

**Andrzej Kalisz**

# **Zhan Zhuang QIGONG**



**YOU CAN FEEL IT!**

**YIQUAN TRAINING WORLDWIDE SUPPORT**

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**I would like to express gratitude to:**

**My parents.**

Thanks to their help I could enter the path of studying Chinese culture, martial arts and exercises for cultivating health.

**My teacher Yao Chengguang.**

He helps me to research the principles of studying and experiencing, and is generously sharing his own experience gained by over 40 years of practice.

**My students.**

They appreciate my efforts and their progress makes me sure that what I'm studying and passing to them is valuable.

Andrzej Kalisz

This is because health, well-being, seeking beauty, balance and harmony are important in human life, that such forms of exercises like **yoga**, **tai chi** and **chi kung** have become very popular all over the world. But until recently **yiquan** and **zhan zhuang** were not widely known. Now they are rapidly becoming popular.

Some people say that zhan zhuang is a **Chinese yoga**. Wide use of positional exercises resembles use of asana in Indian yoga.

Zhan zhuang is often classified as a method of **qigong** (in broad meaning). It has been used as a supplemental means of therapy in hospitals in China since 1950s.

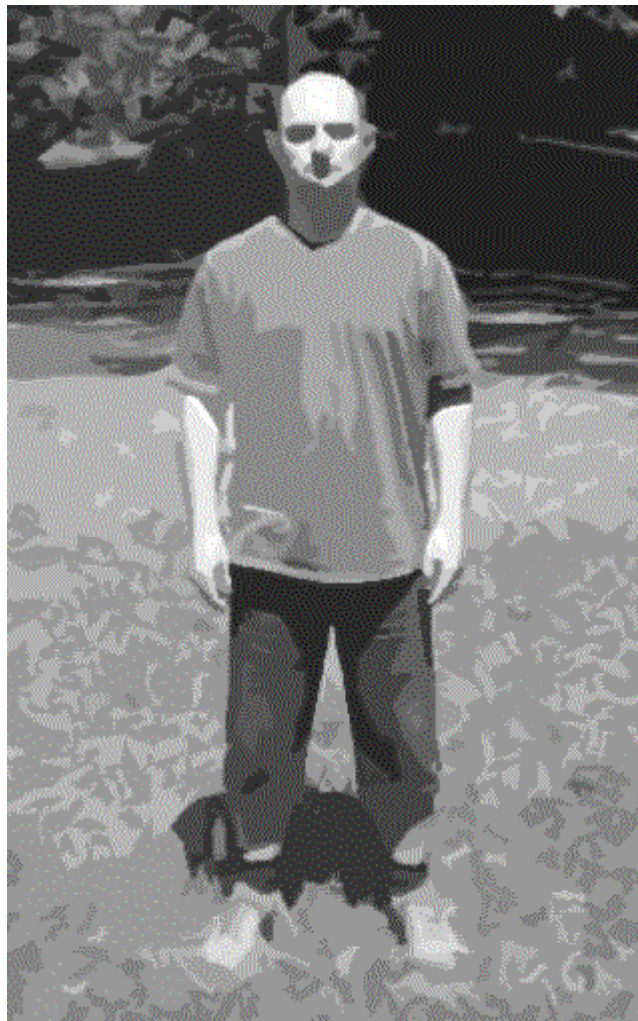
**Tai chi of 21<sup>st</sup> century** – this is another term used in relation to zhan zhuang and yiquan. Presently many taijiquan instructors are including zhan zhuang method in their curriculum or are switching from taijiquan to yiquan.

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# **Chapter I**

## **RELAX FIRST**



Relaxation is what most people interested in starting study of qigong, taijiquan (tai chi) or yoga are looking for. Relaxation is also one of the most important issues in practice of zhan zhuang method.

Many adult people have developed excessive habitual tension of some muscles. This is in big part a result of accumulating stresses which are part of life of modern people. Sometimes it can be very difficult to get rid of tension and stiffness. Excessive tension will make doing various actions in work or in everyday life more difficult, will exhaust you physically and mentally. Even when you are trying to relax, sitting in an armchair, very often you are still too tense. In many cases your shoulders are raised, neck and face stiff.

Now stand in natural, relaxed position, with your feet shoulder-width apart and toes slightly pointing outward. You can do some slight, free movements. This will help you to check whether you are not too tense, because too much tension of muscles is reflected in stiffness, in limitation of free movement of your joints. You can repeat it many times in this or some other position or while walking. Don't try too hard, don't concentrate too much. Do it in a bit casual, careless manner. This way you will gradually learn how to eliminate tension and you will be more conscious of whether you are relaxed or tense. You can use this method before doing next exercises.

You could also use a method of careful observing the level of tension and conscious relaxing your body part by part. First think about your head. If you will notice some feeling of tension there, try to remove it slowly. Then shift your attention to neck, observing the level of tension and slowly, without haste or trying too hard, relax it. Keep shifting attention gradually lower and lower, toward your chest, upper back and upper arms, then waist, abdomen, elbows and forearms, then lower abdomen, buttocks, wrists, palms, thighs, shanks, feet, all the time observing the level of tension and gradually relaxing your body. You can repeat this cycle many times.

This way you are gradually relaxing your body, eliminating tension. And because your mind is engaged in this process, you become more focused, all disturbing thoughts are becoming weaker. You are becoming more relaxed both physically and mentally.

Zhan zhuang method is based on using intention, working on co-ordination between mind and body. This aspect will be included in all further described exercises.

Sometimes even realizing the tension can be difficult. In such a case you can first try to make some parts of your body very tense, and only then to relax them, all the time observing sensations which you experience very carefully. This will help you to develop better perception and ability of distinguishing the states of relax and tension.

Also when you are aware that some part of your body is too tense, but you are not able to relax it, you can try first to tense it even more and only then to relax. If you will not achieve good effects immediately, don't worry, just repeat it regularly, without trying too hard, a bit casually. Progress will come with time, and results will become deeper gradually. And if you try too hard, it could make you more tense.

One of the aspects of relax is a natural, freely flowing breath. If there appears some tension in the area of your chest and abdomen, it will disturb breathing. If you notice this kind of problems, take care to check if it is not related to such tension. Then try to relax the tense area, so your chest and abdomen will be able to move freely again, and you will notice that your breathing becomes more free. Don't try too hard. Don't concentrate on controlling breathing. Just let the natural mechanisms work.

When you practice zhan zhuang, there is no need for special place, time or clothes. You can do the exercises in various situations: standing, sitting, lying on bed, walking, doing various actions. But if you have chance, try to practice in a park, in woods, in natural surroundings with free air. This is not advised to practice when your are very hungry or very full. Before starting practice, you should go to toilet. Unfasten some buttons, make your belt loose, so you can feel comfortable while practicing.

Gradually you will find more and more pleasure in doing exercises and the practice sessions will naturally become longer, there will be no need to force yourself to practice. But at beginning you can start from just a few minutes, practicing everyday, several times per day if it's possible, for example during breaks in work or any other times. It is better to make practice session shorter and more frequent, keeping the pleasant feeling of comfort while doing exercise, not trying to make the practice sessions very long at beginning. But don't stop doing exercise immediately when feel like it – first think for a moment if you are really tired or if it is just kind of impatience (in such case try to keep practicing with calm mind).

After finishing practice session, start moving slowly and have a look around. You can make a few deeper breaths, exhaling in a way as if sighing out. You can shake your body slightly or do some self-massage.

**When you will already have some experience with zhan zhuang, and you will be able to adjust time and intensity of practice properly, you will feel relaxed and full of energy after doing exercises and you will wake up fresh next morning.**



# ZHAN ZHUANG AND YIQUAN

*"The sages of ancient times used to stand on earth, supporting heaven, controlling yin and yang, breathing with essence of qi, standing alone, guarding spirit, with body being a one".*

*This quote from "Yellow Emperor's Inner Classics" (from about 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.) is by many researchers seen as the earliest mention about zhan zhuang. However this method of cultivating health became really popular only in 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Some exercises known as zhan zhuang used to be utilized by most of traditional Chinese martial arts. But in many cases their function was just strengthening legs to achieve stronger, more stable postures in combat. In these cases there is almost no relation between such zhan zhuang and the method described in this book.*

*Zhan zhuang exercises described here, which are being used in Chinese hospitals and sanatoria as supplemental method of therapy, and are also practiced by many people with aim of improving health and promoting well being, were developed by famous master Wang Xiangzhai (1885-1963).*

*As a young child Wang Xiangzhai became student of Guo Yunshen, who was one of the most famous masters in history of xingyiquan (hsing-I ch'uan) – one of Chinese internal martial arts. As in many xingyiquan schools zhan zhuang exercises are limited only to santishi posture, it is not quite clear whether Wang learned more of zhan zhuang postures as part of "secret transmission" or if he developed them later by himself on basis of santishi.*

*Wang Xiangzhai traveled a lot all over China, meeting many experts of traditional martial arts and exercises for cultivating health. This way he gained a lot of experience. In middle 1920s he started developing his own variant of xingyiquan, which he called yiquan. Zhan zhuang exercises became the most characteristic and stressed part of training. On turn of 1920s and 1930s Wang Xiangzhai became very famous in Shanghai.*

*It was period of strong influence of western culture and science in China, and hence some criticism toward Chinese tradition. Wang had met many famous representatives of various schools in all parts of China. He was able to notice that not everything in tradition was really valuable, that following old ways without any criticism may cause a lot of bad results. Impact of western science was important factor which inspired him to try to view traditional concepts and methods from different perspective. His goal was keeping what was valuable in traditional systems, and getting rid of what was wrong. This opened a way for further verification of methods and modifying theories.*

*By end of 1930s Wang Xiangzhai moved to Beijing, which became the main center of yiquan since then. In 1940s his system was also promoted by his students as dachengquan. This name is still used by some branches of the system.*

*When yiquan became a famous martial art, many practitioners could personally discover, that practicing zhan zhuang helps to improve health. In 1940s more and more people started practicing yiquan (dachengquan) mainly to cultivate health. And in 1950s situation was not favorable for popularizing an efficient art of combat. So Wang concentrated more on using zhan zhuang as a method of therapy. He was working in hospitals in Beijing and later in Baoding. Such variant of yiquan, limited to most basic methods, became quite popular. And complete system was practiced by very few people. Only since 1980s yiquan (dachengquan) taught as a complete art could be popularized again officially.*

The system of cultivating health exercises developed by Wang Xiangzhai is usually called zhan zhuang, because standing postures are most often used. However also sitting postures, lying on bed postures, half supported postures and moving exercises are used. Those whose health and level of fitness doesn't limit the possibility of practicing more advanced methods, use to practice yiquan as a complete art.

Chinese characters	International transcription	Old English transcription
站桩	Zhan zhuang	Chan chuang
意拳	Yiquan	I ch'uan
王芗斋	Wang Xiangzhai	Wang Hsiang-chai

## Chapter II

### USING IMAGINATION



While doing zhan zhuang exercises, you can use various imaginations, which will help you in achieving the state of relax, comfort and feeling elastic force. You don't need to try to learn and master many various images. These are only a tool which you can use if they are really helpful. So use them according to actual needs.

