

Simple Qigong

EXERCISES FOR HEALTH

*Improve your health
in 10 to 20 minutes a day*

Eight Pieces of Brocade

健身八段錦

NEW
USER-FRIENDLY
LAYOUT

DR. YANG, JWING-MING

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF BOOKS AND VIDEOS ON TAI CHI, MARTIAL ARTS, AND QIGONG

YMAA Publication Center, Inc.

PO Box 480
Wolfeboro, NH 03894
800 669-8892 • www.ymaa.com • info@ymaa.com

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Summary: The book offers beginners a smart way to learn qigong, the ancient Chinese system of gentle breathing, stretching, and strengthening movements. Using "The Eight Pieces of Brocade", one of the most popular qigong healing exercise sets, students can choose the sitting set, the standing set, or both, to improve overall health and well-being.--Publisher.

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The practice, treatments, and methods described in this book should not be used as an alternative to professional medical diagnosis or treatment. The authors and publisher of this book are NOT RESPONSIBLE in any manner whatsoever for any injury or negative effects, which may occur through following the instructions and advise, contained herein.

It is recommended that before beginning any treatment or exercise program, you consult your medical professional to determine whether you should undertake this course of practice.

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Preface First Edition (1988)

Since my first qigong book, *Chi Kung—Health and Martial Arts*, was published, I have received countless letters and phone calls. Almost all of them are to express people's gratitude for the benefit they have received from practicing the qigong exercises introduced in the book. Surprisingly, many of the readers are Western doctors who have been applying qigong theory and teaching the exercises to their patients and obtaining very positive results. Many of them have suggested that I produce videotapes to help people learn the exercises more accurately and efficiently.

With this encouragement, I have been studying and researching more deeply, trying to increase my understanding of the exercises. After three years of study and practice, I have decided to publish the following videotapes. The first tape will introduce one of the most common and basic qigong exercises in China—The Eight Pieces of Brocade (*Ba Duan Jin*, 八段錦). This set of exercises was created by Marshal Yue, Fei (岳飛) during the Southern Song dynasty (南宋) (AD 1127–1279) for improving his soldiers' health. Since that time, these exercises have become one of the most popular sets in China.

There are a number of reasons for introducing this set first:

1. Its theory and training methods are the simplest and easiest to understand. It is therefore the best set for the qigong beginner.
2. If you practice this set regularly, you should notice improvements in your health within a few months.
3. The set can be practiced by anyone, young or old, healthy or sick.
4. This set will give you a good understanding of basic qigong theory so that if you wish, you may go on to more advanced training.

Although it is best to use this manual together with the videotape, it is possible to learn the set using this manual alone. Seeing the set done will clear up many small questions and avoid the ambiguities inherent in any printed description or still photograph. However, if you read carefully and proceed step by step, you should be able to grasp the essentials well enough to gain full benefit from the exercises.

If there proves to be enough of a demand for manuals and videotapes such as these, YMAA will publish a continuing series of qigong training materials. These materials will introduce a number of different qigong sets and explain the theoretical background for each. At present, a series of ten videotapes and manuals is envisioned, ranging from basic to advanced.

In addition, I am working on a series of books that will discuss in greater depth the various styles of qigong. The first book will lay down the theoretical foundation, or root,

of qigong. This book will give you a general understanding of the theory and principles, which is necessary if you wish to further your study. The second book in this series will be on Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Qigong (易筋經, 洗髓經). This qigong has been known in China (although it has been kept secret) since the Liang dynasty (梁), more than fourteen hundred years ago. Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing is deep and difficult to understand, but once mastered it can give you the health of a child, increase your resistance to disease, and even lengthen your life.

The third volume will be concerned with Qigong Cavity Press Healing. It will help people understand the basic principles of acupressure. Qigong Cavity Press Healing is the root of Japanese Shiatsu Massage. The fourth volume will cover qigong and health, including basic principles as well as various styles of qigong designed to improve health or to treat specific ailments. The next volume will concern qigong training that the martial artist can use to improve his fighting potential, such as Shaolin Qigong training methods, iron shirt, and iron sand palm. Further volumes will introduce Tibetan, Daoist, and Buddhist (*Chan* or *Ren*, 禪 or 忍) meditation methods.

As you can see, this is a very ambitious undertaking, and I can foresee a number of difficulties both in finance and in writing. It will be a new challenge for YMAA and me, and it will take many years of effort to complete. However, with your support and encouragement, we will complete it, even if it takes longer than anticipated.

This manual will start by briefly introducing in the first two chapters the history of qigong and the fundamental theory. The third and fourth chapters in this volume will introduce the sitting and the standing sets of the Eight Pieces of Brocade.

Practicing qigong (which is working with qi, the energy within the body) cannot only maintain your health and mental balance, but can also cure a number of illnesses without the use of any drugs. Qigong uses either still or moving meditation to increase and regulate the qi circulation.

When you practice regularly, your mind will gradually become calm and peaceful, and your whole being will start to feel more balanced. However, the most important thing that will come from the regular practice of qigong is your discovery of the inner world of your body's energy. Through sensing and feeling, and examining your inner experiences, you will start to understand yourself not only physically but also mentally. This science of internal sensing, which the Chinese have been studying for several thousand years, is usually totally ignored by the Western world. However, in today's busy and confusing society, this training is especially important. With the mental peace and calmness that qigong can give you, you will be better able to relax and enjoy your daily work and perhaps even find real happiness.

