

Weaving the

Threads™

Practice and Philosophy in the Internal Arts

Volume 1, Issue 1

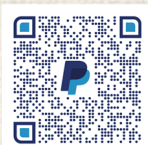
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Practice Methods: Basic Concepts

Practice methods in the internal arts include both physical and internal workmanship.

First, the basic physical movements need to be present. What do I with my hands? What about my feet? Am I in balance? These come first. They are not what we eventually focus on.

Next, physical movements need to connect with the physical breath. As I am moving, my breath is well-coordinated and connected with and through each movement.

Then, I can begin working with the inner breath, the

气 qi. The flow of qi follows and is supported by the physical breath.

How does the qi flow? What are the small, tiny, and large heavenly circles? Where is the 下丹田 lower dan tian? Why is it also called the 气海 qi hai (sea of qi)? What other centers should I pay attention to?

Without some understanding of the answers to these questions, it is not possible to begin basic practice in the



*Stairs at Purple Heaven Hall.
Wudang Mountain, December 1999.*

internal arts. We have to start with the foundation work and concepts first.

Benefits: Joints

The internal arts pay attention to using the movements to open and develop flexibility in the joints.

As we use the smaller muscles, tendons and ligaments during our

movements, we also open the joints.

This is particularly helpful for the hips. The bending and stretching through the legs while supporting the torso, allows the hips to open.

This improves general flexibility for walking an other activities.

As we develop strength through the legs, we also develop flexibility and strength in the hips.



*Embroidered flower
from a two sided em-
broidery. Suzhou 1995.*

Wudang Qigong



*Painting of cranes done
from inside the bottle.
Purchased at a shop in
Beijing the 1990's.*

Wudang Qigong: 1. Extreme Emptiness Exercise

Extreme emptiness method combines heaven and earth,
simple and natural, no things,
push up from below through the head and suspend.
The INTENTION is at the LAO GONG raise the YONG QUAN,
empty the MIND, fill the belly and the BREATH will correctly ascend.

1) Preparation

The body faces south standing straight with the two feet together, both arms naturally hang down, the index finger is slightly raised. The eyes look front, the INTENTION is on the palm, LAO GONG acupuncture point. (Illustration 1-1)

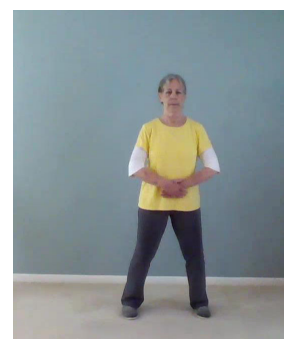
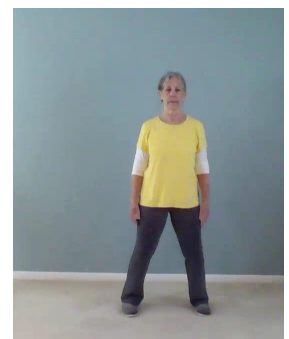
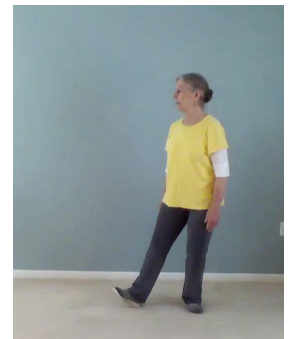
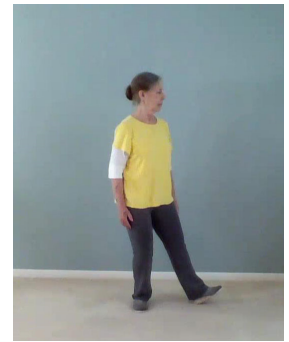
After naturally breathing out and breathing in two times, the body turns left 45 degrees. The heel of the left foot presses along the ground toward the left side pushing out 30 centimeters, the toes close inward, the toes grip the ground, the center of the foot, the Yong Quan acupuncture point, raises upward. The eyes follow the turning of the body, the intention is on the Yong Quan, the breath circulates through the foot's Jue Yin Gan channel. (Illustration 1-2)