Various methods can be more or less useful for various people. Everybody knows himself/herself and knows what helps him/her to become relaxed. According to this personal knowledge, appropriate imaginations or suggestions can be chosen.

For example, if it is easy for you to relax while you are listening to some specific piece of music, you can think about hearing this music, trying to remember how you usually feel when you are listening to it. You don't need and you should not think about it all the time. Just use it as a tool, when there is a need. When you achieve result, don't stick to the method.

If you felt relaxed and comfortable in some place or situation, just try to remember it. If you get this feeling of relax and comfort, you don't need to think about the place or situation all the time. Just focus on perceiving the state of relax and comfort.

Don't think about exercise as something you must do, but something which you find pleasant. Zhan zhuang is training while resting, resting while training. For example you can think that you are having a stroll in a park, being pleasantly relaxed, in good mood. You are watching beautiful views, enjoying the sound of birds singing and scent of flowers. During the stroll you are casually assuming some posture, because you feel like it, because you find the posture comfortable. While standing you are relaxed, feeling soft, elastic unity of whole body. Slight breeze is moving your hair, your clothes. You are feeling so relaxed and soft, that air is as if moving through pores in your skin.

You can imagine that you are taking shower. Water drops are falling on your body and slowly flowing down are massaging surface of your body. Then imagine that your body becomes so much relaxed, that water is able to permeate through it, as if through a sponge, dissolving all tension inside.

Or imagine that your body is as if floating in water, and you don't need any effort to keep the posture. Water is moving slightly, massaging your body and moving it. Breath is flowing freely and naturally. You can imagine that your body is like a sponge, water permeating through it, dissolving all tension which appears there.

These are only some examples of images or suggestions, which you can use. Remember that it is not about visualizing in literary meaning. Trying to visualize these situations for longer time could make you tired and more tense.

The most basic images should be seen more like some slight hints, helping to remember some states which you know, at least to some extent. You are evoking the already known states of relax by thinking about situation in which you felt the state (or thinking about similar situation).

**Example:**

**Do you remember how wonderfully relaxed you felt admiring the waterfall in mountains, when you were on vacation? You can try to remember it or to imagine similar situation.**

Don't try hard to visualize, but just casually use some image/hint which helps you to relax. If you have not experienced relax in such situation, simply don't stick to using this image if it is not working for you.

In case of more advanced mind activity, the relation between image and actual state may not be very direct. It can be related not to your own experience, but to some images or phenomena about which you know or you have some idea about them. This way you are gradually discovering new states.

**Example:**

**When you imagine standing under shower, with water drops flowing not only on surface of your body but also permeating through it as if through a sponge, you are linking the state of relax which you know with image of water permeating through a sponge, which helps you to extend this feeling deeper inside your body, to deeper layers of your muscles.**

When you do relaxing exercises in standing postures, you can put both wrists on your hips or buttocks area on both sides of your body. It will be easy to relax your shoulders and arms in such position. Elbows are pointing outward. This posture is better than the one with arms hanging loosely, especially when you do it for longer time, because you can avoid too much pressure on sides of your ribs cage.



This is called resting posture. You can use it, when you feel too tired to continue more demanding exercises. After some time of rest you can move back to other exercises.



If keeping standing posture for longer time is difficult for you, you can use sitting variant. You can sit on edge of a chair or deeper, leaning against back of the chair, depending which is more comfortable for you. This is a simple modification of standing posture. Feet are still at shoulder width distance, toes pointing slightly outward. Torso naturally straight. You should feel relax and comfort. You can use any kind of images or mental hints which help you to achieve the state of relax.



If you are very tired, you can lie down on a bed or on the floor, or on a lawn, and do the exercise. Legs are naturally straightened, feet shoulder width apart. You will probably need to put something under your head, to keep the right position of your head in relation to whole body (like in standing posture). Put your arms on both sides of your body. If it will not feel comfortable, you can put something under your arms. In this position it will be possible to relax your body more than in any other posture. Thanks to experiencing the feeling of such complete relax, it will be easier for you to get rid of excessive tension in other exercises.

In this exercise you can use image that your body is not lying on a bed or other surface, but is as if floating in the air or in water (only face is above water, so you can breathe).

# ON QIGONG

*The general term qigong embraces many various methods. Through long history of China these exercises has been being created and developed in various circles. So we can say about systems of Taoists, Buddhists, Confucians, shamans, medicine experts or martial artists. All those methods have common points, but also specific characteristics, typical for some branches. The ultimate goal of practice can be different. Sometimes it is seeking harmony with nature or spiritual development, sometimes cultivating health and well being or medical therapy. In some cases it is aimed at developing supernatural abilities. In other it should help to develop attributes and abilities needed in combat.*

*Among many traditional Chinese systems, which today are called qigong, some stressed movement, so they were called donggong (moving exercises), other concentrated on meditative practices in fixed positions, so they were called jinggong (static exercises). With time, the tendency of using both donggong and jinggong in one system started prevailing.*

*The early moving exercises were called daoyin. This name has meaning of leading or directing. One interpretation is that these exercises were based on leading body movement by mind. Another that it was about using body movements to lead qi in specific ways.*

*In old texts there also appears a term tuna – this is another of traditional forms of practice, now classified as a form of qigong. Tuna are breathing exercises. Sometimes it is said that qigong means breathing exercises, but this too big simplification.*

*Yunqi (moving qi) was about using intention to direct the flow of qi to specific parts of body in order to achieve expected results.*

*There were also minggong and xinggong. Minggong (“life exercises”) were more about body, its proper functioning from the point of view of traditional concepts. Xinggong (“nature exercises” or “character exercises”) were more about mind. Meditative practices of Chan (Zen) Buddhism were close to Taoist xinggong.*

*Exercises were also divided into groups of waidangong (external elixir exercises) and neidangong (internal elixir exercises). Originally waidan and neidan were terms related to alchemy of immortality. Seeking for external elixir was just seeking for elixir of immortality, a substance which would give eternal life. And neidan exercises were to create the elixir inside body. Gradually tradition of external elixir as a miraculous substance which would give immortality vanished, because many experiments ended with the alchemist’s death (but these experiments helped to develop Chinese pharmacology). Gradually the alchemistic terminology of neidangong was transferred to Taoist practices of spiritual development. And*



*the term waidangong is now sometimes used in relation to these qigong exercises which don't belong to Taoist neidangong.*

*Later systems usually mixed together various forms of practice. Static and moving exercises, xinggong and minggong, neidan and waidan, daoyin, tuna and yunqi were used inside one system. In daoyin moving exercises, controlled breathing was used, qi was directed by intention, and mind had to be clear like in meditative exercises.*

*Presently qigong exercises are practiced mainly with goal of cultivating and improving health. They can be used not only to prevent health problems, to keep well being and cultivate vital energy, but also as means of therapy used against many illnesses. Both traditional methods and new methods based on traditional ones are used. In therapy exercises created in medical circles, based on theories of traditional Chinese medicine are most often used (yijia qigong – medical qigong). But methods developed in other circles (e.g. by martial artists) also demonstrate very good effects in therapy and as health cultivating practices suitable for most people.*

*There are some systems, which are not designed to treat specific problem, but to positively affect whole body. Such systems are the right choice for most people who want to improve health condition and stay healthy until old. The main idea of these systems is to regain and keep natural harmony of organism which is basis of its ability of resisting illnesses. Zhan zhuang is one of such methods.*

*Apart from such methods for everybody, there are some special exercises to use for patients with specific illnesses. Such exercises should be chosen and supervised by an experienced doctor of traditional Chinese medicine. The choice of exercises depends on situation of specific patient – his body condition, kind of illness (according to theory of Chinese medicine) and stage of therapy. This is called qigong therapy (qigong liaofa).*

*Although the term qigong literary means qi exercises, many methods which are not based on the qi concepts are presently classified as qigong. These methods can be accepted by people who are not convinced by traditional Chinese theories. Zhan zhuang belongs to such systems.*

*Instead of the concept of qi, so called three adjustments (san tiao) is what constitutes qigong in this broader meaning. Three adjustments are: adjusting body (tiao shen), adjusting breath (tiao xi) and adjusting mind (tiao xin - literary: adjusting heart).*

*Tiao shen is related to body position and movements. From this point of view, exercises can be divided into: static, moving and those which are mixing static and moving methods. Stress is usually put on relaxation – getting rid of unnecessary tension.*

*Tiao xi encompasses various breathing methods. But it should be pointed out that in some methods (e.g. zhan zhuang) there is no stress on controlling breath, but rather on free, natural breathing.*

*Tiao xin is about mind activity. Stabilizing spirit (ding shen), eliminating disturbing thoughts (paichu zanian), entering tranquility (ru jing), are the basic points. Various imaginations, mental suggestions, focusing on external objects or points inside body, shifting point of focus (e.g. along acupuncture channels) and many other forms of mind activity can be used, depending on specific qigong method.*

**Chinese characters**

**International transcription**

**Old English transcription**

气功

Qigong

Ch'i kung

## Chapter III

### FOCUSING MIND



In previous chapter we talked about some examples of mind activity, which can be used in zhan zhuang practice to help you to achieve or to deepen the state of relax. You probably noticed that these methods not only help you to relax but at the same time to get rid of too many disturbing thoughts.

But sometimes you can use some specific kinds of mind activity, main goal of which is to help you to calm down, to get rid of disturbing thought, to focus.

If it is difficult for you to concentrate, because there are too many disturbing and distracting thoughts, related for example to some problems in work, at home, you can try to get some mental distance to those thoughts. For example, you can imagine that you are on vacation somewhere far away, like a beautiful lagoon at south Pacific – there are palms around, beautiful beaches, azure sea – you really enjoy being there, forgetting about everyday problems and distracting thoughts.

**Don't concentrate on visualizing, but on the state of tranquility and focus, which you want to achieve, and which you should know already, at least to some extent. You probably remember about when you went on vacation, and after a few days you had forgotten about everyday problems, your mind totally occupied with what you were doing at the moment.**

Sometimes, when it is difficult to get rid of too much distracting thoughts, you can use a method which is called “attracting thoughts”. Imagine that you are like a fire, and thoughts “circling around your head” are like dry leaves falling down from a tree and circling around the fire. If some leaf comes too close to the fire, it will burn to ashes. If you will notice some strong, disturbing thought, think about it as a leaf which is burning in fire.

Or you could imagine that you are in water, like in previous chapter. Imagine that water is permeating through your body as if through a sponge and is dissolving not only tension in your body but also any strong, disturbing thoughts. Just think about this for a moment, when you notice that some thought is becoming too strong and moves your attention away from the exercise.