I believe that it is very important for the Western world to learn, study, research, and develop this scientific internal art immediately, and on a wide scale. I sincerely believe that it can be very effective in helping people, especially young people, to cope with the

confusing and frightening challenges of life. The general practice of qigong could reduce the mental pressure in our society, help those who are unbalanced, and perhaps even lower the crime rate. Qigong balances the internal energy and can heal many illnesses. Older people especially will find that it will maintain their health and even slow the aging process. In addition, qigong will help older people conquer depression and worry, and find peace, calm, and real happiness. I am confident that people in the Western world will realize, as have millions of Chinese, that qigong practice will give them a new outlook on life and that it will turn out to be a key to solving many of today's problems.

For these reasons, I have been actively studying, researching, and publishing what I have learned. However, after a few years of effort, I feel that what I have accomplished is too slow and shallow. I and the few people like me, who are struggling to spread the word about qigong, cannot do it well enough by ourselves. We need to get more people involved, but we especially need to have universities and established medical organizations get involved in the research.

To conclude, I would like to point out one thing to those of you who are sincerely interested in studying and researching this new science. If you start now, future generations will view you as a pioneer of the scientific investigation of qigong. In addition to improving your own health, you will share the credit for raising our understanding of life as well as increasing the store of happiness in this world.

Preface Second Edition (1997)

This book, *Simple Qigong Exercises for Health* (formerly titled *The Eight Pieces of Brocade*), introduces healing qigong exercises that are more than one thousand years old. These exercises were created by Marshal Yue, Fei (岳飛) during the Chinese Southern Song dynasty. Since then, these exercises have been commonly used by the Chinese general public for health and healing. Though the exercises are very simple and easy to learn, the theory of healing is very profound, scientific, and complete. Every movement was created by imitating the natural instinctive reactions and movements that people make when they feel discomfort or pain (a signal from the body to notify your brain that the qi is losing balance). An example is lifting your right arm to release the stress or pressure on your liver due to fatigue or poor quality food. Another example is bowing at the waist to use the back muscles to massage and improve the circulation in the kidneys. Normally, if you do not react to these urgent calls, a physical defect or damage may occur.

Since its creation, countless healing qigong exercises were developed following the basic theory of the Eight Pieces of Brocade (*Ba Duan Jin*, 八段錦). It is called “brocade” because brocade is a shining and beautiful cloth. When you practice these exercises regularly and correctly, it is just as if you have added a shining and beautiful life force to your body.

The concept of qigong is still new in the West. In fact, this more than four-thousand-year-old healing knowledge was not introduced to the West until 1973, when President Nixon visited China and opened its long-closed door. Since then, Chinese culture has been widely imported by the West. Chinese medical science, including acupuncture, qigong exercises, and herbal treatments (which have been experienced for many thousands of years), has also seriously influenced Western society.

Since I arrived in America in 1974, I have witnessed the great cultural exchange between the East and West. I have always believed that in order to have a peaceful and harmonious world, all humans must communicate with each other so they can understand and respect each other. In order to expedite this exchange, I quit my engineering job and put all my effort into translating, teaching, and publishing ancient Chinese documents. Yang's Martial Arts Association (YMAA) was founded in 1982 and with it, I began to fulfill my dreams. YMAA Publication Center was established in 1984 and since then it has published books and videos about Chinese qigong and Chinese martial arts.

I believe that the beginning of a cultural exchange is most important. If this transition is correct, the ideas and concepts introduced will be accurate. Otherwise, the information passed on will be distorted. Once it is distorted, it is very difficult to correct the wrong path. For example, many Chinese martial arts were originally created in Buddhist and Daoist monasteries for self-discipline and moral cultivation. When these arts were

introduced to the West, violent and exciting physical fighting and flashy techniques were emphasized. The inner virtues of self-challenge and spiritual cultivation were completely ignored. Naturally, this was caused by importing these arts in the wrong way—through violent Chinese martial arts fighting movies.

In recent decades, I have also seen many of China's non-medical qigong masters demonstrate mysterious and superstitious qigong power and claim this to be the right qigong. This demonstrates to me how important it is to publish more books and videos so as to introduce the correct Chinese healing arts to the West. Chinese qigong healing arts are derived from scientific and logical analysis and conclusions through thousands of years of healing and health maintenance experience. It is a traditional human medicine and its effectiveness has been verified through thousands of years of human history. The most unique and important part of qigong practice is not just obtaining physical health, but also mental internal health with a meditative mind. This mental element has commonly been ignored in Western health exercises.

This book is a first step toward understanding the science of Chinese qigong. If you are interested, you should read more documents and publications. Then use your logical mind to analyze the truth behind the practice. Only then will you have the correct feeling of the art and believe its effectiveness from your deep heart.

Since this book was first published in 1988, I have written many other qigong books, which may offer you more information. These books are the following:

Beginner Level

Qigong for Health and Martial Arts—Exercises and Meditation

Arthritis Relief—Chinese Qigong for Healing & Prevention (special qigong treatment)

Back Pain Relief—Simple Qigong Exercises for Healing & Prevention (special qigong treatment)

Intermediate Level

Qigong Massage—Fundamental Techniques for Health and Relaxation

Advanced Level

The Root of Chinese Qigong—Secrets for Health, Longevity, and Enlightenment

Qigong, The Secret of Youth—Da Mo's Muscle Tendon and Marrow Brain Washing Qigong Classics

The Essence of Shaolin White Crane—Martial Power and Qigong

Companion videos are also available for many of the above publications from YMAA Publication Center.