The previous movement pauses slightly, the center of gravity shifts left, the body turns toward the right 90 degrees, the heel of the right foot presses along the ground toward the right pushing out 15 centimeters, the right toes close to the inside and press on the ground. The eyes follow the turning of the body, the INTENTION is on the XUAN GUAN opening. (Illustration 1-3)

The previous movement does not stop, the body turns toward the left 45 degrees, still facing toward the south and standing straight, the lower jaw is slightly drawn back, the crown of the head, the BAI HUI acupuncture point, raises upward; empty the MIND, fill the belly and breathe naturally. The eyes look forward, the INTENTION observes the lower DAN TIAN. (Illustration 1-4)

2) Raise Upward and Rub Downward

After adjusting the respiration two times, both hands from the sides of the body describe an arc in front of the abdomen. The palms face inward, (because yin and yang in men and women are not the same) women have the right hand outside, men have the left hand outside, the LAO GONG of both hands fold together and press against each other, lightly pressing above the lower DAN TIAN (the place 4.2 centimeters below the naval also known as the QI HAI



acupuncture point). The eyes look slightly downward, the INTENTION observes the DAN TIAN. (Illustration 1-5)

The previous movement does not stop, both arms slightly revolve outward, the palms face inward and stick to the body traveling upward and stopping in front of the chest. The palms, the LAO GONG acupuncture points with the centers of both breasts, the DAN ZHONG acupuncture points face each other, mutually attracting each other. At the same time as this, the DAN TIAN sinks inward, breathe in. The tongue presses against the upper palate, the teeth are slightly closed, the eyes look front, the INTENTION observes the LAO GONG acupuncture points. (Illustration 1-6)

The previous movement does not stop, the body's center of gravity lowers, both legs bend at the knees and squat down changing into a horse stance. At the same time, both arms slightly revolve inward, the palms face downward at an angle, sticking to the body and smoothly moving downward, stopping in front of the navel. At the same time as this, the DAN TIAN sticks outward, breathe out. (Practice until the BREATH sinks to the DAN TIAN. Afterwards when breathing out and breathing in the tongue presses against the upper palate, not using the repeated up and down movement.) The tongue is close to the lower palate, the teeth are lightly closed. The eyes look front, the INTENTION observes the Bai Hui. (Illustration 1-7)

3) Blend the Elements with One Breath

The previous movement pauses slightly, after adjusting the respiration two times, both legs straighten, naturally standing erect, at the same time, both hands from the front of the body open and turn downwards in an arc stopping at the sides of the body. The eyes look forward, the INTENTION observes the DAN TIAN. (Illustration 1-8)

Acupuncture Points 点穴 (dian xue)

Lao Gong xue 劳宫穴 Palace of Toil PC-8^{who}

Yong Quan xue 涌泉穴 Bubbling Spring KC-1^{who}

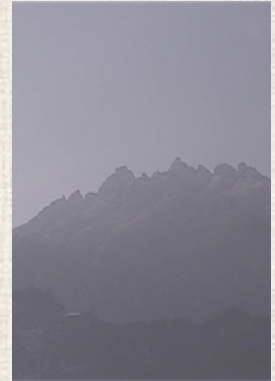
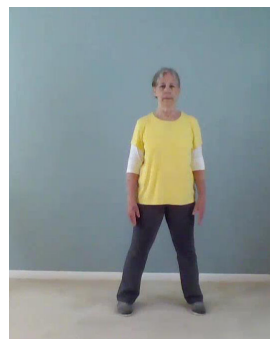
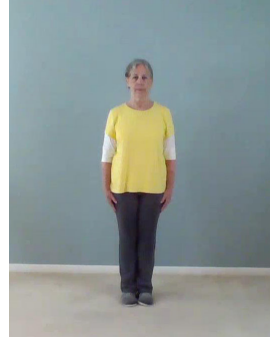
Jue Yin Gan jing 厥阴肝经 Reverting Yin Liver channel

Xuan Guan qiao 玄关窍 Mysterious Gate opening (upper dan tian)"

Bai Hui xue 百会穴 Hundred Convergences GV-20^{who}

Qi Hai 气海 Sea of Qi CV-6^{who}

Dan Zhong xue 膻中穴 Chest Center CV-17^{who}



Wudang Mountains, The Nine Peaks. Photo taken from the road leading up to the mountains. Winter 1999

**Quiet the mind,
still the heart,
deepen the
breath.**

**When the mind
is quiet, we
can let go of
appearances.**

**When we can
let go of
appearances,
we gain clear
understanding.**

From the Eight Requirements for Practice. Wudang Qigong, 1999.