**Don't try to fight hard with the disturbing thoughts. Usually it would only make you more tense, and even more distracting thoughts would appear. Try rather to be indifferent or a bit indulgent toward those thoughts. This way the thoughts will gradually diminish and will not disturb your practice. If you are able to keep focus on the exercise, on what is important in it, even if sometimes there appear some thoughts about something different, don't worry about it too much. But if some thought has became so strong, that you forgot about the exercise, when you finally notice that it happened, just focus again on the exercise and the disturbing thought will become weaker and will disappear eventually.**

# ON MEDITATION

*Original meaning of the word meditation was close to thinking, pondering, considering. But now when we say meditation, usually it is some methods of mental practices which come from Far East. In most cases there is some focusing and tranquilizing mind. And often the common points of various kinds of meditation are limited to this.*

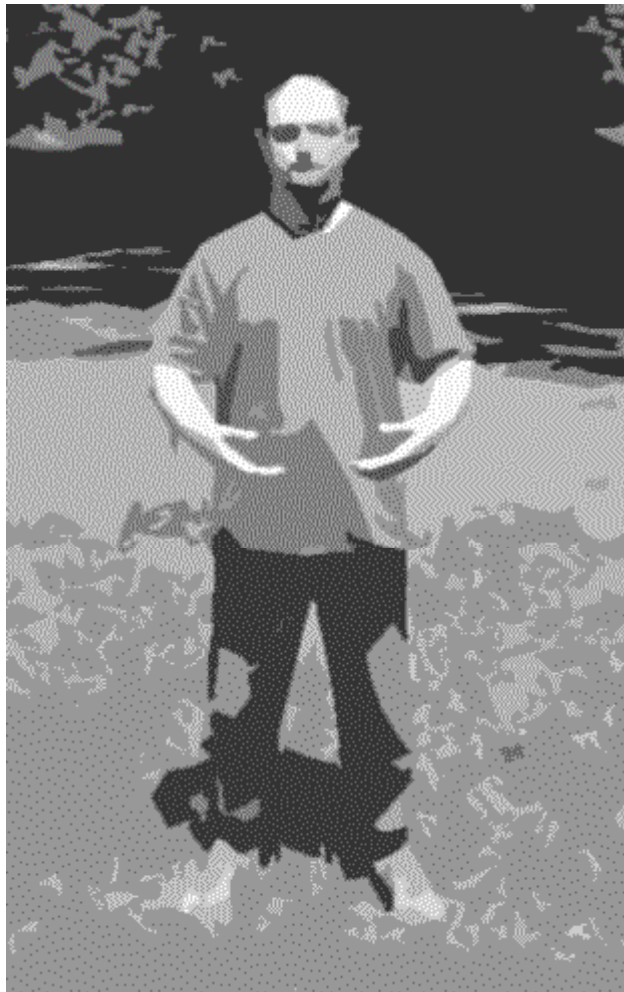
*These methods actually were developed in various circles, they are related to various philosophies and religions or sects inside those religions. There are different principles, different methods and different goals. Just using the word meditation doesn't explain everything.*

*Sometimes there are people who come to learn yiquan or zhan zhuang, they start working with tranquilizing and focusing mind, and learn other forms of mental practices of yiquan, and then they ask questions like: „Why don't we practice meditation? Even karate trainings start and finish with meditation. Why in yiquan we don't do meditation?“*

*Many readers will not believe that there could be people asking such absurd questions. Unfortunately there are really many people of this kind. This is really funny, that if you don't use the word meditation, when you don't actually tell people: “And now you start meditating”, they will not be able to notice that tranquility and focus are stressed all the time, that mind is engaged in all exercises. They are only occupied with use of some words which are presently in vogue.*

## Chapter IV

### BODY AWARENESS



Stand in natural position, with feet shoulder width apart and toes pointing slightly outward. Torso in straight, vertical position, knees slightly bent. Relax, try to keep pleasant, a bit joyful mood. This mood can be expressed by a slight smile. Mouth is slightly open, but you should breathe rather through nose. Upper and lower teeth are almost touching each other, but they should not be clenched. You can imagine that you are keeping some very thin piece of gum between your teeth, not using too much force. Tip of your tongue is behind your teeth, slightly curved toward palate.

Raise your arms, your palms at navel or lower abdomen level, insides of palms directed upward. Remember not to raise your shoulders. Elbows pointing outward, arms as if embracing some big ball, palms as if supporting it from below.



Keeping this position needs some more effort than if your arms are hanging loosely or are supported like in resting posture. But we are still talking about relax. Not about being completely loose, but rather about relaxation as eliminating tension and effort which is not necessary in a given situation.

Usually, when people hear about relax, they think about being completely loose. But you should realize that this is not the meaning of relax which is used in zhan zhuang method, or in taijiquan (tai chi). It doesn't mean being completely loose. In most cases this is kind of mental feeling of relax together with elimination of tension which is excessive in a given situation, which is not necessary or even could be harmful from point of view of doing some action.

To help with achieving the right state of relax, comfort and slight elastic force at the same time, you can use some images, mental suggestions, hints.

Imagine that you are so tall, that you are reaching ceiling with your head. You are touching the ceiling lightly with top of your head, not pressing too hard. While keeping this feeling, think that there is some elastic stick just below your buttocks, and you are as if lightly sitting on it. This pressure should be light, so the stick doesn't break. Because you are keeping the slight intention of touching ceiling with your head and as if trying to sit down at the same time, your body is naturally straight, and at the same time you feel stable. There should not be too much tension in it. Breathing should flow freely, naturally.

Your wrists and elbows are as if resting lightly on some props or maybe on balls floating on surface of water. Of course you will not be able to relax your arms to the extent which would be possible if those props or balls were really there, but this kind of imagination should be helpful in eliminating too much tension.

Imagine that you are embracing a big balloon inside your arms. You are keeping it lightly. Your arms should not be completely loose. Think that you can feel the elastic surface of the balloon (you probably had chance to keep a balloon or a big ball in your arms, so it should be easy to remember this kind of feeling, and evoke it in your body). If you press a bit too hard, the balloon will break, but if you relax too much, you will lose the feeling of slight elastic force.

Imagine that you are keeping two very small balloons under your armpits. Don't let them fly away, but also don't press too much, because they could break. So here there should be the same kind of light, comfortable, elastic force.

Imagine that you are keeping a balloon between your knees in exactly the same way.

Thanks to such images, suggestions, hints, it will be easier to achieve in all parts of your body the state of relax, which is not about being completely loose. Don't concentrate too much on one part. You can start from some parts, but you should try to develop this state and feeling in your whole body, as if your body was inside a big block of gum – you will feel elastic tension from each direction, and gradually you will start feeling your body as something elastic, as if it was one with this block of gum.



This state is related to some slight activation of all muscles (but the deeper layers of muscles, closer to bones are more engaged – hence the saying of “iron wrapped in cotton” in internal arts). This way you are avoiding too much tension, but at the same time the “structure” is not based only on skeleton, you are avoiding too much tension on the working surfaces of joints. You can feel some “relax of joints”. This is completely different from normal standing.

You can also try a sitting variant. Sit on edge of a chair, or deeper (you can lean against back of the chair). This posture is just a simple modification of standing version. Feet are still shoulder width apart, slightly pointing outward. Torso naturally straight. You should feel the same kind of comfortable relaxed force in your body. You can use the same images, as when practicing standing posture.



If you feel tiredness or pain in your shoulders, you can put your wrists on your thighs, and let your arms and shoulders relax more.

# SENSATIONS AND BODY REACTIONS

*Yiquan is about working simultaneously with mind and body. The coordination of mind and body is developed and improved through focus on perceiving body, perceiving strength and energy of movement. Apart from feelings important for the training process, other sensations and body reactions can appear too, while doing the exercises. They are not a goal or even a tool, they are only natural side effects, which appear usually at beginning stage of practice.*

*In zhan zhuang exercises stress is put on relaxation. But tiredness and some pain are something natural, especially at the beginning stage, when you are not accustomed with this kind of practice, and you are still not able to do the exercises properly. Gradually muscles work will change. You will learn using body structure in such a way, that strength (mainly related to opposing gravitation) is transferred through body in relatively comfortable way. You are eliminating unnecessary effort. This way you will avoid pain and too much tiredness.*

*Some typical phenomena (traditionally they were interpreted as changes in the flow of qi), which appear at first stage of practice are:*

- *Tingling, itching, numbing or swelling sensations in some parts of body,*
- *Feeling warm or cold,*
- *Rumbling in stomach, gases,*
- *Trembling or swaying of body (at beginning often related to excessive tension, then to the change of way of using muscles; at higher stage it changes in kind of subtle oscillation in all parts of body, when muscles system keeps some dynamic balance without effort),*
- *Difference in sensations of left and right side of body (eg. pain, swelling, warmth only on one side of body, feeling that one hand is higher and the other lower, while they are at the same level or feeling that they are at the same level, while actually they are not; these are mainly result of asymmetry of body, being used to use left and right side in different ways),*
- *Pain and other sensations in place of old injuries, operation scars, focuses of acute illnesses or organs chronically ill.*

*Most of the unpleasant sensations will disappear after some time of practice, and main sensation will be relax and comfort. But these unpleasant sensations will continue longer if you don't practice regularly. They might also appear again, when you move to next, more demanding exercises. You should not be afraid about them too much. They should not discourage you, they should not irritate you. You should treat them with calm, trying to keep relax, focus and pleasant mood. But if you have some doubts, it is advised to consult a doctor.*

*If you don't do anything opposing the principles of exercises, there shouldn't be risk of negative side effects. In zhan zhuang method you avoid trying too hard, forcing anything. Relax, calm, softness and subtlety are the basis. These exercises need patience. Progress will come gradually.*

*But there are some people, who are very tense, very anxious. Often they are too impatient. They are trying hard to make fast progress, to achieve highest levels of mastery immediately. This causes even bigger tension and anxiety. Such people need to be more "careless" about exercises. They should progress not faster than other students, but slower. In many cases more conventional forms of recreational activity (like playing ball, ping-pong, swimming, dancing, playing music etc.) will be more advisable for them and will help them to get rid of too much tension and anxiety.*

*Some people are too much fascinated by some of naturally appearing sensations and body reactions, and put too much attention to them. This way they forget about the essence and principles of exercises, and think about evoking and keeping such sensations (interpreted as feeling of qi), while the right attitude is not to care too much about them, not trying to evoke them, not trying to keep them.*

*Zhan zhuang is known as one of the safe methods of qigong (qigong in broad meaning), convenient for wide popularization. But you should realize that even the most safe exercises will not be such, if you do them in a way which goes against the principles and basic demands of the method and against common reason. Experienced instructor will easily notice when student's attitude makes his practice risky, and will react according to situation to correct him/her.*

## **Chapter V**

### **RELAX AND EFFORT**



Stand in the same posture as before, with your palms at lower abdomen level and arms as if embracing a big balloon. Then raise your arms until your palms will be at about shoulders level, arms still keeping the shape of embracing a balloon, insides of palms directed toward body.

Remember not to raise your shoulders. Elbows pointing outward and as if sinking at the same time. Your mind should be focused on your body, but not detached from outer environment. Body should be naturally relaxed, with feeling of light elastic force everywhere.



Distance between palms and body: about 1 foot. Elbows bent at angle about 90 degrees.

This exercise demands some more effort than the one described in previous chapter. But you are still trying to keep some relax, to remove tension which is not necessary in this situation. So this kind of practice can be described as: “resting while training, training while resting”.

Specific mixture of moderate effort together with mental focus (mind-body coordination) and deep feeling of relax is one of the most important elements making zhan zhuang method efficient as a means of therapy and cultivating health. These are also the common points of taijiquan and most qigong systems.