The new edition of this book has been updated from the old edition in several ways. First, the Chinese Romanization system has been changed to Pinyin, which has become more popular and widely accepted by Western academic scholars. Second, many Chinese characters have been included in the text for those who can read Chinese. Third, a glossary has been added for better reference. Fourth, many new photos have been added. Finally, an index has also been provided for your convenience.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming
President, YMAA International
January 28, 1997

Chapter 1. General Introduction

1-1. Introduction

If you study the history of the human race, you will see that a large part of this history has been taken up with war, conquest, killing, and the struggle for power. We have tended to worship as heroes those who could conquer and rule other countries, and we have wrongly educated each new generation to glorify killing and slavery, and to worship power. There have been only relatively short periods when humankind has not been at war, when people could live their lives in peace and tranquility; but it was during these times that people created art, wrote poems, and sought ways to live longer and happier lives.

In their seven thousand years of history, the Chinese people have experienced all possible human suffering and pain. Chinese culture is like a seven-thousand-year-old man who has seen and experienced all of the pain of human life. Yet through his experience, he has also accumulated a great store of knowledge. China's long spiritual experience cannot be compared to the popular culture of the West, which is the result of centuries of emphasis on the material sciences, money, war, and conquest. If you research Chinese culture through its literature and painting, you will discover that they rank among the greatest achievements of the human spirit. They reflect humankind's joy and grief, pleasure and suffering, peace and strife, vitality, sickness, and death.

Coming from this complex cultural and historical background, the Chinese people have long sought ways of living healthy and happy lives. However, while on the one hand the Chinese study themselves spiritually, they also tend to say that everything that happens is destiny and is prearranged by heaven. While holding the fatalistic belief that everything is predetermined, the Chinese also looked for ways to resist the apparent inevitability of sickness and death.

It was with this seemingly contradictory and no-win point of view that the Chinese focused their attention on self-study and self-cultivation. This inward feeling and looking, this spiritual searching, has become one of the major roots of Chinese culture and medical science. Once *qi*, or the internal energy within the human body, was discovered, it was studied very carefully. When the link between the qi in the human body and the qi in nature was discovered, the hope soon grew that this qi was the means whereby humans could escape from the trap of sickness and death. When viewed from

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this historical background, it is not difficult to understand why a major part of Chinese culture, other than warfare, was based on the religions of Daoism and Buddhism, and spiritual science.

So many people today are devoting all their efforts striving for, and even achieving, material wealth, and yet they are suffering spiritually. They wander through their lives, listlessly or frantically, wondering what it is they are missing. Their lives have no meaning or purpose. Many seek temporary release from their pain through drugs. I deeply believe that if these people were to study the spiritual practices that have been developed over these several thousand years, they would find the mental balance, which is especially necessary for today's society.

In this chapter, we will first define qi and *qigong*, and then survey the history of qigong. This will be followed by the story of the creator of the Eight Pieces of Brocade. Finally, qigong theory and training principles will be discussed.

1-2. Definition of Qi and Qigong

What is Qi?

In order to understand qigong, you must first understand qi. Qi is the energy or natural force that fills the universe. There are three general types of qi. Heaven (the sky or universe) has heaven qi (*tian qi*, 天氣), which is made up of the forces that the heavenly bodies exert on the earth, such as sunshine, moonlight, and the moon's effect on the tides. The earth has earth qi (*di qi*, 地氣), which absorbs the heaven qi and is influenced by it. Humans have human qi (*ren qi*, 人氣), which is influenced by the other two. In ancient times, the Chinese believed that it was heaven qi that controlled the weather, climate, and natural disasters. When this qi or energy field loses its balance, it strives to rebalance itself. Then the wind must blow, rain must fall, and even tornadoes and hurricanes must happen in order for the heaven qi to reach a new energy balance. Heaven qi also affects human qi, and divination and astrology are attempts to explain this.

Under heaven qi is earth qi. It is influenced and controlled by heaven qi. For example, too much rain will force a river to flood or change its path. Without rain, the plants will die. The Chinese believe that earth qi is made up of lines and patterns of energy, as well as the earth's magnetic field and the heat concealed underground. These energies must also balance; otherwise, disasters such as earthquakes will occur. When the qi of the earth is balanced, plants will grow and animals will prosper. Also, each individual person, animal, and plant has its own qi field, which always seeks to be balanced. When any individual living thing loses its balance, it will sicken, die, and decompose.

You must understand that all natural things, including humans, grow within and are influenced by the natural cycles of heaven qi and earth qi. Since you are part of this

nature (*Dao*, 道), you must understand heaven qi and earth qi. Then you will be able to adjust yourself, when necessary, to fit more smoothly into the natural cycle, and you will learn how to protect yourself from the negative influences in nature. This is the major goal of qigong practice.

From this, you can see that in order to have a long and healthy life, the first rule is that you must live in harmony with the cycles of nature and avoid and prevent the negative influences. The Chinese have researched nature for thousands of years. Some of the information on the patterns and cycles of nature has been recorded in books, one of which is the *Book of Changes* (*Yi Jing*, 易經). This book gives the average person formulas to trace when the season will change, when it will snow, when a farmer should plow or harvest. You must remember that nature is always repeating itself. If you observe carefully, you will be able to see many of these routine patterns and cycles caused by the rebalancing of the qi fields.

Over thousands of years, the Chinese have researched the interrelationships of all things in nature, especially about human beings. From this experience, they have created various qigong exercises to help bring the body's qi circulation into harmony with nature's cycles. This helps to avoid illnesses caused by weather or seasonal changes.

