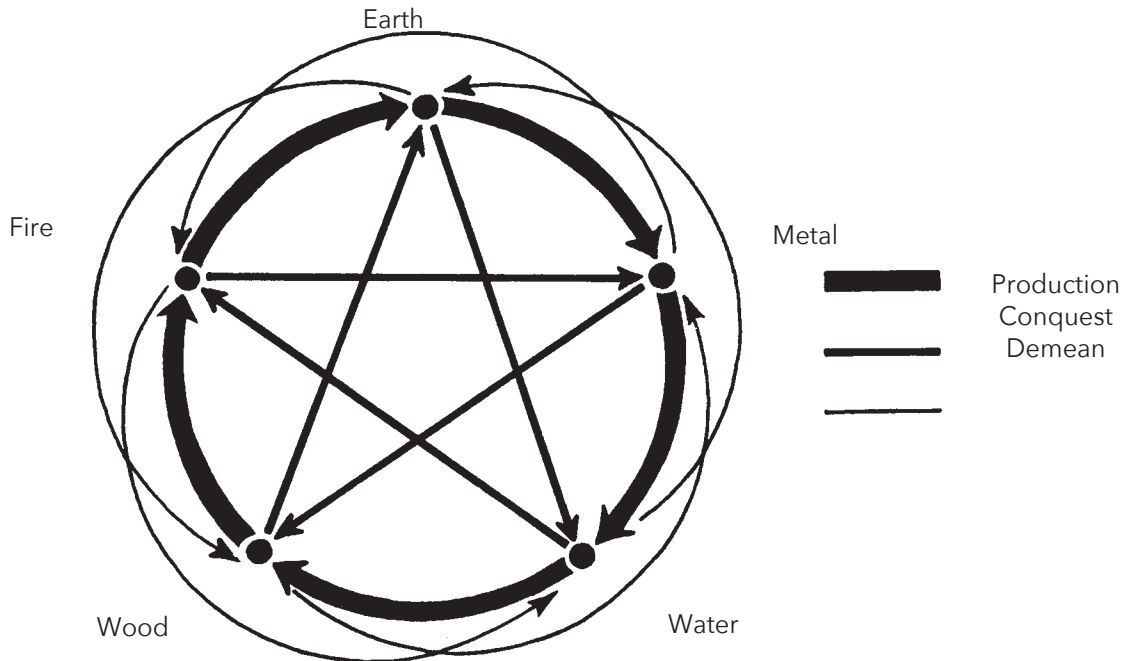


Figure 15-1. The relationships between the Five Phases

pertinent, it means a process. The Five Phases are thought of as the five properties inherent in all things. Each phase symbolizes a category of related functions and qualities. For example, Wood is linked with active functions that are in phase with growth or with increasing. Fire expresses that the functions have reached a maximum state and are ready to decline. Metal represents that the functions are declining. Water symbolizes that the functions have declined and are ready to grow. And finally, Earth is associated with balance or neutrality. Therefore, Earth is the center point of the five phases.

The relationships between the five phases are shown in Figure 15-1.

### Qì Channels and Vessels

“Jīng” (經) is commonly translated “meridians” or “primary Qì channels.” Your body has twelve channels, which Chinese medicine considers to be like rivers of Qì. Each channel, although referred to in the singular, is actually a pair of mirror-image channels, one on either side of the body. One end of each of these twelve channels is associated with one of the twelve organs, while the other end is connected to a toe or finger (six channels are connected to the fingers and the other six are connected to the toes).

There are eight “Qì mài” (氣脈) or “Qì vessels” in your body. They are often compared to reservoirs because they store Qì for your system. They can also be compared to batteries and capacitors in an electrical system. Batteries store and then release electrical current, and

capacitors regulate the electrical current in the same way that the vessels regulate the Qì in your channels and organs.

There are other Qì channels called "Luò" (絡) or "Qì branches." There are millions of Luò spreading out from the channels to distribute Qì to every cell in the body. The Luò carry Qì from the channels outward to nourish the skin, hair, eyes, nails, etc., and also inward to the bone marrow to maintain the production of blood cells. Luò also connect the organs, enabling them to communicate and cooperate with each other.

The next term you must know is "Xùè" (穴), which is translated as "cavity." Your body has more than seven hundred of these cavities, through which acupuncturists access the Qì channels with needles or other methods.