You can do sitting variant of this exercise. If you can use an armchair, sit comfortably, leaning against back of the armchair, making your legs more straight than previously, raising toes, so only your heels are on the ground. You could also do variant with your heels above ground.



This is possible to do similar exercise lying on a bed. Bend your knees. Soles of your feet can be placed on the bed, or you can raise toes. You will notice that a different angle of your knees bending will be felt as comfortable in those two situations. You can imagine that you are keeping a fragile balloon between your knees. Keep feeling of relax and light elastic force at the same time. Raise your arms in such way that they make a shape like in standing variant. Imagine that you are lightly embracing a balloon and your elbows are as if supported by some props. If this makes you tired, you can put your elbows on the bed. But you should still have the idea of embracing something with your arms.



# IN SEARCH OF HARMONY

*In zhan zhuang method relax doesn't mean being completely loose. Learning to relax means learning to eliminate unnecessary tension. You should remember that the actual goal is not just relax, but rather a kind of harmony. Harmony in stillness, harmony in slow movement, harmony in dynamic movement, harmony in any, even most complex situation in life, work, sports, when there are changes between stillness and movement, changes of speed of movement, and even changes of rhythm of those changes, and also various changes of the path of movement.*

*I hope that you are not seeking some illusions and ways to escape from real life, but that you would like to feel free and comfortable in various situations, being able to adapt even to sudden and surprising changes of situation. So the actual goal will not be just relax, but seeking this dynamic balance between relax and tension, learning how to adapt to changes.*

*In yiquan the static exercises are not a goal, but just a stage preparing for movement. Thanks to making situation as simple as possible, it is easier to work with very subtle aspects, which would not be easy to notice in movement, even if the movement would be relatively slow.*

*If you want to be able to keep harmony in movement, including situations of dynamic movement, when you need to change fast in reaction to sudden change of situation (and this often happens in life), if even then you want to be able to stay relatively relaxed, so you will be able to move swiftly like a cat, a tiger, like a mythical dragon, you should not think only about relax. This is very important not to be stiff, but at the same time you shouldn't be too loose.*

*The state which you will gradually achieve, will not be just standing, but standing and being ready to make movement in any direction. The state of relative relax is actually related to some slight activation of all muscles. Too much looseness will slow down your reactions, exactly like too much tension will cause the same result.*

*Yiquan founder used to say: "if relaxed, you should not be too loose, if tense, you should not be stiff". In such a state your body is relaxed, but with some feeling of "alive force" (huo li) – mind is relaxed and focused, you can feel comfort and vigor at the same time.*

*Depending on actual needs, you will focus more on relax or on being ready to act. Sometimes the exercises can help you to calm down, and sometimes to become more alert, sometimes they will allow you to rest and sometimes they will demand more effort. Seeking harmony will mean finding right proportions between more passive or more active ways of practice. There shouldn't be fixed ways, but the practice should be adapted to actual needs, changing conditions and actual results of practice.*

## Chapter VI

# DIRECTING STRENGTH





Stand in a natural position, as in exercises described before, keeping similar feeling of elastic force, but now imagine that you are standing in water up to your chest level (or between chest and stomach). Imagine that there is a wooden board floating on surface of water. Put your palms and forearms on this board. Imagine that no effort is needed to keep this position, because your arms are supported by the board floating on water. This way it will be easier to remove excessive tension. Shoulders should be relaxed as much as possible, elbows sinking and pointing outward at the same time. Your armpits half open, as if you kept some small balls or balloons under them. Try to keep the feeling of elastic strength everywhere, as in previous exercises, at the same time trying to keep the state of relax and comfort. Mind calm, focused on body, but not detached from surrounding environment. Breath is flowing freely.



When you feel that you made some progress with the most basic exercises, you can try to make next step. This kind of practice is known as **mo li** or **mo jin** – feeling force. Imagine that masses of water which are behind you are pushing your body forward. At the same time imagine that masses of water which are in front of you, create some resistance, trying to stop your body movement. At this time don't think that it is your force, or that you are resisting (this way it will be easier to avoid too much tension). Keep relax, but at the same time try to realize that there is some force working and meeting some resistance (of course it will be related to some slight activation of muscles). Breath should flow freely, without unnecessary control. Movement of your body should not be too big. All the time keep balance.

**Remember that this is not just visualizing, but using images, mental hints in order to evoke some body reactions and sensations related to it.**

Then imagine that water stops pushing you. Stand still, feeling in the same way as in previously described exercises. After a moment start thinking that masses of water which are in front you, now are pushing your body backward, and masses of water behind you are as if trying to stop this movement. Stop again, and after a moment start thinking about water pushing your body forward, the same way, as when you started this exercise. When water is pushing you from behind, your whole body is leaning slightly forward. When water is pushing you from front, your body is moving back to straight, vertical position. You will repeat these action many times. But think also about next elements, which will be described below.

When water is pushing your body from behind, and it is leaning slightly forward, at the same time your knees are straightening slightly. Your head is leading this movement upward and forward. You can imagine that there are springs between top of your head (or forehead) and heels of both feet, and that you are stretching these springs. You should feel resistance of the springs, but it shouldn't make you tense. And when water is pushing your body backward, you are as if sitting down, your knees bending slightly. Now you can imagine that there is some elastic stick, just below your buttocks, and you are sitting on it. It is bending, but at the same time creating some elastic resistance. This upward-downward force is important for creating the main forward and backward force.

Imagine that there are many springs placed horizontally between your both legs, at various levels. When sitting down, you are stretching all those springs, when standing up you are compressing them. However this movement should be very slight, this is only supplemental direction of force. Remember about keeping feeling of comfort, without tension or stiffness.

So, when water is pushing your body forward (you are meeting resistance of the masses of water in front of you), you are slightly leaning forward, at the same time slightly standing up (stretching springs between head and both heels) and there is also some idea of closing between both legs (as if slightly pressing springs between your legs). This way your body becomes more unified. There is summing up forces in all the main directions in three dimensional space.

When water is pushing your body backward (you are meeting resistance of the masses of water behind you), you are slightly sitting down (feeling resistance of elastic stick), and slightly stretching the springs between your legs.

When body is moving forward, there is also some very slight intention of turning legs inward, and when body is pushing backward, very slight intention of legs turning outward. This action should be related to sensation of meeting some resistance too.

At beginning perceiving all those directions of forces simultaneously may not be easy. But don't worry too much about it, just keep practicing patiently, finding some pleasure in feeling

things, and gradual deepening of ability of feeling it in your whole body at once. Don't think that there are so many elements. Talking about elements is only to make it more approachable at the very beginning stage. Actually all those elements should be seen as one thing, just natural parts of unity. Remember about keeping the feeling of relax and comfort.

To help a beginning person to concentrate on torso and legs, arms actions were omitted in above description. So now let's talk about arms. When your body is leaning slightly forward and overcoming resistance of water (remember about stretching springs between head and heels, and about compressing springs between your legs), your hands are moving the board floating on surface of water forward – of course there should be feeling of overcoming some resistance. When body is pushing backward (overcoming resistance of water), you are slightly sitting down (on an elastic stick) and slightly stretching springs between your both legs, at the same time you are pulling the board back toward your body – again as if overcoming some resistance.

When pushing the board forward, your body is slightly leaning forward. In result some pressing downward, as if trying to press the board under surface of water will become a natural action. You realize some resistance, when you are trying to do this. Imagine that there are also many springs placed horizontally between your both arms. When pushing forward, and slightly pressing down, at the same time there is some slight feeling of compressing the springs between your arms. Pushing forward is the main direction (you should have idea that this is the biggest force). Pressing down and inward are supplemental directions – these forces should be perceived as much smaller.

When pulling the board closer to your body, from the position of slightly leaning forward you are moving to vertical position. Forearms, which previously were pressing the board, now are as if trying to lift it. You can imagine that the board is tied to your forearms and at the same time is as if sticking to the surface of water, so you will feel that your action is meeting some resistance. This time you are stretching the springs between your both arms. Pulling back is the main direction, lifting and opening outward are supplementary directions, with idea of much smaller forces.

Remember about coordinating all above described movements. They are starting at the same moment and are stopping at the same moment. After completing movement in one direction, stop for a moment, check whether you are keeping the feeling of unity of your whole body, whether in some part of body there is not too much tension or too much looseness (it would mean losing the feeling of unity and elastic relaxed strength).

I have talked here about some movements, but actually this kind of practice should not be about moving, but it should be so called “seeking movement in non movement”. Starting from description of movement was to make understanding the way of coordinating whole body and directions of forces easier. But now, doing the same exercise, try to limit range of the

movements. Movement is starting, but the resistance is stopping it, so movement becomes very short. For example movement in main direction can be some 2-3 centimeters (about 1 inch) and in supplementary directions only 1 centimeter (1/3 of inch).

Remember that imagining and feeling resistance should not cause losing the feeling of relax and comfort. Breath should flow freely, naturally. At beginning it will be better to imagine that the active forces and forces of resistance are extremely small, close to zero. After some time of practice you will be able to work with idea and feeling of bigger forces, and this will not cause wrong tension (stiffness). But that needs some longer time of diligent practice.

Next stage will be making the movement still smaller, until it becomes actual „seeking movement in non movement”. Non movement, static posture, will be a basis. You are trying to start movement in some direction (remember about supplemental directions too), but at this moment the resistance is stopping your movement. So there is only the starting point of movement, without continuing it.

This is not just a static posture, but this is also not a typical movement. It is often described as relatively static exercise. There is no excessive tension (stiffness), but all muscles are slightly activated even before starting a try of “seeking movement”. When you are trying to start the movement, there appears only slightly bigger tension, and after a moment you come back to starting situation. This is also not a typical isometric exercise, where you would work with very big static tension. Here change of tension is small. All muscles are active, whole body is working, all organs are stimulated by moderate effort, and at the same time you are staying relaxed both physically and mentally, with your mind focused and cleared of distracting thoughts.

Relax and tension are relative concepts. Seeking the balance between them is something dynamic. You are gradually coming closer and closer to the right state. Lack of the right kind of tension will mean losing the feeling of force, strength. But when tension appears, doesn't it cause stiffness? If stiffness appears, relax is needed. But doesn't this relax cause too much looseness, losing the feeling of force? This is balancing on the border between opposites.

Thanks to making the form of movement extremely simple, working with situation of „almost no movement” or „one point of movement”, it is possible to realize the most subtle elements and aspects of body working, achieving very deep level of mind and body coordination.

This element of subtlety is also stressed in **tai chi** (t'ai chi ch'uan, taijiquan), where exercises are executed very slowly, to make it easier achieving this deep coordination – “unity of mind and body”. But although movements are done slowly, this is still quite complex situation, where consciousness of a beginning person is “slipping over” big parts of movement, without deeper experiencing this coordination and without being aware what's happening at each point of the movement. Thanks to making situation even simpler, the **zhan zhuang** method enables better focusing on what is important, and hence faster authentic progress.

**Zhan zhuang** exercises are also used in schools of authentic **tai chi** (taijiquan). However in taijiquan those exercises are not as much stressed as in **yiquan**.