Embroidered flower
from a two sided em-
broidery. Suzhou 1995.

武当气功



Painting of cranes done
from inside the bottle.
Purchased at a shop in
Beijing the 1990's.

武当气功：第一节 无极功

无极功法合乾坤，浑然无物顶头悬。
意在劳宫提涌泉，虚心实腹气腾然。

1) 预备势

身体面南直立两脚靠拢，两臂自然下垂，食指微微上挑。目视前方，意在掌心劳宫穴（图 1-1）。

自然呼吸2次后，身体左转 45度。左脚跟贴地面向左侧蹬出30厘米，脚尖内扣，脚趾抓地，脚心涌泉穴上提。目随身移，意在涌泉，气行足厥阴肝经（图 1-2）。

上动略停，重心左移，身体向右转90度，右脚跟贴地面向右蹬出15厘米，右脚尖里扣踏地。目随身移，意在玄关窍（图 1-3）。

上动不停，体向左转45度，仍面向南方直立，下颌微收，头顶百会穴悬起，虚心实腹自然呼吸。目视前方，意守下丹田（图 1-4）。

2) 上提下摩

调整 2次呼吸以后，两手由体侧向腹前划弧。掌心向内，（由于男女阴阳不同）女士右手在外，男士左手在外，两手劳宫相互叠压，轻压在下丹田上（肚脐下 4.2厘米处亦称谓气海穴）。目微下视，意守丹田（图 1-5）。

上动不停，两臂微向外旋，掌心向内贴身体向上擦行停于胸前。掌心劳宫穴与两乳之中膻中穴相对相互吸引。与之同时丹田向内凹、吸气。舌顶上腭，牙齿轻扣，目视前方，意守劳宫穴（图 1-6）。

上动略停，身体重心下降，两腿屈膝下蹲成马步。同时，两臂微内旋，掌心斜向下方，贴身体向下滑动，停于脐前。与之同时，丹田向外凸起、呼气（练至气沉丹田后呼吸时舌顶上腭，不用再上下移动）。舌守下腭，牙齿微扣。目视前方，意守百会（图 1-7）。



3) 混元一气

上动略停，调整 2 次呼吸后，两腿伸直，自然站立，同时，两手由体前分开向下划弧停于身体两侧。目视前方意守丹田（图 1-8）。

要领与功能：

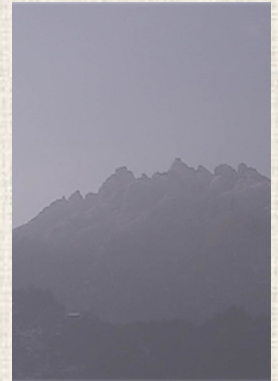
无极功主要炼养丹田内气。吸气时，脚心涌泉穴、手心劳宫穴、头心百会穴，三心吸收上、中、下（阳、中、阴）3 气向丹田输送。3 心之中有微凉、麻麻的感觉。呼气时由 3 心向外排气，3 心有微热的感觉（练功 100 天后热感加大）。丹田气足则水到渠成，精气往返大、小周天。初学武当道家气功，气感不太大者，可以专心意守劳宫穴一心，注重其呼吸调整。

吸气抬臂时，肩要松、肘要坠。下压呼气时，脚要撑，胯要坐。会阴附近的括约肌要上提。秘诀云：“紧撮谷道内中提，明目辉煌顶上飞”。

丹田气要意守，意念不受外界干扰。神与形相合相依，人才能以生存。无极功为内壮功修炼的开始，可以使练功者，逐步达到练神还虚，复归于无极至高至上之境界。

练习方法：

每次练习以 6 次或 9 次为一组，可以反复连续练习。动作的幅度大小、高低不限，以练功者的年龄老少、力量大小、体质强弱而定。



Wudang Mountains, The Nine Peaks. Photo taken from the road leading up to the mountains. Winter 1999

无物
气行
气行
绝象
绝象
觉明

从 遵守八要当忌三害

W武当气功. 1999.