In order for you to be healthy, the Qì must flow smoothly and continuously in the channels. However, sometimes there are blockages, and the flow becomes stagnant. Blockages can be caused by eating poor quality food, by injuries, or by the physical degeneration that occurs as you age. Another problem is when the Qì is not flowing at the proper level. Acupuncturists have several ways of treating these problems, including the insertion of needles in certain cavities to adjust the flow of Qì.



# The Twelve Primary Qì Channels

## 16-1. INTRODUCTION (JIÈSHÀO, 介紹)

In this chapter we will briefly review the twelve primary Qì channels. As a Qìgōng practitioner you need to know how the Qì in each channel and related organ can be affected by the seasons, the weather, emotions, and food. Table 15-1 offers you a guideline to these relationships.

You should also know the organ's Yīn and Yáng. As seen in the last chapter, there are six Yáng organs and six Yīn organs. Each Yáng organ is associated with a Yīn organ by a special Yīn/Yáng relationship. Pairs of Yīn and Yáng organs belong to the same phase in the Five Phases, their channels are sequential to each other in the circulation of Qì, their functions are closely related, and disease in one usually affects the other. In Chinese medicine, the channel corresponding to the Yáng organ is often used to treat disorders of its related Yīn organ.

In the limbs, the Yáng channels are on the external side of the limbs while the Yīn channels are on the internal side. Generally speaking, the outsides of the limbs are more Yáng and are more resistant and prepared for an attack, while the internal sides are more Yīn and weaker.

The organs are further subdivided in order to distinguish the different levels of the Yīn/Yáng characteristics. The Yáng organs are divided into Greater Yáng (Tàiyáng, 太陽), Lesser Yáng (Shàoyáng, 少陽), and Yáng Brightness (Yángmíng, 陽明). The Yīn organs are divided into Greater Yīn (Tàiyīn, 太陰), Lesser Yīn (Shàoyīn, 少陰), and Absolute Yīn (Juéyīn, 厥陰). In the following discussion, all of the classifications will be shown in the title, for example: the Lung Channel of Hand—Greater Yīn.



## 16-2. THE TWELVE PRIMARY CHANNELS (SHÌÈRJĪNG, 十二經)

### The Lung Channel of Hand—Greater Yin (Figure 16-1) 手太陰肺經

#### 1. Course

##### *Course #1:*

(1). stomach (Zhōngjiāo, Middle Triple Burner) (中焦)—(2). large intestine—(3). diaphragm—(4). lung—(5). throat—(6). upper arm—(7). mid-elbow—(8). forearm—(9). wrist—(10). thenar—(11). pollex (Shàoshāng, L-11, (少商).

##### *Course #2:*

(12). Above the styloid process at the wrist—(13). Index finger (Shāngyáng, LI-1) (商陽).

#### 2. Related Viscera

Lung (pertaining organ), large intestine, stomach, and kidney.

#### 3. Cavities

Zhōngfǔ (L-1) (中府), Yúnmén (L-2) (雲門), Tiānfǔ (L-3) (天府), Xiábái (L-4) (俠白), Chǐzé (L-5) (尺澤), Kǒngzuì (L-6) (孔最), Lièquē (L-7) (列缺), Jīngqú (L-8) (經渠), Tàiyuān (L-9) (太淵), Yújì (L-10) (魚際), and Shàoshāng (L-11, 少商).

#### 4. Discussion

The Lungs (Yīn) and the Large Intestine (Yáng) are considered paired Organs. From Table 15-1 you can see that they belong to Metal in the Five Phases, the westerly direction, the season of autumn, the dry climactic condition, the color white, the pungent taste, the rank odor, the emotion of sadness, and the sound of weeping. Their opening is the nose, and they govern skin and hair.

In Qigōng practice, since the Lungs belong to Metal, they are able to regulate heartburn. The Heart belongs to Fire. Whenever the Heart has excess Qì, deep breathing is able to lead the Heart's fire to the Lungs, and therefore cool the heartburn. When the weather is changing from damp, hot summer into drier and chilly autumn, Lungs are the first organ to sense the change. If your Lungs are not able to readjust themselves to fit the new situation smoothly, you will catch a cold. The lung access the outside world through your nose. The Lungs are responsible for taking Qì from the air, and for the energy (Qì) state of the body.