# ON TAI CHI

*Taijiquan (t'ai chi ch'uan or in short tai chi) is the most popular of so called internal martial arts. Although legends say that it was created many centuries ago, most evidence suggests that under such a name it appeared not earlier than in 19<sup>th</sup> century (but of course there had to exist similar precursory systems before).*

*Taijiquan means fist of ultimate pole. Ultimate pole (taiji) is the primeval unity, which is born from formless wuji – without pole, and gives birth to yin and yang. The earliest meaning of the word taiji was: top of a roof – something which caused one side of the roof being exposed to sun (yang) and the other being in shadow (yin). The name taijiquan means that this martial art is based on concept of unity of contradictions – yin and yang supplementing each other.*

*Taijiquan forms, which should help to develop combat skills, at the same time can be classified as qigong exercises. Thanks to the principle of “mind is leading qi, qi is leading body movement”, which means that in practice each, even most subtle movement is following some mental image – intention, and is not done mechanically or automatically, taijiquan master can use his body with incredible precision.*

*Presently for most people taijiquan (tai chi) seems to be just a kind of exercise for health. But it is still practiced as a martial art too. Most popular styles are Yang, Chen, Wu, Wu(Hao) and Sun. Lately some other similar systems, earlier known by other names, but now called taijiquan (to use marketing potential of this name) are becoming known.*

*To most people Chen style taijiquan, with forms in which slow and fast movements are mixed, more than other taijiquan styles looks like a martial art. The most popular Yang style, where whole form in most cases is done slowly, is also practiced by many people as a martial art, but it evolved into many variants which are practiced only as health cultivating exercises.*

*This is really interesting that many taijiquan practitioners are discovering that they can achieve more health benefits while learning from those instructors who teach complete systems, than from those who do only the health variant. This is probably result of the fact that to be able to teach taijiquan as a martial art competently, you need to learn all its aspects very well. So in such a case the quality of teaching will be higher, even if some student wants to learn it only for health and not for self-defense. And in case of many instructors who are teaching tai chi for health, their knowledge of the system is too limited, which causes lower quality of teaching. In too many cases teaching only for health is just a convenient excuse for those who don't really know much.*

**Chinese characters**

**International transcription**

**Old English transcription**

太极拳

Taijiquan

T'ai chi ch'uan

## Chapter VII

### TESTING STRENGTH



The zhan zhuang method, thanks to working with extremely simple situation, enables deeper focusing on feeling your whole body and achieving more subtle level of coordination between mind and body, than if you only use moving exercises, even if the movement is slow, like in tai chi (taijiquan). But life is not about being motionless. In this method, which because of wide use of relatively static, standing postures is called zhan zhuang, actually we are using also sitting postures, lying on bed postures and moving exercises. Keeping static posture is not the goal. These relatively static exercises are actually designed to serve the goal of improving movement.

The exercise, which will be described below, actually was already in big part explained in previous chapter. Because before you could start “seeking movement in non movement” in right way, you had to get idea what kind of movement we are talking about, where is the main direction and where are the supplementary directions of forces and how they are coordinated. Now I will just supplement that description.



This kind of practice is called **shi li** – testing strength. It means testing whether in movement you are able to continuously keep the feeling of strength.

When you start this exercise, your body is in vertical position and most weight is put on your heels. This is called: 3 in front, 7 in back. Knees are slightly bent. Now you are starting the movement of pushing with your whole body forward (whole body is slightly leaning forward), some standing up (as if stretching springs between head and both heels) and slight closing between legs (as if lightly compressing springs placed horizontally between your legs). Stop all those movement at the same moment, when most of weight is on balls of your feet (7 in front, 3 in back). Take care to keep the feeling of meeting resistance and



overcoming it with your body all the time, at each point of the movement and in all parts of your body simultaneously. At the same time you should not lose the feeling of relax and comfort.

When you are starting the above described movement, your elbows are bent at angle of about 90 degrees. Then your body is pushing forward and your arms are straightening gradually (but not to position of being completely straight – your elbows should remain slightly bent – angle of about 150-170 degrees). Your hands should start pushing exactly at the same moment when your body starts movement. Both movements should also stop at the same moment. Of course when you are doing this movement (“pushing a wooden board, which is floating on surface of water”), you should imagine and try to feel that you are overcoming some resistance. When pushing forward, you are slightly pressing down, as if trying to move the wooden board under water, and pressing inward, as if trying to compress springs placed horizontally between your both arms.



Then from the leaning forward (front 7, back 3) position you are slowly moving back to the straight vertical position (front 3, back 7). At the same time you are slightly sitting down, as if overcoming resistance of elastic stick under your buttocks. You should also feel as if there were some springs between your both legs and as if you were stretching them.

At the same time you are pulling the board toward your body, as if trying to lift it, and as if stretching springs between your both arms. When body stops movement, elbows should not bend anymore. The angle at your elbows should be about 90 degrees.

You can also imagine, as if between your fingers and a tree or a wall far in front of you there were springs. When you are moving the board forward, you are compressing those springs with your fingers. When pulling the board closer to your body, imagine that you are stretching the springs and try to feel resistance created by those springs. When pulling back, the force is horizontal. But when pushing forward, your fingers start pointing slightly upward, with intention of force directed diagonally forward and upward. However your arms should not move upward. Remember about pressing down – trying to move the wooden board under surface of water.

While pulling back, fingers of both palms are starting pointing to each other. When pushing forward, they become directed forward again. When finishing the movement of pulling back, imagine as if you were embracing a balloon, which makes further backward movement impossible. Your arms make a shape similar as in exercise which was described in 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, only now insides of your palms are pointing downward.

Remember that all those elements of exercise, which were described above, should be coordinated. You should be aware of the whole. You should see all of this as one thing. Practice slowly, very carefully, noticing whether at any moment in your whole body – all its parts, you can keep the feeling of strength, being aware how it works, in which direction, where is the main direction, and where are supplementary directions. At the same time keep relax and feeling of comfort.

Breath naturally, freely and slowly. In this kind of exercises there is no need to coordinate inhaling or exhaling with direction of movement. Just let your breath flow freely, without disturbance.

If you will notice that it is very difficult for you to relax while doing this kind of exercise, concentrate rather on the more basic exercises, which put the main stress on relaxation, or while doing the moving exercise, give up trying to feel overcoming resistance, and focus on feeling relax, especially at your joints. Or try to work with extremely slight and subtle feeling of elastic resistance, as if you were playing with soap bubbles.

But remember that zhan zhuang method should not only teach you relaxing, but rather should be a way of seeking harmony, economy and efficiency of acting, dynamic balance between relax and tension, resting and effort. This is what can give you much more benefit.

# ON INTERNAL ARTS

*Usually the Chinese martial arts are being divided into two groups: external – waijia and internal – neijia. Most systems are classified as external and only very few as internal.*

*At beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century a group of xingyiquan, baguazhang and taijiquan experts in Beijing decided that these arts had some common points, the same core principles, and started classifying them as one family – internal family (neijia). So when we talk about internal arts, it usually means those 3 systems. There is also no doubt about classifying liuhebafaquan as an internal art. Yiquan is quite often classified as internal art too, because it was developed on basis of xingyiquan. But yiquan's founder – Wang Xiangzhai didn't care much about this classification.*

*Simplifying the issue, we could say that external styles concentrate more on typical physical training and more typical use of force, while internal styles concentrate more on working with mind-body coordination and specific way of generating power with use of whole, relatively relaxed body. Traditional theories say about “using strength of bones and tendons”. The basic concept is nei jin – internal strength. It should be noted, that when in relation to internal martial arts the term internal strength is used, in Chinese it is nei jin, and not qi. Not distinguishing between these two concepts can lead to many misunderstandings.*

*Division of external – waijia and internal – neijia families is not the same as dividing training methods into external exercises – waigong and internal exercises – neigong. Because in most Chinese martial arts classified as external, neigong – internal exercises are used.*

*Apart from taijiquan (tai chi), also baguazhang (pakua chang) and xingyiquan (hsing-i ch'uan) are famous systems of internal family. Although there are clear differences in ways of practice, forms of these systems, alike taijiquan forms, can be classified as qigong exercises. Very characteristic is putting stress on mind, intention and stressing deep level of external and internal harmony. The internal harmony means perfect coordination between mind activity and use of body. Traditional theories describe this as three internal harmonies: between heart and mind (heart being the aspect of mind, where thoughts are initiated), between mind and qi, and between qi and physical strength.*

*Although the training methods of baguazhang and xingyiquan are also used as exercises for cultivating health, these systems more often than taijiquan (proportionally to number of people practicing those arts) are taught as complete martial arts.*

*Baguazhang means palm of eight trigrams – it is related to concept of continuous changes coming from the “Book of changes” (Yijing – I-ching). Baguazhang has circular, flowing*

*movements and swift steps in various directions. Cheng and Yin are most popular styles of baguazhang.*

*Xingyiquan means fist of form and intention. The name explains that the system stressed unity of mind and body. Xingyiquan, with its simple violent basic movements, may seem to be crude and not so much refined, but actually at higher level it is as subtle as baguazhang or taijiquan.*

*Yiquan comes from xingyiquan and is sometimes described as natural school of xingyiquan. Like xingyiquan, yiquan puts stress on mind and body coordination. Especially the mental work is stressed, to avoid focusing too much on external form and neglecting mind. This is why the part xing (form) was removed from the name of this system. Although yiquan has roots in xingyiquan, it was also inspired by baguazhang and taijiquan.*

*Yiquan stresses scientific attitude and continuously developing the system. Hence yiquan training methods can be accepted by those who are put off by some difficult to understand, concepts of traditional Chinese martial arts. In yiquan, we think that traditional concepts and methods should be verified and reinterpreted. Following development of science, the system should be modernized continuously, but in such a way that it doesn't lose what was valuable in traditional methods.*

*Yiquan contains many various training methods, from static postures, through slow movements, to dynamic, explosive movements. Thanks to this, its methods can be used by people with different needs and of various condition. The basic methods of yiquan, used for cultivating health or as medical therapy are called zhan zhuang or zhan zhuang qigong.*

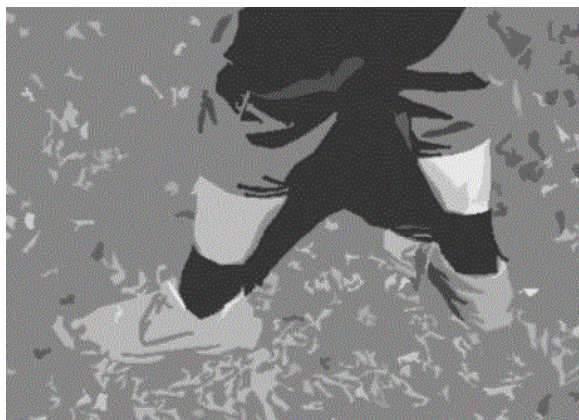
Chinese characters	International transcription	Old English transcription
内家	Neijia	Nei-chia
外家	Waijia	Wai-chia
内劲	Nei jin	Nei-chin
八卦掌	Baguazhang	Pa-kua chang
形意拳	Xingyiquan	Hsing-i ch'uan

## Chapter VIII

### MORE ON TESTING STRENGTH



The simplest exercises are done in a position with feet shoulder width apart and weight evenly distributed on both feet. This is called pingbu. On next stage, we do most exercises in a position which is called dingbabu.