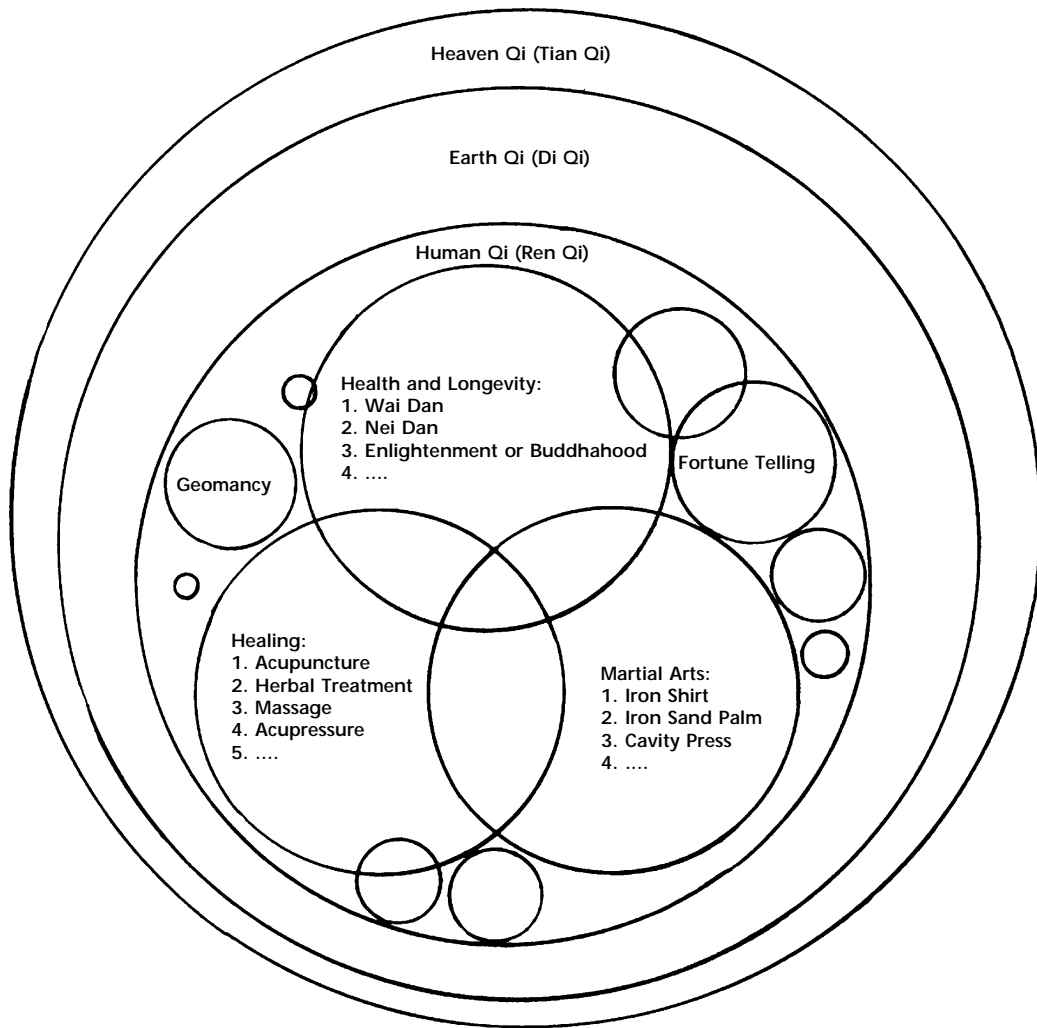
After a long period of research and study, the Chinese also discovered that through qigong practice they were able to strengthen their qi or internal energy circulation, and slow down the degeneration of the body, gaining not only health but also a longer life. The realization that such things were possible greatly spurred new research.

What is Qigong?

From the above discussion, you can see that qi is energy and is found in heaven, in the earth, and in every living thing. All of these different types of energy interact with each other and can convert into each other. In China, the word “*gong*” (功) is often used instead of “*gongfu*” (功夫), which means energy and time. Any study or training that requires a lot of energy and time to learn or to accomplish is called gongfu. The term can be applied to any special skill or study as long as it requires time, energy, and patience. Therefore, the correct definition of qigong is any training or study dealing with qi that takes a long time and a lot of effort.

Qi exists in everything. Since the range of qi is so vast, the Chinese have divided it into three categories, parallel to the three natural powers (*san cai*, 三才) of heaven, earth, and man. Generally speaking, heaven qi is the biggest and the most powerful. This heaven qi contains within it the earth qi, and within this heaven and earth qi lives humans, with their own qi. You can see from the diagram that human qi is part of heaven and earth qi. However, since the human beings who research qi are mainly interested in human qi, the term qigong is generally used to refer only to qi training for people.

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Qi diagram.

As you can see, qigong research should include heaven qi, earth qi, and human qi. Understanding heaven qi is very difficult, however, and it was especially so in ancient times when the science was just developing. The major rules and principles relating to heaven qi can be found in such books as *The Five Elements and Ten Stems* (*Wuxing and Shitiangan*, 五行與十天干); *Celestial Stems* (*Shierdizhi*, 十二地支); and the *Yi Jing* (易經).

Many people have become proficient in the study of earth qi. They are called geomancy teachers (*di li shi*, 地理師) or wind water teachers (*feng shui shi*, 風水師). These

Chapter 2. Qigong Training Theory

2-1. Introduction

Before you start your qigong training, you must first understand the three treasures of life: essence (jing, 精), internal energy (qi, 氣), and spirit (shen, 神)—as well as their interrelationship. If you lack this understanding, you are missing the root of qigong training, as well as the basic idea of qigong theory. The main goals of qigong training are to learn how to retain your jing, strengthen and smooth your qi flow, and enlighten your shen. To reach these goals you must learn how to regulate the body (tiao shen, 調身), regulate the mind (tiao xin, 調心), regulate the breathing (*tiao xi*, 調息), regulate the qi (*tiao qi*, 調氣), and regulate the shen (tiao shen, 調神).