Breathing is considered a strategy for leading Qì to the extremities such as skin and hair. When your breathing is regulated properly, you are able to strengthen your body's Guardian Qì and generate an expansive Qì shield to protect your body. You are also able to raise or lower your Qì state through your breathing. For example, when you are angry, deep breathing is able to calm your excited Qì state.

The Lungs are sensitive to emotional changes, especially when you are sad or angry. They also control that part of the liquid metabolism which distributes liquid to the skin.

- Points Belonging to Channels
- △ Points of Intersection
- - - - - Connecting Lines
- Primary Channels on Which There are Points
- - - - - Primary Channels and Branches without Points

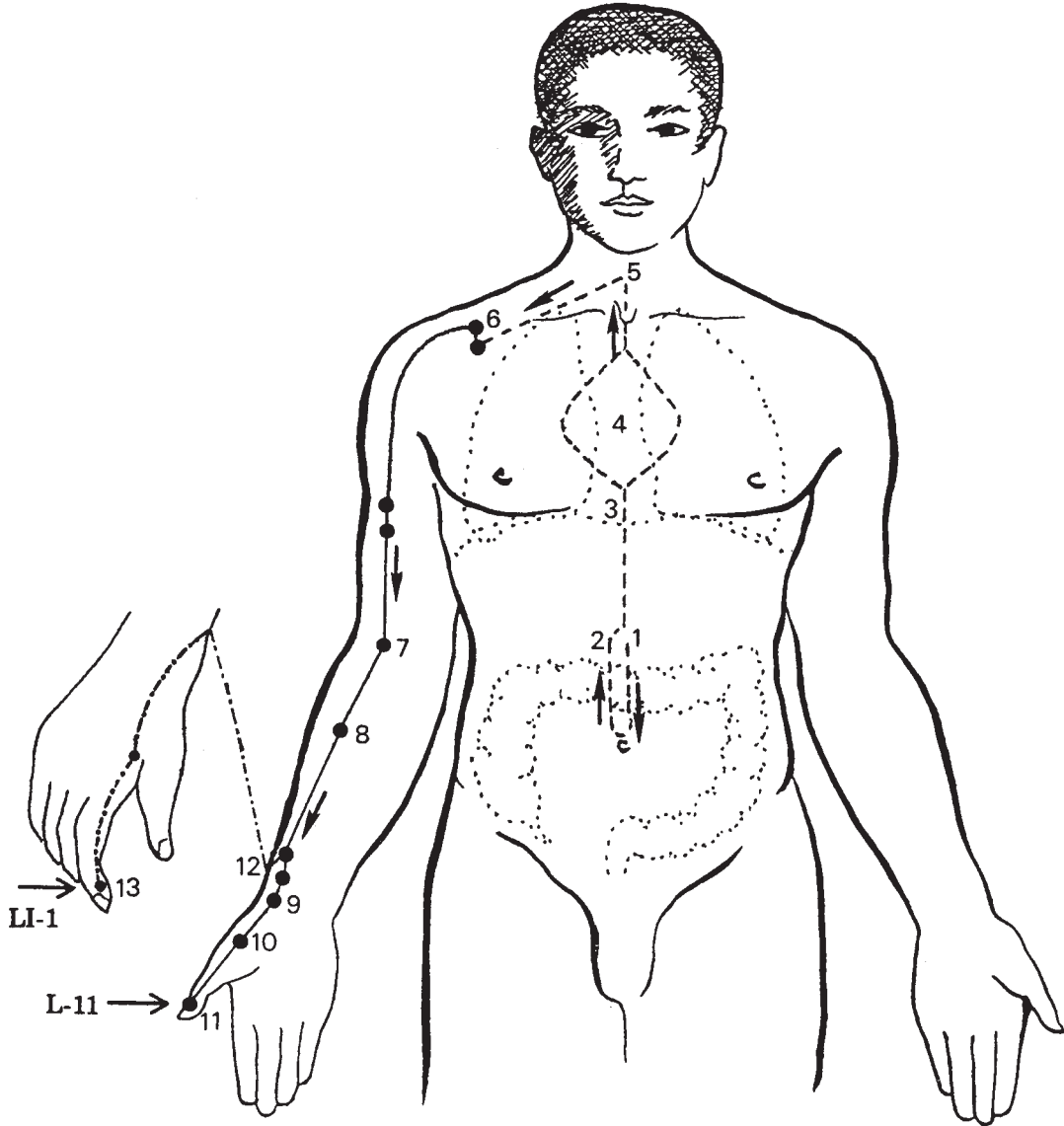


Figure 16-1. The Lung Channel of Hand-Greater Yin

Because the Lungs are usually the first to be attacked by exogenous diseases, they are called “the Delicate Organ.” These diseases can also cause what is called “the Non-Spreading of the Lung Qì.” The main symptom of a problem with the Lungs is coughing, which is a form of Rebellious Qì (since the Lung Qì normally flows downward). If coughing is also accompanied by lassitude, shortness of breath, light foamy phlegm, and weakness in the voice, it is called “Deficient Lung Qì.” However, if the cough is a dry one, with little phlegm, a parched throat and mouth, and Deficient Yīn symptoms (such as night sweating, low grade fever, red cheeks, etc.), the condition is referred as Deficient Lung Yīn.

## The Large Intestine Channel of Hand—Yáng Brightness (Figure 16-2)

手陽明大腸經

### 1. Course

#### Course #1:

(1). Index finger (Shāngyáng, LI-1) (商陽)—(2). Wrist—(3). Elbow—(4). Shoulder joint—(5). Governing Vessel at Dàchuí (Gv-14)(大椎)—(6). Supraclavicular fossa (Quēpén, S-12) (缺盆)—(7). Lung—(8). Diaphragm—(9). Large intestine.

#### Course #2:

(6). Supraclavicular fossa—(10). Neck—(11). Cheek—(12). Lower gum—(13). Rénzhōng (Gv-26) (人中)—(14). Side of the nose (Yíngxiāng, LI-20) (迎香).

### 2. Related Viscera

Large Intestine (Pertaining Organ), Lung, and Stomach.

### 3. Cavities

Shāngyáng (LI-1) (商陽), Èrjiān (LI-2) (二間), Sānjiān (LI-3) (三間), Hégu (LI-4) (合谷), Yángxī (LI-5) (陽溪), Piānlì (LI-6) (偏曆), Wēnliū (LI-7) (溫溜), Xiàlián (LI-8) (下廉), Shànglián (LI-9) (上廉), Shǒusānlǐ (LI-10) (手三里), Qūchí (LI-11) (曲池), Zhǒuliào (LI-12) (肘髎), Shǒuwǔlǐ (LI-13) (手五里), Bìnào (LI-14) (臂臑), Jiānyú (LI-15) (肩髃), Jùgǔ (LI-16) (巨骨), Tiāndǐng (LI-17) (天鼎), Fútú (LI-18) (扶突), Héliào (LI-19) (禾髎), and Yíngxiāng (LI-20) (迎香).