*Embroidered flower
from a two sided em-
broidery. Suzhou 1995.*

Wudang Qigong



*Painting of cranes done
from inside the bottle.
Purchased at a shop in
Beijing the 1990's.*

Wudang Qigong: 2. Pushing the Mountain Exercise

In Pushing the Mountain, the inner breath gathers in the middle dan tian, Issuing or receiving, using and transforming do not change the countenance.

The triple burner is unimpeded, the breath is not obstructed, strengthen the body, guard the health, protect the original breath.

1) Preparation

The movement method is exactly the same as for Extreme Emptiness Exercise, Preparation Postures. (see Illustrations 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4)

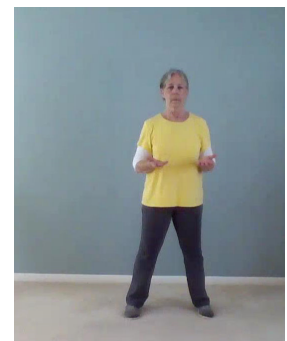
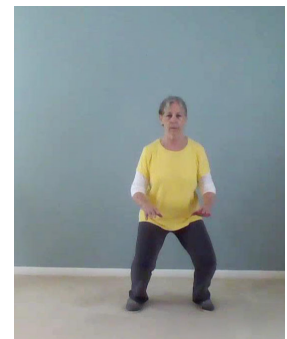
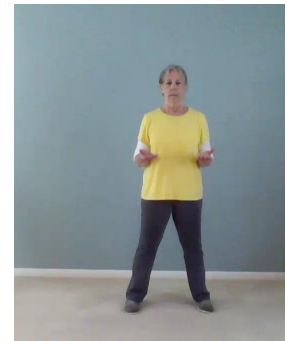
2) Extremely Empty Initially

The previous movement pauses slightly, after regulating the breath by breathing out and in two times, both legs extend and straighten, naturally standing erect. At the same time, both arms revolve outward, both hands follow this turning inward and rising up, the heels of the palms stop just below both breasts. The fingertips of both hands face front, the palms face up. At the same time as this, the dan tian sinks inward, breathe in. The tongue presses against the upper palate, the teeth are slightly closed, the eyes look toward the front. (Illustrations 2-1 and 2-2)

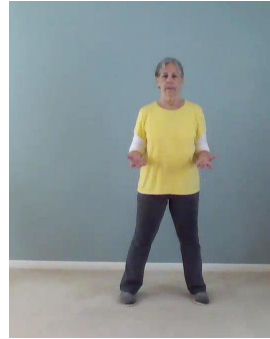
The previous movement does not stop, the body's center of gravity lowers, both legs bend at the knees squatting down and changing into a horse stance. At the same time, both arms revolve inward, both elbows close as if carrying something, the hands turn toward the front of the body in an arc shape and press down, stopping in front of the abdomen. The palms face down, the fingertips face forward. At the same time as this, the dan tian sticks out, breathe out. The tongue is close to the lower palate, the teeth are lightly closed. The eyes look slightly downward, the intention is on the dan tian; the breath circulates through both the Du Mai and the Ren Mai. (Illustration 2-3)

3) Pushing the Mountain Exercise

The previous movement pauses slightly, after regulating the breath by breathing out and in two times, both legs extend and straighten, naturally standing erect. At the same time, both arms revolve outward, both hands follow this turning inward and rising up, the heels of the palms stop just below both breasts. The fingertips of both hands face front, the palms face up. At the same time as this, the dan tian sinks inward, breathe in. The tongue presses against the upper palate, the teeth are slightly closed, the eyes look toward the front. (Illustration 2-4)