Now you will try to do the same shi li exercise which was described in previous chapter, but in dingbabu position.

For a moment you can forget about hands movement and focus on legs and torso. Stand in dingbabu position, with weight mostly on back leg (front 3, back 7).

**Your torso is now not in frontal, but slightly diagonal position. While doing this exercise, there is no rotation around vertical axis.**

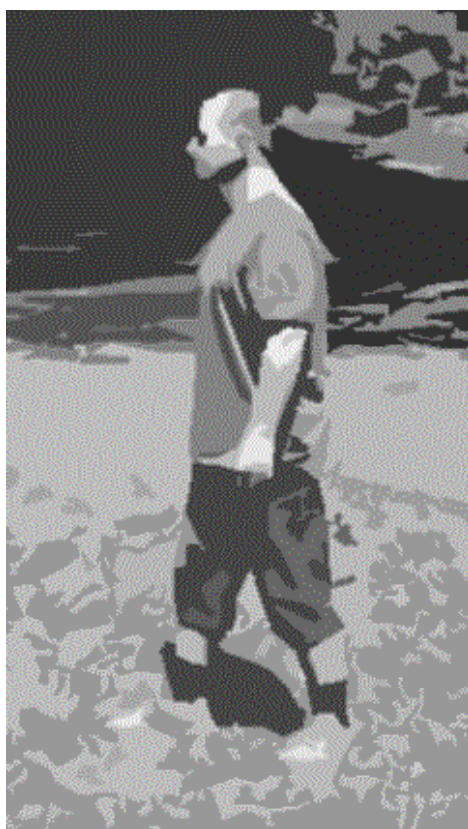




In pingbu position your body was pushing forward, slightly leaning forward, with some standing up (stretching springs between head and both heels). This is very similar in dingbabu position, but now it is only about one of legs (the rear one). Body is leaning and pushing forward, rear leg is straightening, there is feeling as if stretching spring between head and heel of rear foot.

When doing this movement, take care that shank of front leg is not changing position and front knee is not moving forward (but front knee is somewhat straightening). You can imagine as if your front leg was buried in ground, to the level just below your knee.

You should feel that while doing the movement, ball of your front foot is pressing more and more on the ground. Stop the movement, when distribution of weight is 50/50 (front 5, back 5).

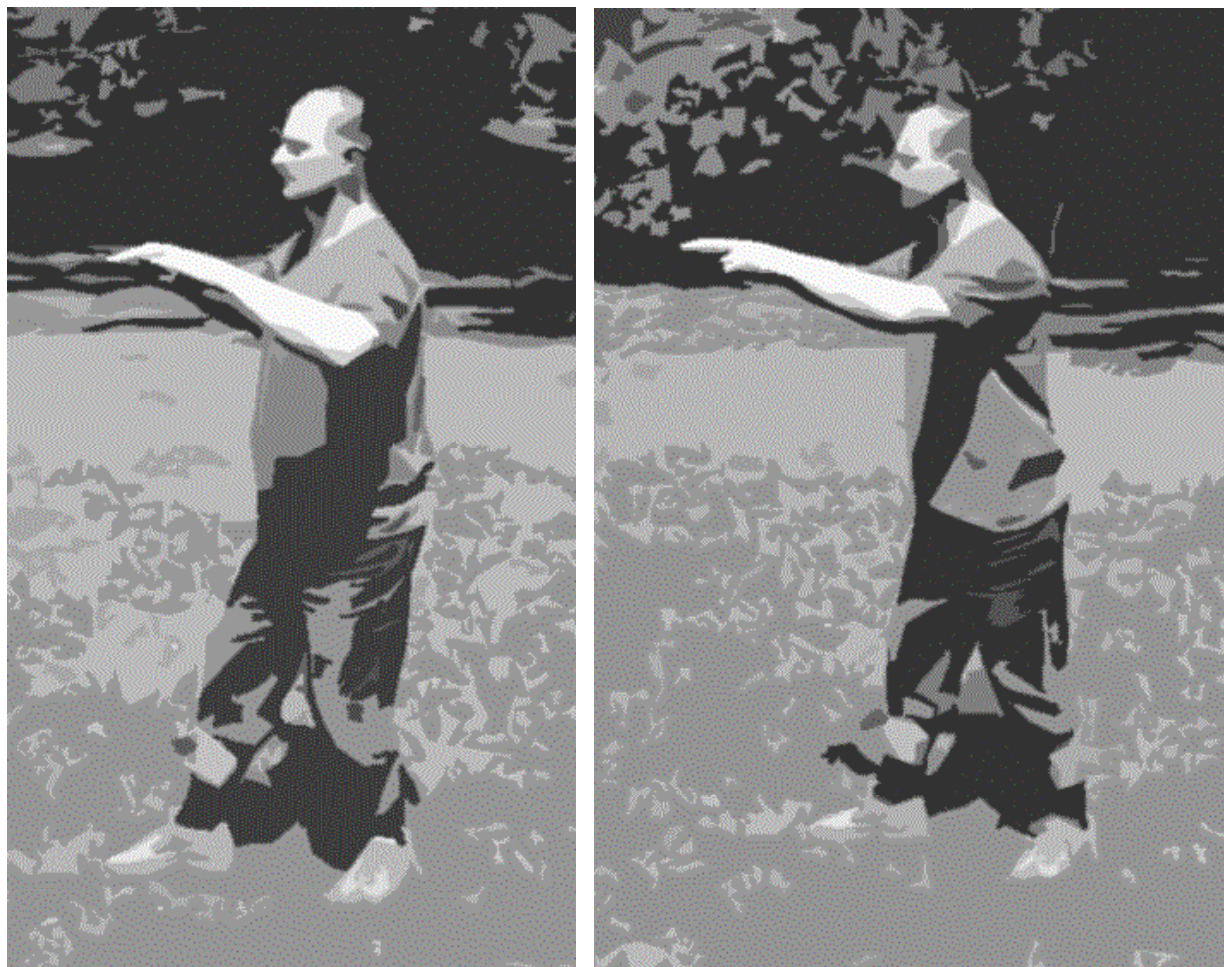


Then body is pushing backward, moving again to vertical position. At the same time rear leg is bending, as if you were sitting down (overcoming resistance of an elastic stick below your buttocks). Ball and toes of front foot are pressing and pushing against ground. Imagine that you are stretching a spring between head and toes of front foot. Knee of front leg should not move back (it is only bending). The final position is the same as starting position (front 3, back 7).



While doing forward movement, there should be idea of compressing springs between your both legs, and while doing backward movement, idea of stretching them – exactly like when you do shi li in pingbu position.

Now doing the above described action, add also hands movements which were described in 7<sup>th</sup> chapter. Because your torso is in slightly diagonal position, one palm is a bit more to the front than the other (the difference of about fingers length).



At beginning you must practice slowly, carefully, remembering about trying to feel the force (overcoming resistance) at each point of the movement, and about trying to keep relax at the same time. When it will not be difficult for you anymore, you can move to next stage, which is called “seeking non movement in movement”. This is not just slow movement. You are doing the movement, keeping the feeling of strength, but at each point of this movement you should be ready to stop it. So actually there will appear some slight vibration – continuous oscillation between states of relax and some slight tension.

All described images (springs, elastic stick etc.) are only a tool which should help you to develop right perception of body and strength and proper reactions. What is important here is not visualizing, but using some images, suggestions, hints, in order to develop right feeling, clear perception of body, movement and strength. A teacher will help you to verify your progress. You will also be gradually able to estimate your progress better, when you actually make progress and learn more advanced training methods and you understand how they are related to those basic ones.

# QI – MAGIC POWER?

*According to written sources, the concept of qi (ch'i, ki), as the primeval subtle matter being basis of everything, was developed during Springs and Autumns period (722-481 BC). It had become one of the main ideas used in all branches of traditional Chinese science.*

*Seeing it from one side, philosophically, mystically, you can see qi as a basis of everything. From the other side, in practical use in various fields, in various branches of traditional science, the concept can have various meanings. We should not approach this issue with too naive attitude, without seeing it in various contexts.*

*Some people see qi as a kind of magic power. They think that this is some specific kind of energy or subtle, ethereal matter with unusual properties, and if they will be able to master controlling it (thanks to learning qigong), many miraculous abilities and skills will become available for them. This is quite naive view. Actually the concept of qi is not very precise, and it has very wide range of use, like modern concept of energy. We should not see it too simply. As we can discuss various kinds of energy, the classical Chinese theories say about various kinds of qi. The concept of qi is used not only by doctors of Traditional Chinese Medicine, qigong masters and martial arts experts, but it is also used in traditional arts theory and actually in any branch of classical Chinese science and culture. Of course it has a bit different meaning in each of those contexts.*

*Let's have a look at one example. We often speak about power or energy of expression of a poem. But nobody thinks about using this energy to propel a car with combustion engine. However people who don't know about Chinese culture and science, whenever they see the word qi used, they immediately jump to conclusions similar to this propelling a car with energy of artistic expression. This is because they don't realize how the meaning of the concept of qi changes with change of context.*

*For example there is the concept of qi developed in the context of traditional Chinese medicine. This is a whole complex of medical theories, where this idea is used. There is some common field between those theories and the use of the qi concept in qigong. However in qigong there are some more subjective elements, related to feeling, to perception, which are also described with the word qi.*

*Qigong exercises are widely used in Chinese martial arts. In internal systems training methods similar to qigong had became the basis of practice. So we can find there some elements directly related to the basics of Chinese medicine, and also some subjective elements which are specific for qigong. But in martial arts we have next specific elements - expression of fighting spirit, expression of movement related to characteristics of animals and phenomena of nature, perception and expression of physical power. The concept of qi is used*

*also when we are talking about these aspects. And of course there is also issue of body mechanics. Centuries of experience made possible developing principles and training methods which enable very efficient use of body.*

*But in old times the Chinese could not use such kind of theoretical apparatus, which would enable simple relating some theoretical concepts to various practical issues in the way, as we can use for example the principle of leverage, when explaining working of a heavy industry crane and working of human body. The only possibility was to transmit some achievements through direct teaching and correction during the training process. Many things were described by using the concept of qi. However those specific descriptions very often couldn't help much with relating some principles to other fields. In various schools similar phenomena could be described in various ways, although many people would think that it shouldn't be so, if seemingly common concepts were used. So we should be aware that it just wasn't exactly the same kind of concepts as we use in modern science. Realizing this is very important in order to avoid too many misinterpretations. We should know, that one of many aspects of the concept of qi is what we call mechanics, and when using old theories, this aspect couldn't be explained in such a way, that it would be easy to use the same theory for something else than what was described. It just wasn't this kind of scientific theory.*

*Now some people tend to just put concepts of modern science and those of traditional Chinese science together, not realizing that they are not consistent with each other. In many cases, when the traditional theory aims at explaining something related to what we call mechanics, these people will not be able to understand and appreciate the actual transmission of neijia masters, concentrating on empty slogans and thinking that if word qi was used, it for sure must be something outside mechanics.*