### 4. Discussion

The Lungs (Yīn) and the Large Intestine (Yáng) are considered paired Organs. From Table 15-1 you can see that they belong to Metal in the Five Phases, the westerly direction, the season of autumn, the dry climactic condition, the color white, the pungent taste, the rank odor, the emotion of sadness, and the sound of weeping. Their opening is the nose, and they govern skin and hair.

The main function of the Large Intestine is the metabolism of water and the passing of water. It extracts water from the waste material received from the Small Intestine, sends it on to the Urinary Bladder, and excretes the solid material as stool. Many disorders affecting this

# The Eight Extraordinary Qì Vessels

## 17-1. INTRODUCTION (JIÈSHÀO, 介紹)

The eight extraordinary Qì vessels and the twelve primary Qì channels (meridians) comprise the main part of the channel system. Most of the eight vessels branch out from the twelve primary channels and share the function of circulating Qì throughout the body. These vessels form a web of complex interconnections with the channels. At the same time, each has its own functional characteristics and clinic utility independent of the channels.

Traditional Chinese medicine emphasizes the twelve primary organ-related channels and only two of the eight vessels (the Governing and the Conception Vessels). The other six vessels are not used very often simply because they are not understood as well as the other channels, and there is still a lot of research being conducted on them. Although they were discovered two thousand years ago, little has been written about them. There is a lot of research on the extraordinary vessels being conducted today, especially in Japan, but the results of one researcher often contradict the results that another has achieved.

In this section we would like to compile and summarize the important points from the limited number of available documents. Since references from original Chinese sources are very scarce, and references from Western textbooks are tentative, esoteric, or in disagreement with one another, I have used my own judgment in selecting ideas and details.