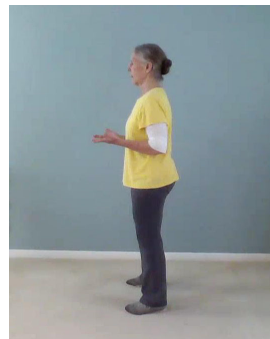


The previous movement does not stop, the body's center of gravity lowers, both legs bend at the knees squatting down and changing into a horse stance. At the same time, both arms revolve inward, the heels of the palms use strength, pushing toward the front along a level plane. The distance between the centers of the two palms and the centers of both breasts is the same width, the palms face forward; the fingertips face up. At the same time as this, the dan tian turns sticks out, gradually breathe out. The tongue is close to the lower palate, the teeth are lightly closed. The eyes look through the center of the space between both palms toward the front and into the distance, the intention is on the palms Lao Gong acupuncture points. (Illustration 2-5)

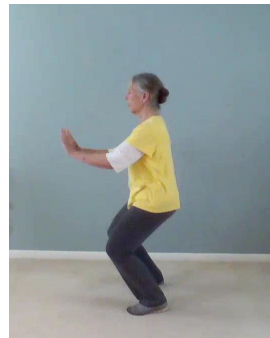


4) Blend the Elements with One Breath

The previous movement pauses slightly, after regulating the breath by breathing out and in two times, both legs extend and straighten, naturally standing erect. At the same time, both arms revolve outward, both hands follow this turning inward and rising up, the heels of the palms stop just below both breasts. The fingertips of both hands face front, the palms face up. At the same time as this, the dan tian sinks inward, breathe in. The tongue presses against the upper palate, the teeth are slightly closed, the eyes look toward the front. (Illustration 2-6)

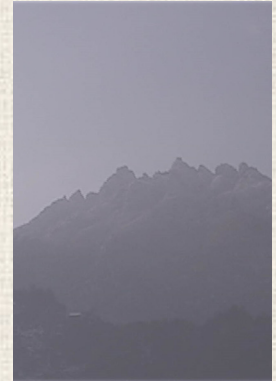
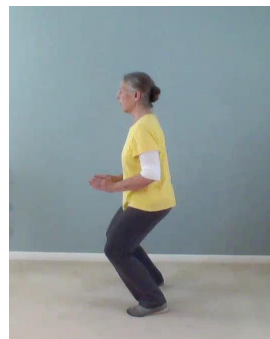


The movement methods are entirely the same as for Extreme Emptiness Exercise, Blend the Elements with one breath (see Illustration 1-8).



Main Points and Functions

The important point in practicing Pushing the Mountain Exercise is that the Lao Gong acupuncture points turn outward and send out breath. From the very beginning the shapeless and formless "Dao" created and sent out true original breath. True breath separates yin and yang, yin and yang develop and produce the three cai, four directions, five elements, eight trigrams and thereby giving birth to and transforming ten thousand things. Thus, returning to the original source and achieving the objective of a healthy body and long life. When raising the arms and breathing out, the requirement is to relax the shoulders and sink the elbows. The movement and the respiration must be inseparably coordinated and completely unanimous, when the hands stop, the breath in must be sufficient. Observe the energy and spirit inside, relax the whole body, the toes grip the ground, and the breath travels up-



Wudang Mountains, The Nine Peaks. Photo taken from the road leading up to the mountains. Winter 1999

**Quiet the mind,
still the heart,
deepen the
breath.**

**When the mind
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From the Eight Requirements for Practice. Wudang Qigong, 1999.



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from a two sided em-
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Wudang Qigong



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Purchased at a shop in
Beijing the 1990's.

Wudang Qigong: 2. Pushing the Mountain Exercise

ward. Raise the body straight, the Hui Yin acupuncture point with the crown of the head center the Bai Hui acupuncture point above and below connect and reflect.

The timing of breathing out and the movement of lowering of the body must be together, the speed slow and well-distributed. When the Lao Gong acupuncture points face out, send out breath and push with the palms, the appearance is the same as if pushing a piece of wood on the water; or very much like the appearance of pushing a ball in the water. The whole body is covered by a type of "outer breath" and feels enveloped by (it); lead, mix, and sink the breath, slightly restraining it. Use the intention to send out the breath; neither excessively extending nor not reaching. The method of neither expecting nor overly exerting must be employed, then it is possible to send out the breath and perform the exercise.

Practice Method:

Each time, practice 6 times or 9 times to make one set. Practicing again and again in succession is fine. The size of the movements, large or small, high or low is not restricted, but depends on the age or youth, the extent of physical strength, and the strength or weakness in the physique of the one who is practicing.