*Some reason for misunderstandings being so common is that actually in traditional Chinese internal arts all those aspects are in some way interrelated. In the same exercise and its description, when the concept of qi is used, we can often find elements which are related to traditional Chinese medicine, to subjective perception and to mechanics at the same time. It makes people think of qi as one homogenous thing, not seeing various aspects of it. In result learning what masters of internal arts actually transmitted becomes very difficult for them.*

*The issue of developing supernatural abilities is also related to qigong. Some people believe in those abilities, and other do not. But this is not important. First of all we should realize, that there is not very direct relation like qigong = supernatural abilities. Various kinds of qigong have various goals, theories and characteristics. The concept of qi in theories of various qigong schools is not used in exactly the same way. Those who know more on this subject will not say that qi = magic powers.*

*And still much bigger misunderstanding is thinking about direct link between internal martial arts and supernatural powers. This is not the actual transmission of skills characteristic for*

*neijia. Those who are looking for this in neijia are on quite wrong path. They are trying to find something else than those systems actually offer, and they neglect what is really there, what is the core of neijia. In result they are not able to make much progress. Their knowledge of neijia is limited to fantastic speculations. And the view that qi = magic powers is really at basis of those misunderstandings.*

*So we should realize, that the concept of qi has aspect of mystical unity. This is something like unified theory of everything. But in fact there is nothing practical in it. This is nothing more than just assuming that some unity is at basis of everything. But this is not the actual Chinese medical science, qigong or neijia.*

*Science means differentiating. This is not only about western science, modern science, but also about classical Chinese science. We should realize this to avoid approaching the offer of traditional Chinese science and philosophy with too much naivety.*

*Western science and traditional Chinese science are two different systems, two paradigms. We should not take out some element of one and try to fit it mechanically into the other. Most of the educated people realize what differences there are between various languages. That meaning of similar concepts in various languages is not exactly the same. That sometimes long description in one language is necessary, while in some other language only one word is needed to express the same. When we know this, avoiding too many misunderstandings, when talking about classical Chinese science, will be easier. New valuable things are often created thanks to contact between various traditions. But deep understanding of both sides is important. Only then avoiding the kind of misunderstandings which are now often related to neijia will be possible.*

*Yiquan was created by a Chinese, in China, on basis of classical internal art of xingyiquan. But impact of the culture and science of the West was important impulse for its development. This western influence resulted in some critical attitude toward the tradition. Yiquan appeared when the East and the West met. The concepts and methods were verified and improved. And this is being continued, because the basic idea of quanxue (science of fist, as Wang Xiangzhai used to call it) is that there is no limit for the development of the science, of course also the science of martial art.*

*Wang Xiangzhai was using the concept of qi in early period, when he wrote "The right path of Yiquan". But in later book "Central pivot of the way of fist" (also known as "Theory of dachengquan"), representative for more mature version of yiquan, he did not use this and many other traditional concepts anymore. Gradually a new system of concepts and methods, which is more approachable by modern people and which can be easier interpreted from the point of view of modern science, was developed. The basic idea was, that while concepts and methods were changed, the actual values of traditional systems should not be lost, but preserved and taken to a new, higher plane. Although the concept of qi was removed, but*

*what was important behind it, in the context specific for martial arts, including internal arts, was preserved. We are just trying to express the theory in a way which doesn't lead to so many misunderstandings.*

**Chinese characters**

**International transcription**

**Old English transcription**



Qi

Ch'i

## Chapter IX

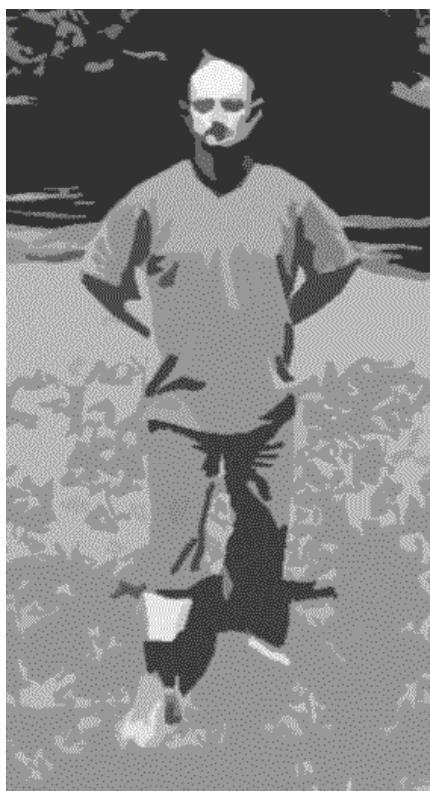
### FRICTION STEPS





The steps exercises which are done in the same way as shi li are called moca bu – friction steps. It is said that moca bu is shi li for legs.

Stand in dingbabu position, but in such a way, that your torso is placed frontally in relation to the main direction of movement and your feet are standing on a line placed diagonally in relation to the main line of movement. Weight is mostly on rear leg (front 3, back 7). Put your both wrists on your hips or buttocks as in the resting posture. Basic intention and feelings should be similar as in static exercises. Keep the state of relax, and at the same time feeling of some elastic strength in your whole body.



Start from shifting your weight slowly onto front leg. The movement and feelings are very much like those in shi li exercise in dingbabu position. Rear foot is pushing ground (with some tendency to press with ball of your foot – ankle joint is working like a spring), rear leg is slowly straightening (remember not to straighten it completely), head is leading upward and forward. You should feel as if you were stretching a spring between your head and heel of your rear foot. Body is slightly leaning and is pushing forward. You should feel as if moving in water or some thicker liquid, overcoming resistance.

Unlike in shi li exercises in dingbabu position, here you will not finish the movement in front 5, back 5 position, but you will continue it, until most of weight is on front leg. This is called front 7, back 3. Actually more than 70% of weight is on front leg.

When you are doing this movement, you should feel that front foot is more and more pressing on the ground. Heel, which at beginning is slightly lifted, is gradually moving down on ground. But there still should be tendency to accent pressing more with ball and toes. You should feel as if compressing springs between both legs. Knee is moving slightly, but this movement meets some limiting resistance.

When you finish this stage of movement, heel of rear foot is raising slightly (becoming “empty”), you are still pressing ground with ball and toes of rear foot, until weight is shifted completely on front leg. Then lift rear foot. Although heel raises earlier than rest of the foot, remember not to lift your heel too high. Imagine that your foot is in a shoe without laces, and the shoe is in mud. You want to pull your foot together with the shoe out of the mud. If you lift your heel too high, you will pull your foot out, but the shoe will remain in the mud.





Then pull that foot toward the other foot.



Remember to keep feeling of overcoming resistance all the time. It is as if you were moving in water or in mud. Head is as if „supporting ceiling”, and your hips and buttocks are as if sinking and “sitting down”.

Now move this foot forward (remember not to straighten your knee completely).





After moving forward, move the foot and leg to the side. While moving your foot slightly above ground, you should have idea and feeling as if your foot and whole leg were moving in water or some thicker liquid, which is creating resistance. Think that your whole body is in water or other liquid. When you are moving your foot above ground, your whole body is pushing forward, all the time overcoming resistance. Also when you move your leg and foot to the side, your body should still push forward – so at that time your leg is not only moving to the side, but simultaneously pushing forward. On your leg you should feel resistance from side and from front.



Then step down, putting toes and ball of your foot on ground (heel “empty”) and shift some small part of weight on it (front 3, back 7), as if pressing it into mud.

After this, start shifting weight onto front leg, in the same way as it was described above.



Moca bu should be done in the same way as shi li – slowly, carefully, so at each point of movement you can check if you are keeping feeling of relaxed strength. You can imagine that you are moving on ground with many unstable plates or on floor with old, rotten boards. So you must be very careful and alert, being ready to react if it turns out that the ground is not stable or firm enough.

I only described forward steps here. Of course this exercise is done also with backward steps. Actually basics needed for moving in any direction are included in moca bu exercises. After some time, when you understand the principles, you can move to free steps practice.

# ON PHILOSOPHY

*Zhan zhuang and yiquan are based on the valuable achievements of classical Chinese culture and science. Stress is put on self-improvement, seeking harmony, working with mind and body simultaneously. A practitioner can gradually better and better understand the concepts related to Taoism or Chan (Zen) Buddhism, getting the right idea what for example Taoist monks were actually talking about when describing their practices with use of traditional concepts.*

*It should be clear, that by teaching zhan zhuang and yiquan we want to offer something valuable to normal people. To people who were educated in environment of certain culture, who have their own views and religion.*

*Eastern forms of exercises or martial arts can offer the people of the West something which can be used by them. But these systems should not be seen as kinds of religion. These methods and systems were not seen as a religion in their original environment. They were practiced by people of various beliefs and views, including Taoist and Buddhist monks.*

*But even for the Buddhist or Taoist monks these exercise systems were not their actual religions. It was only a part of their life and religious practices. Of course it had to be related on the plane of theoretical basis to principles of their religion. Some of these practices were designed to help to achieve the goals of spiritual development. But some other concentrated more on cultivating health. Health was seen as something necessary for someone who had to engage in many years intensive spiritual pursuit.*

*Some monks, both Buddhist and Taoist, practiced also martial arts. In some historical periods it was necessary. Sometimes they had to defend temples against robbers (in some periods the temples had accumulated a lot of wealth) or fight for existence in periods of persecutions. Monks transporting some relics from one temple to another were always in risk of being assaulted. On the other hand, after some wars or uprisings, very often those from the defeated side had to escape and hide, and some of them found their refuge in temples, becoming monks, or pretending to be monks.*

*The martial arts practiced in the temples, were of course based on some theories consistent with principles of religion. There occurred some mixing of the methods for spiritual development and health practices with martial arts training. But health practices or martial arts were only a small part of something bigger. Of course they were not in contradiction with the basic principles of spiritual development of certain religion. But despite conformity with more general concepts and rules of the spiritual practices, health practices and martial arts as such were not seen by the monks as the actual way of spiritual development, as an autonomous method leading to highest spiritual achievements.*



*You should be aware of this, if you want to use in reasonable way what qigong, taijiquan, yiquan or other Chinese systems offer. You should not seek goals founded only on some false premises being result of gossip, movie fiction or dishonest marketing.*

*So if you want to learn, to develop, to improve, qigong, taijiquan, zhan zhuang or yiquan can offer you something valuable. You will train mind and body, you will improve character, you will learn to know yourself. Many concepts of Taoism and Buddhism will become easier to understand for you. But you should not see qigong or martial arts as your new religion, something which would give you answers to all questions and would solve all problems. If you will look after this in qigong or martial arts, you could easily become a prey for some dangerous sects.*

# Chapter X

## THERAPY



For those practicing internal martial arts it used to be obvious that practicing them could improve health and help to stay healthy until old age. At beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century in China, when popularity of taijiquan (tai chi) was growing, these benefits became known to more people. As for yiquan, this aspect of training started attracting more people in 1940s. In 1950s some stress on this side of yiquan helped to popularize basic training methods more widely. Yiquan founder Wang Xiangzhai was able to make living by working as a teacher of zhan zhuang method in hospitals in Beijing and later in Baoding. His student Yu Yongnian made some preliminary research and tests which confirmed therapeutic value of this method and helped to make it accepted by medical circles in China. Wang Xiangzhai's daughter – Wang Yufang became especially famous as a representative of the zhan zhuang method of yiquan, helping many people to get rid of health problems. This health cultivating aspect is also important in the teachings of schools which offer studying yiquan as a complete system.