### What are the Eight Vessels?

The eight vessels are called “Qíjīng Bāmài” (奇經八脈). “Qí” means “odd, strange, or mysterious.” “Jīng” means “meridian or channels.” “Bā” means “eight” and “Mài” means “vessels.” Qíjīng Bāmài is then translated as “Odd Meridians and Eight Vessels” or “extraordinary meridian (EM).” Odd has a meaning of strange in Chinese. It is used simply because these eight vessels are not well understood yet. Many Chinese doctors explain that they are called “Odd” simply because there are four vessels that are not paired. Since these eight vessels also serve the function of homeostasis, sometimes they are called “Homeostatic Meridians.” French acupuncturists call them “Miraculous Meridians” because they were able to create therapeutic effects when all other techniques had failed. In addition, because each of these

channels exerts a strong effect upon psychic functioning and individuality, the command points are among the most important psychological points in the body. For this reason, they are occasionally called the “Eight Psychic Channels.”

These vessels are: 1. Governing Vessel (Dūmài, 督脈); 2. Conception Vessel (Rènmai, 任脈); 3. Thrusting Vessel (Chōngmài, 衝脈); 4. Girdle (or Belt) Vessel (Dàimài, 帶脈); 5. Yáng Heel Vessel (Yángqiāomài, 陽蹻脈); 6. Yīn Heel Vessel (Yīnqiāomài, 陰蹻脈); 7. Yáng Linking Vessel (Yángwéimài, 陽維脈); and 8. Yīn Linking Vessel (Yīnwéimài, 陰維脈).

## History

The first brief mention of some of these eight vessels is found in the second part of the Nèijīng chapter of the book *Huángdì Nèijīng Sùwèn* (*The Yellow Emperor's Classic*, 黃帝內經素問) (Hàn dynasty, circa 100–300 BCE, 漢). Also, some of the vessels were mentioned in Biǎnquè's classic *Nànjīng* (*Classic on Disorders*, 難經) (Qín and Hàn dynasty, 221 BCE to 220 CE, 秦、漢). It was not until the 16th century that all eight vessels were deeply studied by Lǐ, Shí-Zhēn (1518-1593 CE, 李時珍) and revealed in his book *Qíjīng Bāmài Kǎo* (*Deep Study of the Extraordinary Eight Vessels*, 奇經八脈考). From then until only recently, very few documents have been published on this subject. Although there is more research being published, as yet, there is no single document which is able to define this subject systematically and in depth.

## General Functions of the Eight Vessels

**Serving as Qì Reservoirs.** Because the eight vessels are so different from each other, it is difficult to generalize their characteristics and functions. However, one of the most common characteristics of the eight vessels was specified by Biǎnquè (扁鵲) in his *Nànjīng*. He reported that the twelve organ-related Qì channels constitute rivers, and the eight extraordinary vessels constitute reservoirs. The reservoirs, especially the Conception and Governing Vessels, absorb excess Qì from the main channels, and then return it when they are deficient.

You should understand however, that because of the limited number of traditional documents, as well as the lack of modern, scientific methods of Qì research, it is difficult to determine the precise behavior and characteristics of these eight vessels. The main difficulty probably lies in the fact that they can be taken at different levels, because they perform different functions and contain every kind of Qì such as Yíngqì (營氣), Wèiqì (衛氣), Jīngqì (精氣), and even blood.

When the twelve primary channels are deficient in Qì, the eight vessels will supply it. This store of Qì can easily be tapped with acupuncture needles through those cavities which connect the eight vessels with the twelve channels. The connection cavities behave like the gate of a reservoir, which can be used to adjust the strength of the Qì flow in the rivers and the level of Qì in the reservoir. Sometimes, when it is necessary, the reservoir will release Qì by itself. For example, when a person has had a shock, either physically or mentally, the Qì in some of the main channels will be deficient. This will cause particular organs to be stressed,

and Qi will accumulate rapidly around these organs. When this happens, the reservoir must release Qi to increase the deficient circulation and prevent further damage.

**Guarding Specific Areas Against “Evil Qi.”** The Qi which protects the body from outside intruders is called Wèiqì (Guardian Qi, 衛氣). Among the eight vessels, the Thrusting Vessel, the Governing Vessel, and the Conception Vessel play major roles in guarding the abdomen, thorax, and the back.