Regulating the body includes understanding how to find and build the root of the body as well as of the individual forms you are practicing. To build a firm root, you must know how to keep your center, how to balance your body, and most important of all, how to relax so that the qi can flow.

Regulating the mind involves learning how to keep your mind calm, peaceful, and centered, so that you can judge situations objectively and lead qi to the desired places. The mind is the main key to success in qigong practice.

To regulate your breathing, you must learn how to breathe so that your breathing and your mind mutually correspond and cooperate. When you breathe this way, your mind will be able to attain peace more quickly, and therefore concentrate more easily on leading the qi.

Regulating the qi is one of the ultimate goals of qigong practice. In order to regulate your qi effectively, you must first have regulated your body, mind, and breathing. Only then will your mind be clear enough to sense how the qi is distributed in your body and understand how to adjust it.

For Buddhist priests, who seek the enlightenment of the Buddha, regulating the shen is the final goal of qigong. This enables them to maintain a neutral, objective perspective of life, and this perspective is the eternal life of the Buddha. The average qigong practitioner has lower goals. He raises his shen in order to increase his concentration and enhance his vitality. This makes it possible for him to lead qi effectively to his entire body so that it carries out the managing and guarding duties. This maintains his health and slows down the aging process.

If you understand these few things you will be able to quickly enter into the field of qigong. Without all of these important elements, your training will be ineffective and your time will be wasted.

2-2. Three Treasures (Jing, Qi, Shen, 三寶一精, 氣, 神)

Before you start any qigong training, you must first understand the three treasures (*san bao*, 三寶): essence (jing, 精), internal energy (qi, 氣), and spirit (shen, 神). They are also called the three origins or the three roots (*san yuan*, 三元) because they are considered the origins and roots of your life. Jing means the essence, the most original and refined part of every thing. Jing exists in everything. It represents the most basic part of anything that shows its characteristics. Sperm is called *jing zi* (精子), which means “essence of the son,” because it contains the jing of the father, which is passed on to his son (or daughter) and becomes the child’s jing. Jing is the original source of every living thing, and it determines the nature and characteristics of that thing. It is the root of life.

Qi is the internal energy of your body. It is like the electricity that passes through a machine to keep it running. Qi comes either from the conversion of the jing that you have received from your parents, or from the food you eat and the air you breathe.

Shen is the center of your mind, the spirit of your being. It is what makes you human because animals do not have a shen. The shen in your body must be nourished by your qi or energy. When your qi is full, your shen will be enlivened.

These three elements are interrelated in a number of ways. Chinese meditators and qigong practitioners believe that the body contains two general types of qi. The first type is called original qi (*yuan qi*, 元氣) or pre-birth qi (*xian tian qi*, 先天氣), and it comes from converted original jing (*yuan jing*, 元精), which you get from your parents at conception. The second type, which is called post-birth qi (*hou tian qi*, 後天氣), is drawn from the jing of the food and air we take in. When this qi flows or is led to the brain, it can energize the shen and soul. This energized and raised shen is able to lead the qi to the entire body.

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:

1. There are many kinds of jing that your body requires. Except for the jing that you inherit from your parents, which is called original jing (*yuan jing*, 元精), all other jings must be obtained from food, air, or even the energy surrounding you. Among all of these jings, original jing is the most important one. It is the root and the seed of your life, and your basic strength. If your parents were strong and healthy, your original jing will be strong and healthy, and you will have a strong foundation on which to grow. The Chinese people believe that in order to stay healthy and live a long life, you must protect and maintain this jing. It is like money that you have

invested in a bank. You can live off the interest for a long time, but if you withdraw the principal and spend it, you will have nothing left.

The root of original jing before your birth was in your parents. After birth this original jing stays in its residence—the kidneys, which are considered the root of your jing. When you keep this root strong, you will have sufficient original jing to supply to your body. Although you cannot increase the amount of jing you have, qigong training can improve the quality of your jing. Qigong can also teach you how to convert your jing into original qi more efficiently and how to use this qi effectively.

2. Qi is converted both from the jing that you have inherited from your parents and from the jing that you draw from the food and air you take in. Qi which is converted from the original jing, which you have inherited, is called original qi (yuan qi, 元氣).¹ Just as original jing is the most important type of jing, original qi is the most important type of qi. It is pure and of high quality, while the qi from food and air may make your body too positive or too negative, depending on how and where you absorb it. When you retain and protect your original jing, you will be able to generate original qi in a pure, continuous stream. As a qigong practitioner, you must know how to convert your original jing into original qi in a smooth, steady stream.

Since your original qi comes from your original jing, they both have the kidneys for their root. When your kidneys are strong, the original jing is strong, and the original qi converted from this original jing will also be full and strong. This qi resides in the lower dan tian in your abdomen. Once you learn how to convert your original jing, you will be able to supply your body with all the qi it needs.

3. Shen is the force that keeps you alive. It has no substance, but it gives expression and appearance to your jing. Shen is also the control tower for the qi. When your shen is strong, your qi is strong and you can lead it efficiently. The root of shen (spirit) is your mind (*yi*, 意) or intention. When your brain is energized and stimulated, your mind will be more aware and you will be able to concentrate more intensely. Also, your shen will be raised. Advanced qigong practitioners believe that your brain must always be sufficiently nourished by your qi. It is the qi that keeps your mind clear and concentrated. With an abundant qi supply, the mind can be energized and can raise the shen and enhance your vitality.