People with various chronic illnesses often come to the so called consultation stations (fudaozhan) in many parks in many cities in China, where they can learn and practice methods like zhan zhuang, shi li, moca bu. Often, when their health improves, they start learning also the more advanced methods of yiquan.

In hospitals, those who are not able to do other forms of exercises, or even to walk, can start from doing the lying on bed postures, sitting postures, gradually, when their health improves and body strengthens, moving to half supported standing postures, normal standing postures and other forms of practice.

At the first stage stress is put on static exercises, especially in standing position, hence common calling this therapy **zhan zhuang**. But according to needs, also lying on bed, sitting and half supported postures and moving exercises are used.

This method doesn't focus on treating one part. It is based on influencing the whole, trying to restore some kind of harmony, using natural body forces to improve health. Exercises are adjusted according to specific situation of a patient. But it doesn't mean that some posture is a tool to treat specific illness, that the posture has therapeutic properties "assigned" to specific health problem. Wang Xiangzhai himself stressed that such a view comes from a misunderstanding. Thanks to many years of practice he was able to tell which postures are usually more often used for people with some illnesses, but it is not the same as assigning specific therapeutic properties to specific posture.

Right using and adjusting zhan zhuang exercises, according to patient's situation needs a lot of experience in using this kind of therapy and is related to modifying exercises and way of executing them according to actual patient's reaction, the changes of his state and his sensations. I will only give a few very simple examples here, to make it easier to understand the perspective on which this kind of adjusting exercises according to needs is based.

For beginners these exercises can be exhausting, so time of practice is rather short. But someone who practices already for some longer time will make practice sessions longer, without feeling tiredness. Beginner will use less demanding postures, advanced practitioner can focus on some more intensive exercises (e.g. lower postures).

Someone weak (for example because of illness) will practice for shorter time at one session and will use less demanding exercises, and when his/her health improves and body strengthens, he/she can practice longer and use more intensive exercises.

People seriously ill sometimes are not able to do standing practice, so depending on their condition they can use half supported postures, sitting postures or in some cases only lying on bed postures.

Some health problems or injuries may make it impossible to practice some specific postures. So choosing appropriate posture or modifying a standard posture may be needed.

# HOW DOES IT WORK?

*In China there are many various forms of exercises known by a common name of qigong. They are based on various concepts and use various methods, putting stress on different elements, seen in a certain methods as crucial for achieving positive results. But it can be noticed that despite this great diversity, the achieved results are in most cases very similar. It makes you think what really decides that these methods are efficient, which elements are really important and which are not?*

*Common element characteristic for almost all qigong methods (also for taijiquan), which are used for cultivating health, is mixing together some mental focus (attention is naturally, without forcing it, focused on body – element of mind and body coordination), some kind of relax and some moderate effort. Even very simple methods, if they contain right mixture of these three elements, can bring positive results. Hence growing popularity of the quite simple zhan zhuang method, which is part of yiquan.*

*In yiquan and zhan zhuang method we don't use classical concepts, which could not be easily understood and accepted by contemporary people. We don't talk about certain points or channels (those which are used in acupuncture). There is no need to use the term qi. Thanks to this, these exercises are perfect offer for people who are not too much convinced by traditional Chinese theories and concepts.*

*Zhan zhuang method, alike other, more complex forms of qigong, is based on seeing a human being as a unity, where all elements are interrelated and interdependent. The basic assumption is that there is some kind of harmony, which should be guarded, as disturbing and destroying the natural harmony causes negative effects. When illness appears, you should think not only about treating the ill part, but you should try to affect the whole in a way which leads to regaining the harmony. Body has some ability of resistance against pathological factors, and of self regulating which to some extent enables regaining the state of health. The exercises should help to strengthen and maintain this natural ability.*

*When yiquan and zhan zhuang will become more popular all over the world, there will be more possibility of scientific research, which will allow to learn more about these exercises, and use them even more efficiently. Here I will only point to some aspects, noticed by Chinese experts.*

*Cerebral cortex is controlling the whole nervous system, directing and coordinating functions of all organs. Excessive activation and in result exhaustion of parts of cerebral cortex will lead to disorder. Various functions of body will suffer, which often leads to pathological changes. And the illness or disorders of functioning of some organs are source of signals, which can cause even greater disorder of functioning of cerebral cortex. Meditation,*

*taijiquan, qigong, zhan zhuang help to break this cycle. They let the cerebral cortex rest and regain efficient functioning.*

*While doing zhan zhuang or shi li exercises, your breath should be slow, deep, natural, flowing freely. There is no stress on controlling breathing. But observing other demands of exercises (e.g. keeping arms in certain position, together with relax and free breathing) will cause breathing naturally become more abdominal, without artificial limiting natural functions of the chest.*

*When you do standing exercises, oxygen consumption increases, and breathing responds naturally to this demand – at beginning it becomes faster and slightly deeper, then slower but at the same time much deeper. This should not be artificially controlled.*

*Stress is put on relaxing whole body, which helps improving blood circulation. In case of standing postures, there is some moderate effort, which causes some increase of the rate of pulse. After finishing the exercise, the pulse rate is not dropping immediately. There is no sudden expansion of the right atrium, which happens when you suddenly stop typical intensive kinds of training.*

*While doing sitting or lying on bed postures, oxygen consumption is usually decreasing. Breathing is still deep, but much slower. But in case of some very weak people, some variants of those postures can be intensive enough to cause effects usually typical for standing postures.*

*Deep breathing helps in improving blood transportation (blood circulation is result not only of the heart working, but breathing and body movements, especially legs movements, do also play important role) and creates massaging effect on internal organs. Rhythm of calm breathing is also a positive factor stimulating nervous system.*

## Chapter XI

### BEYOND BASICS



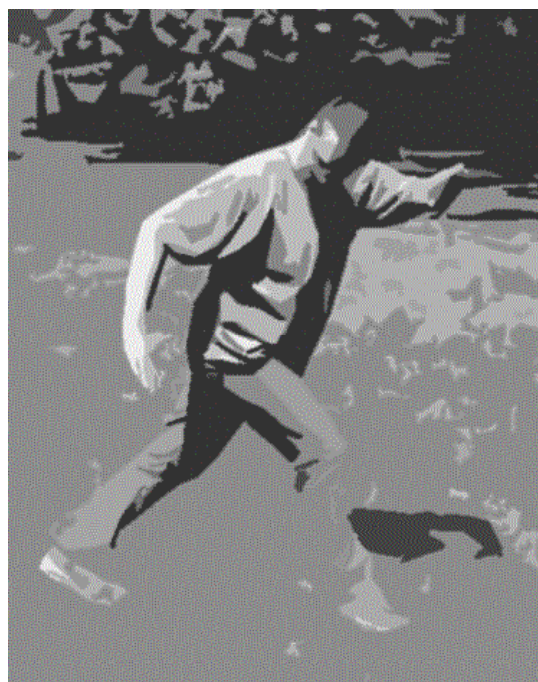


In this small book I have only introduced a few examples of exercises from which beginners start their study. If you want to study the complete system, fully enjoying what it offers, you will learn next training methods, you will gradually better and better understand relation between them, the deep principles of the system and you will be able to use it to develop abilities useful in various fields of human activity.

In zhan zhuang you will work with various situations of “relative non movement”, you will try to feel strength in basic directions and then keeping this feeling while changing directions. You will develop and deepen the feeling of unified strength – in whole body and in all directions. This will be a state of alertness and being ready to act, using any part of your body.

Doing basic zhan zhuang exercises you will gradually come closer and closer to the state which the yiquan founder Wang Xiangzhai described:

*“As if you were floating in the air. You start experiencing strength and start learning testing it. In your whole body there is a balanced expanding force, All surfaces are diagonal. You feel as if standing on a cloud floating in the air, Your breath is very subtle. You feel harmonious comfort, You are as if astounded. Mind is clear, without disturbing thoughts, Focused, as if listening to raindrops gently falling on ground. Whole body agile, as if empty, If a feather falls on it, it will not be able to stay there. If form is visible, you are as if flow of water, If form is not visible, you are as if pure air. Spirit is soft, as if you were drunk, As if you were floating in water. Silent in the space of universe. Empty and agile, with stable mind. Body as if a big melting furnace, Everything is melting in it. Natural changes happen inside mind, Breath is calm, you are listening to the silence.”*



In more advanced practice you will seek state which Wang described as:

*“Body balanced, empty and agile, spirit should be full, you are vigilant like a leopard walking in fog, you are agile like an attacking rhinoceros, like a galloping horse, like a dragon. Head straight, you feel some pressure on top of your head, whole body is pulsating, as if dancing, everything is connected, toes as if grasping ground, knees as if embracing something and at the same time pressing outside, there is also some lifting upward force, heels slightly raised. You feel a force as if a tornado was about to pull a tree out of ground, as if you were a dragon which landed for a moment, ready to fly again, ready to twist and sway. You feel power great as if heaven and earth were fighting. When you move, you are like a fierce tiger, as if you intend to crush mountain slope with your hand. Body as if startled snake, as if it was on fire, like a dragon throwing thunders and flying away, muscles are pulsating, force like gun powder, hands like bullets, slight body movement and bird will not be able to fly away, you are full of great courage. No matter what happens, your mind is like a big fishing net, catching everything, like a dance of the branches of lightening, like scales covering body of a fish, like snow and frost on grass and trees”.*

You will start shi li exercises from very simple movements. Thanks to this simplicity it will be easy to focus on the essence of exercise, not losing the important feeling, thanks to which the mind and body coordination is achieved. You will gradually learn next movements, from simple ones to more difficult, from straight line to rotation and spirals. You will do shi li movements together with mocabu steps. First you will repeat single movements, then you will link them in a kind of improvised form, with order of movements changing each time. After some time, when you understand the principles, you will move beyond standard form of movements, improvising without losing the essence.

In zhan zhuang you will start from calmly controlling the feeling of strength, then you will „seek movement in non movement”. In shi li you will start seeking “changes”, at each moment of movement being ready to stop, to change direction or change to completely different movement. Then there will also be being ready to change speed of movement and “issue force” in explosive way. Some of these changes will actually happen. But even if they don’t happen, at each point of movement there is this state of alertness, of being ready to act according to situation, which could potentially change.

If you don’t stop at the stage of learning only basics of yiquan (the zhan zhuang qigong), but you will continue your study, you will learn principles of dynamic, explosive “issuing force” – fa li, principles of adapting your actions in interaction with partner in tui shou (pushing hands), and if you are physically fit and you are interested in this aspect, you can also practice free fighting – san shou, learning to act in critical situation, which is creating the biggest challenge.

## 王芾斋专集选

## 意拳养生

### 意拳站桩

## 王芗斋站桩功

## 站桩养生法

## 王芃斋养生健身站桩功

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