**Regulating the Changes of Life Cycles.** According to chapter 1 of “Sùwèn” (素問), the Thrusting Vessel and the Conception Vessel also regulate the changes of the life cycles which occur at seven-year intervals for women and 8 year intervals for men.

**Circulating Jīngqì to the Entire Body, Particularly the Five “Ancestral Organs.”** One of the most important functions of the eight vessels is to deliver Jīngqì (Essence Qi, which has been converted from Original Essence and sexual essence) to the entire body, including the skin and hair. They must also deliver Jīngqì to the five ancestral organs: the brain and spinal cord, the liver and gall bladder system, the bone marrow, the uterus, and the blood system.

## 17-2. THE EIGHT EXTRAORDINARY VESSELS (BĀMÀI, 八脈)

### The Governing Vessel (Dūmài, 督脈) (Figure 17-1)

#### 1. Course

##### *Course #1:*

(1). Perineum—(2). Along the middle of the spine—(3). Fēngfǔ (Gv-16) (風府)—(4). Enters the brain—(5). Vertex—(6). Midline of the forehead across the bridge of the nose—(7). Upper lip.

##### *Course #2:*

(8). Pelvic region—(9). Descends to the genitals and perineum—(10). Tip of the coccyx—(11). Gluteal region (intersects the Kidney and Urinary Bladder Channels)—(12). Returns to the spinal column and then joins with the kidneys.

##### *Course #3:*

(13). Inner canthus of the eye—(14). Two (bilateral) branches, ascend across the forehead—(15). Converge at the vertex (enters the brain)—(16). Emerges at the lower end of the nape of the neck—(17). Divides into two branches which descend along opposite sides of the spine to the waist—(18). Kidneys.

##### *Course #4:*

(19). Lower abdomen—(20). Across the navel—(21). Passes through the heart—(22). Enters the trachea—(23). Crosses the cheek and encircles the mouth—(24). Terminates at a point below the middle of the eye.

\*\*\*This vessel intersects Fengmen (B-12) (風門) and Huìyīn (Co-1) (會陰).

## 2. Cavities

Chángqiáng (Gv-1) (長強), Yāoshū (Gv-2) (腰俞), Yāoyángguān (Gv-3) (腰陽關), Mìngmén (Gv-4) (命門), Xuánshū (Gv-5) (懸樞), Jízhōng (Gv-6) (脊中), Zhōngshū (Gv-7) (中樞), Jīnsuō (Gv-8) (筋縮), Zhìyáng (Gv-9) (至陽), Língtái (Gv-10) (靈台), Shéndào (Gv-11) (神道), Shēnzhù (Gv-12) (身柱), Táodào (Gv-13) (陶道), Dàzhū (Gv-14) (大椎), Yǎmén (Gv-15) (啞門), Fēngfǔ (Gv-16) (風府), Nǎohù (Gv-17) (腦戶), Qiángjiān (Gv-18) (強間), Hòudǐng (Gv-19) (後頂), Bǎihuì (Gv-20) (百會), Qiándǐng (Gv-21) (前頂), Xīnhuì (Gv-22) (囟會), Shàngxīng (Gv-23) (上星), Shéntíng (Gv-24) (神庭), Sùliào (Gv-25) (素膠), Rénzhōng or Shuǐgōu (Gv-26) (人中、水溝), Duìduān (Gv-27) (兌端), and Kěnjiāo (Gv-28) (齧交).

## 3. Discussion

The Governing Vessel is the confluence of all the Yáng channels, over which it is said to “govern.” Because it controls all the Yáng channels, it is called the “Sea of Yáng Meridians.” This is apparent from its pathway because it flows on the midline of the back, a Yáng area, and in the center of all Yáng channels (except the Stomach Channel which flows in the front). The Governing Vessel governs all the Yáng channels, which means that it can be used to increase the Yáng energy of the body.

Since the Governing Vessel is the “Sea of Yáng Meridians” and it controls or governs the back, the area richest in Guardian Qì (Wèiqì, 衛氣), it is also responsible for the circulation of the body’s Guardian Qì to guard against external evil intruders. The circulation of Guardian Qì starts from Fēngfǔ (Gv-16) (風府), and moves down the Governing Vessel to Huìyīn (Co-1) (會陰). It is said that it takes twenty-one days for the Guardian Qì to flow from Fēngfǔ to Huìyīn, and nine days from Huìyīn to the throat, making it a monthly cycle.