The deeper levels of qigong training include the conversion of jing into qi, which is then led to the brain to raise the shen. This process is called “*huan jing bu nao*” (還精補腦) and means “return the jing to nourish the brain.” When qi is led to the head, it stays at the upper dan tian (center of the forehead). The upper dan tian is the residence of shen. Qi and shen are mutually related. When your shen is weak,

your qi is weak, and your body will degenerate rapidly. Shen is the headquarters of qi. Likewise, qi supports the shen, energizing it and keeping it sharp, clear, and strong. If the qi in your body is weak, your shen will also be weak.

2-3. Qigong Training Theory

In qigong training, you must understand the principle behind everything you are doing. The principle is the root of your practice, and it is this root that brings forth the results you want. The root gives life, while the branches and flowers (results) give only temporary beauty. If you keep the root, you can regrow. If you have just branches and flowers, they will die in a short time.

Every qigong form or practice has its special purpose and theory. If you do not know the purpose and theory, you have lost the root (meaning) of the practice. Therefore, as a qigong practitioner, you must continue to ponder and practice until you understand the root of every set or form.

Before you start training, you must first understand that all of the training originates in your mind. You must have a clear idea of what you are doing, and your mind must be calm, centered, and balanced. This also implies that your feeling, sensing, and judgment must be objective and accurate. This requires emotional balance and a clear mind. This takes a lot of hard work, but once you have reached this level, you will have built the root of your physical training, and your yi will be able to lead your qi throughout your physical body.

As mentioned previously, qigong training includes five important elements: regulating the body, regulating the breath, regulating the mind, regulating the qi, and regulating the spirit (shen). These elements are the foundation of successful qigong practice. Without this foundation, your understanding of qigong and your practice will remain superficial.

1. Regulating the Body (Tiao Shen, 調身)

Regulating the body is called “tiao shen” (調身) in Chinese. This 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. If it is not, you will be tense and uneasy, and this will affect the judgment of your yi and the circulation of your qi. In Chinese medical society it is said: “(When) shape (body’s posture) is not correct, then the qi will not be smooth. (When) the qi is not smooth, the yi (mind) will not be peaceful. (When) the yi is not peaceful, then the qi is disordered.”²² You should understand that the relaxation of your body originates with your yi. Therefore, before you can relax your body, you must first relax or regulate your mind (yi). This is called “*shen xin ping heng*” (身心平衡), which means “body and heart (mind) balanced.” The body and the mind are mutually related. A relaxed and balanced body helps your yi to relax and concentrate. When your

Chapter 3. Sitting Eight Pieces of Brocade

It has been nearly one thousand years since the Eight Pieces of Brocade were created. There are many versions, each one somewhat different from the others. However, it does not matter which version you are training, the basic principles and theory are the same, and the goal is consistent. Remember that the most important thing in the training is not the forms themselves, but rather the theory and principle of each form, which constitute the root. Once you understand these, you will be able to use your wisdom mind (yi, 意) to lead the qi to circulate and bring you to health. Therefore, when you practice you should try to understand the poetry or the “secret words.” They have been passed down for hundreds of years and are the root of the practice. Because of cultural and language differences, it is very difficult to translate into English all of the meaning of the Chinese. We will try to keep as close as possible to the Chinese and hope that you are able to get not just the meaning, but also the taste of the original. Sometimes, words that are not in the original will be added in parentheses to clarify the meaning. Each section of poetry will be discussed so that it is as clear as possible.

As the first chapter explains, The Eight Pieces of Brocade is an external elixir (wai dan, 外丹) exercise. It includes both types of wai dan qigong practice theory: not only does it build up qi in the limbs and then allow this qi to flow into the organs, but it also uses the motion of the limbs to move the muscles around the organs and increase the qi circulation there.

There are two sets of The Eight Pieces of Brocade. One set is sitting and the other is standing. The sitting set discussed in this chapter focuses on exercising the upper limbs and benefits the six organs that are related to the six qi channels in the arms. The sitting set is a good way to wake up in the morning, and it is usually practiced before noon. The sitting set is also good for people who are bedridden or cannot stand easily.

You may wonder about the number of repetitions given for the different exercises. Chinese people consider twelve to be the number of a cycle; for example, twelve months comprise a year. Therefore, you will often see twelve or its multiples listed as the recommended numbers of repetitions. Square numbers such as nine, sixteen, forty-nine, or sixty-four are also popular. Such numbers are only a guide, and you don't need to follow them precisely. If you have only a limited amount of time and cannot do the recommended number of repetitions, simply use a smaller number. Do not, however, omit any of the exercises.

You may have noticed that in the discussion of the training theory and in the training instructions there is very little about coordinating your breathing with the movements. This is simply because the set was designed for the beginning qigong practitioner. For the beginner, the most important element of the practice is relaxation. Only when you have mastered the set and learned how to regulate your body should you start to coordinate your breath with the movements. The general rule in breathing is that when you extend your limbs you exhale and lead the qi to the extremities, and when you withdraw your limbs you inhale and lead the qi to your spine.

First Piece

Close Eyes and Sit Still (Bi Mu Jing Zuo, 閉目靜坐)

閉目冥心坐，握固靜思神。

Translation: Close eyes and sit with deep mind; (hands) hold firm; (mind is) calm, and think (concentrate on the) spirit (shen).

Practice

Your mouth is closed and the teeth are touching slightly. Regulate your breathing so that it is smooth and uniform. Your mind is clear and pure. Condense your wisdom mind (yi, 意) and spirit (shen, 神) internally, until the shen is peaceful and the qi sinks. Your



Sit with your legs crossed and concentrate on your solar plexus. Your head should feel as if it were suspended, and your chest loose and relaxed. The waist and spine are easy and comfortable. Hold your hands in your lap.

yi should be at the middle dan tian (solar plexus) first to feel the qi there, then lead the qi down to the lower dan tian (*xia dan tian*, 下丹田). Too much fire qi at middle dan tian is not healthy; it can trigger the heart on fire. Through deep breathing, bring the accumulated fire qi at the middle dan tian to the lower dan tian. You should meditate at least three to five minutes.

Discussion

Three places are called fields of elixir (*dan tian*, 丹田): the forehead is called the upper dan tian (*shang dan tian*, 上丹田), the solar plexus is the middle dan tian (*zhong dan tian*, 中丹田), and the abdomen is the lower dan tian (*xia dan tian*, 下丹田). The upper dan tian is the residence of shen (spirit). When the qi is led to the upper dan tian, the brain is nourished and the spirit can be raised. When the spirit is raised, the qi circulating in the body can be effectively led by the mind. The middle dan tian is the center where the post-birth qi accumulates. Post-birth qi is obtained mainly from food and air. When qi in the middle dan tian is stimulated and full, the body is energized. The mind, however, although stimulated to a higher state, is scattered, and you will be troubled by heartburn. The lower dan tian, which is the original source of human life, is the residence of pre-birth qi.

This exercise will extinguish any fire in your middle dan tian so that you can concentrate and calm your mind. Before you start any qigong exercise, you must first be calm. Closing your eyes will keep you from seeing anything distracting which is happening around you, and help you to calm down. You must train yourself to meditate with a deep mind. When you practice, hold your hands in front of your abdomen. Holding them together will help you to keep your mind centered and firm. If you wish, you may regulate your breath for a minute to start calming your mind, but then let go of the regulating and allow your mind to be calm and deep. You should pay attention to the condition of the post-birth fire qi (*hou tian qi*, 後天氣) at the middle dan tian, and then lead it down to the lower dan tian to remove excess qi accumulated at the middle dan tian. When the fire is gone, place your concentrated mind on your shen, which is located in the upper dan tian, to increase your energy level.

In China, concentration is called gathering your jing to meet your shen (*ju jing hui shen*, 聚精會神), which implies concentration. Jing here does not mean semen or sperm, but rather something that is refined. Here it means the refined and concentrated mind. When the mind meets with shen (spirit), the shen will be raised. Whenever your shen is raised, you will be able to increase the depth of your concentration.

Second Piece

Hands Hold Head (Shou Bao Kun Lun, 手抱崑崙)

扣齒三十六，兩手抱崑崙。

Translation: Knock the teeth thirty-six (times) and two hands hold *kun lun* (head).

Practice



First, tap your teeth together thirty-six times. If there is any saliva generated, swallow it.



Next, fold your hands together and hold the back of your head. Push your head and body backward while pulling your hands forward. Inhale when tensing and exhale when relaxing. Do nine repetitions.

Discussion

There are two major purposes for tapping the teeth together. One purpose is to stimulate the qi in the gums to strengthen the roots of the teeth. In ancient times, dentists and technology were not as common or advanced as today, and you had to take care of your teeth by yourself. Tapping your teeth together strengthens the roots and helps prevent decay. The other purpose is to clear and wake the mind. When you tap, the vibrations resonate in your brain cavity and stimulate the brain. This will clear the mind.

Kun Lun Mountain (崑崙山) is one of the highest mountains in Xinjiang Province (新疆省), China. Here it means your head, which is the highest part of your body. When you push your head backward while pulling your hands forward, also push out your whole back. This will straighten the spine. In addition, this exercise tenses and then relaxes the back muscles, which will increase the qi circulation there and in the governing vessel (du mai, 督脈). This exercise will also strengthen the spine and prevent backache. When you are

doing this piece, your breathing should be coordinated with the movement to help the lungs compress and expand. This will release tension in the lungs and increase lung capacity.

Third Piece

Knock and Beat the Jade Pillow (Kou Ji Yu Zhen, 叩擊玉枕)

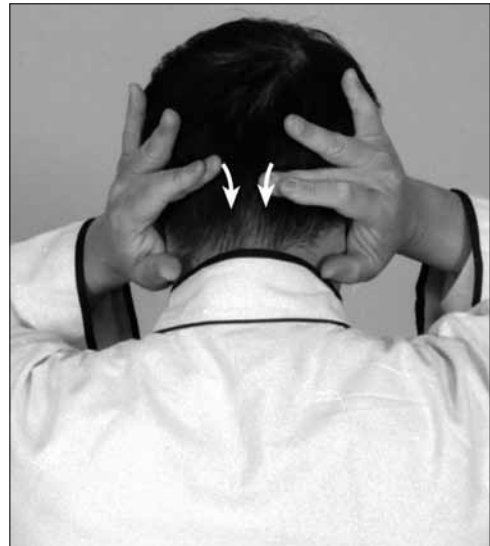
左右鳴天鼓，二十四度聞。

Translation: Left right beat the heavenly drum, resounding twenty-four times.

Practice



Continuing from the last piece, cover your ears with your palms, with the middle fingers on the jade pillow cavity area (under the external occipital protuberance).