According to Chinese medical science, Guardian Qì is Yáng Qì and therefore represents the “Fire” of the body. Its quick and ubiquitous circulation keeps the fire going in the body and controls the loss of body heat. Guardian Qì is also inextricably linked with the fluids that flow outside the channels, in the skin and flesh. Consequently, through the breathing (under control of the Lungs), Guardian Qì is responsible for the opening and the closing of the pores, and also controls the sweat.

The Governing Vessel is also responsible for nourishing the five ancestral organs, which include the brain and spinal cord. This is one of the ways in which the Kidneys “control” the brain, as is said in Chinese medicine.

Because of their importance to health, the Governing Vessel and the Conception Vessel are considered the two most important Qì channels to be trained in Qigōng, especially in Nèidān (內丹). Training related to these two vessels includes: 1. How to fill them with Qì so that you have enough to regulate the twelve channels; 2. How to open up stagnant areas in these two vessels so that the Qì flows smoothly and strongly; 3. How to effectively direct the Qì to nourish the brain and raise up the Shén; 4. How to effectively govern the Qì in the

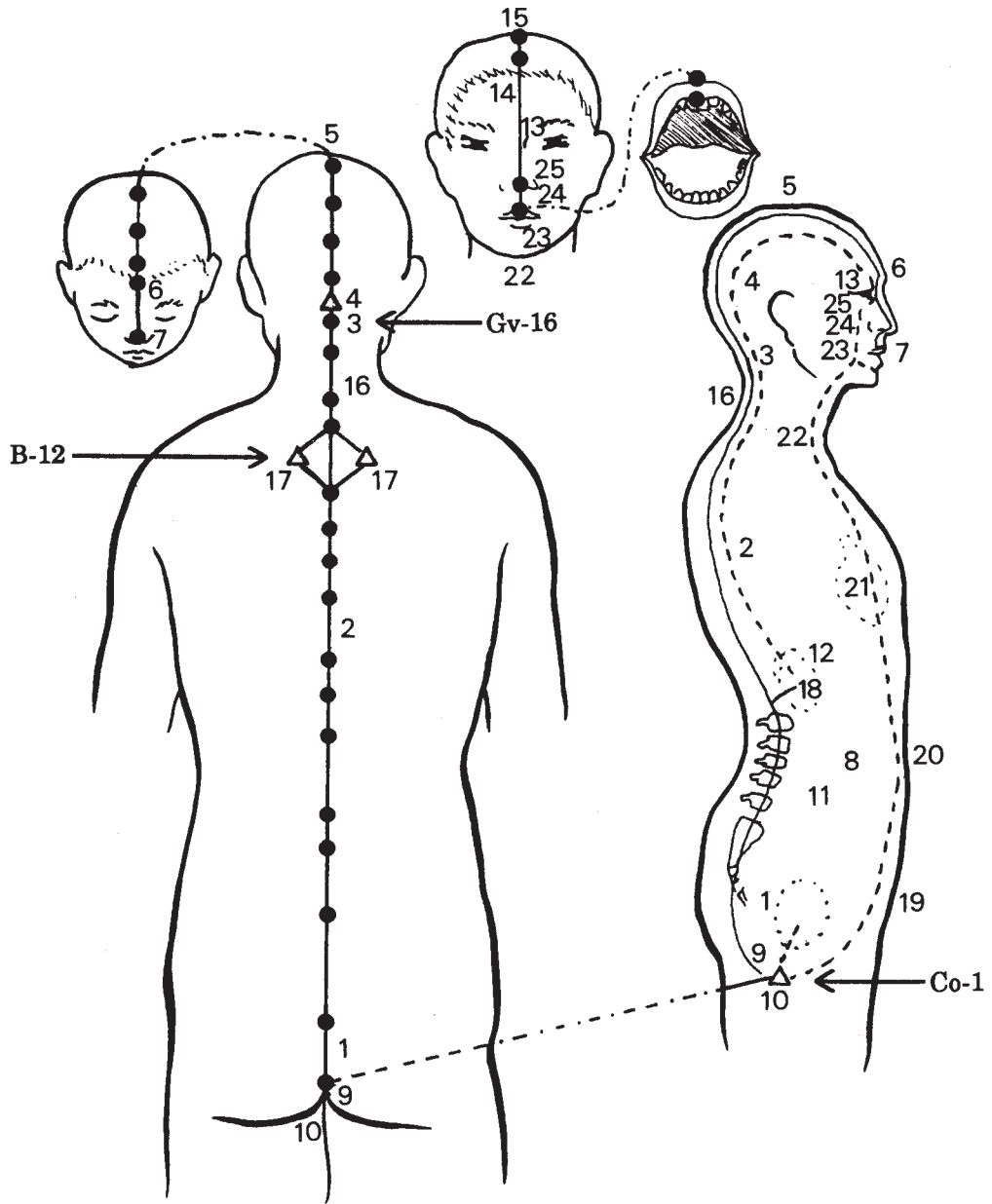


Figure 17-1. The Governing Vessel (Dūmài)



twelve channels, and nourish the organs; 5. How to use your raised Shén to lead the Guardian Qì to the skin and strengthen the Guardian Qì shield covering your body

In Nèidān Qigōng training, when you have filled up the Qì in these two vessels and can effectively circulate the Qì in them, you have achieved the “Small Circulation.” In order to do this, you must know how to convert the essence stored in the Kidneys into Qì, circulate this Qì in the Governing and Conception Vessels, and finally lead this Qì to the head to nourish the brain and Shén (spirit). If you are interested in “Small Circulation,” please refer to the book: *Qigōng Meditation—Small Circulation*, by YMAA Publication Center.

## The Conception Vessel (Rènài, 任脈) (Figure 17-2)

### 1. Course

#### Course #1:

- (1). Lower abdomen below Qūgǔ (Co-2) (曲骨)—(2). Ascends along the midline of the abdomen and chest—(3). Crosses the throat and jaw—(4). Winds around the mouth—(5). Terminates in the region of the eye.