Put your index fingers on the middle fingers and snap them down to hit your head. Hit twenty-four times in an even, steady beat.

This will generate a drumming sound in the brain cavity. This exercise is commonly called “*ming tian gu*” (鳴天鼓) which means “sound the heavenly drum.” You may hit with both fingers at the same time, or else alternate the fingers.

Discussion

The jade pillow (*yu zhen*, 玉枕) is the name of a cavity located on the back of your head under the protruding ridge of bone. The heavenly drum means the head.

When you do this exercise, do not let your ring and pinkie fingers touch your head, for this will muffle the sound. Concentrate on the sound, and let every beat bring your attention more fully to the vibrations in your skull and brain. Beating the drum clears the mind. When you are finished and take your hands off your ears, you will feel like you just woke up, and everything will seem clear.

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About the Author

Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD (楊俊敏博士)

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming was born on August 11, 1946, in Xinzhu Xian (新竹縣), Taiwan (台灣), Republic of China (中華民國). He started his wushu (武術) (*gongfu* or *kung fu*, 功夫) training at the age of fifteen under Shaolin White Crane (*Bai He*, 少林白鶴) Master Cheng, Gin-Gsao (曾金灶). Master Cheng originally learned Taizuquan (太祖拳) from his grandfather when he was a child. When Master Cheng was fifteen years old, he started learning White Crane from Master Jin, Shao-Feng (金紹峰), and followed him for twenty-three years until Master Jin's death.



In thirteen years of study (1961–1974) under Master Cheng, Dr. Yang became an expert in the White Crane style of Chinese martial arts, which includes both the use of bare hand and various weapons, such as saber, staff, spear, trident, two short rods, and many other weapons. With the same master he also studied White Crane Qigong (氣功), *qin na* or *chin na* (擒拿), *tui na* (推拿), and *dian xue* massages (點穴按摩), and herbal treatment.

At the age of sixteen, Dr. Yang began the study of Yang Style Taijiquan (楊氏太極拳) under Master Kao, Tao (高濤). After learning from Master Kao, Dr. Yang continued his study and research of taijiquan with several masters and senior practitioners such as Master Li, Mao-Ching (李茂清) and Mr. Wilson Chen (陳威伸) in Taipei (台北). Master Li learned his taijiquan from the well-known Master Han, Ching-Tang (韓慶堂), and Mr. Chen learned his taijiquan from Master Chang, Xiang-San (張詳三). Dr. Yang has mastered the taiji bare hand sequence, pushing hands, the two-man fighting sequence, taiji sword, taiji saber, and taiji qigong.

When Dr. Yang was eighteen years old, he entered Tamkang College (淡江學院) in Taipei Xian to study physics. In college he began the study of traditional Shaolin Long Fist (*Changquan* or *Chang Chuan*, 少林長拳) with Master Li, Mao-Ching at the Tamkang College Guoshu Club (淡江國術社), 1964–1968, and eventually became an assistant instructor under Master Li. In 1971, he completed his MS degree in physics at the National Taiwan University (台灣大學) and then served in the Chinese Air Force

from 1971 to 1972. In the service, Dr. Yang taught physics at the Junior Academy of the Chinese Air Force (空軍幼校) while also teaching wushu. After being honorably discharged in 1972, he returned to Tamkang College to teach physics and resumed study under Master Li, Mao-Ching. From Master Li, Dr. Yang learned northern style wushu, which includes both bare hand and kicking techniques, and numerous weapons.

In 1974, Dr. Yang came to the United States to study mechanical engineering at Purdue University. At the request of a few students, Dr. Yang began to teach gongfu (*kung fu*), which resulted in the establishment of the Purdue University Chinese Kung Fu Research Club in the spring of 1975. While at Purdue, Dr. Yang also taught college-credit courses in taijiquan. In May of 1978, he was awarded a PhD in mechanical engineering from Purdue.

In 1980, Dr. Yang moved to Houston to work for Texas Instruments. While in Houston, he founded Yang's Shaolin Kung Fu Academy, which was eventually taken over by his disciple Mr. Jeffery Bolt after Dr. Yang moved to Boston in 1982. Dr. Yang founded Yang'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, Yang's Martial Arts Association (YMAA). The organization expanded to become a division of Yang's Oriental Arts Association, Inc. (YOAA).

In 2004, Dr. Yang began the nonprofit YMAA California Retreat Center. This training facility in rural California is where selected students enroll in a 10-year residency to learn Chinese martial arts.

In summary, Dr. Yang has been involved in Chinese martial arts since 1961. During this time, he spent thirteen years learning Shaolin White Crane (*Bai He*), Shaolin Long Fist (*Changquan*), and taijiquan. Dr. Yang has more than four decades of teaching experience.

In addition, Dr. Yang has also offered seminars around the world to share his knowledge of Chinese martial arts and qigong. The countries he has visited include Canada, Mexico, France, Italy, Poland, England, Ireland, Portugal, Switzerland, Germany, Hungary, Spain, Holland, Latvia, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia.

Since 1986, YMAA has become an international organization, which currently includes more than fifty schools located in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom, Venezuela, and the United States. Many of Dr. Yang's books and videotapes have been translated into languages such as French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Russian, German, and Hungarian.

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Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD is a world-renowned author, scholar, and teacher of tai chi chuan. He has been involved in Chinese martial arts since 1961 and maintains over 55 schools in 18 countries. Dr. Yang's writing and teaching include the subjects of kung fu, tai chi chuan, massage, meditation, chin na, and he is a leading authority on qigong. Dr. Yang is the author of over 35 books and 80 videos.

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