#### Course #2:

- (6). Pelvic cavity—(7). Enters the spine and ascends along the back.

\*\*\*This vessel intersects Chéngqì (S-1) (承泣) and Kǎnjiāo (Gv-28) (巔交).

### 2. Cavities

Huīyīn (Co-1) (會陰), Qūgǔ (Co-2) (曲骨), Zhōngjí (Co-3) (中極), Guānyuán (Co-4) (關元), Shímén (Co-5) (石門), Qìhǎi (Co-6) (氣海), Abdomen-Yīnjiāo (Co-7) (陰交), Shénquè (Co-8) (神闕), Shuǐfēn (Co-9) (水分), Xiàwǎn (Co-10) (下脘), Jiànlǐ (Co-11) (建里), Zhōngwǎn (Co-12) (中脘), Shàngwǎn (Co-13) (上脘), Jùquè (Co-14) (巨闕), Jiūwěi (Co-15) (鳩尾), Zhōngtíng (Co-16) (中庭), Shānzhōng (Co-17) (膻中), Yùtáng (Co-18) (玉堂), Chest-Zǐgōng (Co-19) (紫宮), Huágài (Co-20) (華蓋), Xuánjī (Co-21) (璇璣), Tiāntú (Co-22) (天突), Liánquán (Co-23) (廉泉), and Chéngjiāng (Co-24) (承漿).

### 3. Discussion

“Rèn” (任) in Chinese means “direction, responsibility.” Rènài, the “Conception Vessel,” has a major role in Qì circulation, directing and being responsible for all of the Yīn channels (plus the Stomach Channel). The Conception Vessel is connected to the Thrusting and Yīn Linking Vessels, and is able to increase the Yīn energy of the body.

This vessel nourishes the uterus (one of the five ancestral organs) and the whole genital system. It is said in the *Nèijīng* (內經) that the Conception and Thrusting Vessels contain both blood and essence (Jīng), and both flow up to the face and around the mouth. They

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## About the Author

Yáng, Jwìng-Mǐng, PhD (楊俊敏博士)

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



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

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

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

In 1974, Dr. Yáng came to the United States to study mechanical engineering at Purdue University. At the request of a few students, Dr. Yáng began to teach Gōngfū, which resulted in the establishment of the Purdue University Chinese Kūng Fū Research Club

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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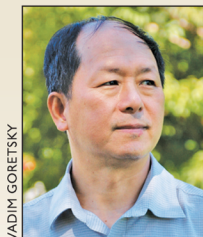
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VADIM GORETSKY

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



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