Acupuncture Points 点穴 (dian xue)

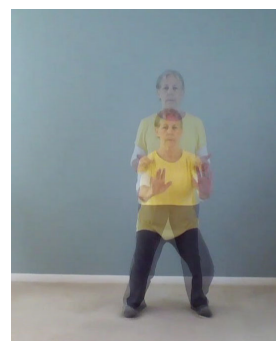
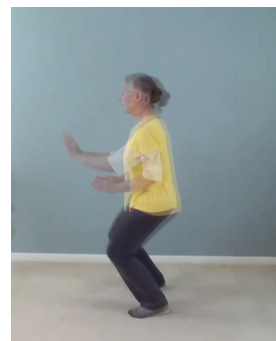
Zhen Yuan 真元 True Breath.

Yuan Qi 元气 Original Breath

Du Mai 督脉 Governing Vessel GV^{who}

Ren Mai 任脉 Controlling Vessel; Conception Vessel CV^{who}

Hui Yin 会阴 Meeting of Yin (perineum) CV-1^{who}



The two images above show the change in the body position (or not) for the four movements. The back should remain straight. Strength comes from the core and the upper back, extending into the legs.



Wudang Research Association

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Monday—Friday 7 AM Eastern Time

<https://youtube.com/c/wudang>

History and Tradition in the Internal Arts

The history and traditions of the internal martial arts date back centuries to the Yellow Emperor c. 2500 BCE. The foundations we have from Traditional Chinese Medicine inform our practice today.

These foundations include the concepts of qi, jing, shen, and the notion that we naturally have them and more. But these concepts are not part of most western teachings. In fact, they are often connected with various mythologies.

As the martial arts developed, there were people who focused on developing their physical body. They worked to improve their external body. There were those who sought to develop their internal body. Both are brought together in the internal arts.

Which arts are internal? All of them. That's not incorrect. The emphasis, the approach to learning, and the types of applications are partly determined by the system and partly by the way the forms are played.

This "playing the form" is another way of looking at how to practice. We play taiji. What we do in practice is playing. This changes the way we look

at what we are doing in practice. It's another aspect of the history.

In the culture, ancient and modern China, there are elements of practice. Getting up early in the morning to do exercises is still the best time of day. It also corresponds to the best time for increase according to the traditional yang/yin arrangement of hours.

In Wudang Taiji, we have a movement called "Lan Han Za Yi" (Lazy guy tangles his clothes).

This makes no sense unless we understand that the image is of a person in long robes with long, wide sleeves. The movement is very much like someone getting tangled in those sleeves.

The more we understand the underlying basis, the history, and the traditions, the easier it is to understand what we are doing in practice. The more we understand where what we are doing in practice came from, the easier it is to improve.



Wudang Mountains, Temple complex at the Top viewed from the path below. Stairs wind up and down for about 7km. Summer 1995.

If we do not look at where the arts came from, how can we understand what we are doing?

Wudang Mountains, Stone steps, on the way down from the Top. Summer 1995



Embroidered flower
from a two sided em-
broidery. Suzhou 1995.

武 当 气 功



Painting of cranes done
from inside the bottle.
Purchased at a shop in
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武当气功：第二节 推山功

推山气息聚丹田，出纳运化不变颜。
三焦畅通气无阻，健体护身保真元。

1) 预备势

动作方法完全同无极功预备势（参阅图 1-1、1-2、1-3、1-4）。

2) 无极初开

上动略停，调整 2 次呼吸后，两腿伸直，自然站立。同时，两臂外旋，两手随之向内上抬，掌根部停靠于两乳下。双手指尖向前，掌心向上。与之同时，丹田向内凹、吸气。舌顶上腭，牙齿轻扣，目视前方（图 2-1，2-2）



上动不停，身体重心下降，两腿屈膝下蹲成马步。同时，两臂内旋，两肘合抱，手向体前弧形下按，停于腹部前面。掌心向下，指尖向前。与之同时，丹田向外凸、呼气。舌守下腭，牙齿微扣。目微下视，意在丹田，气行督任二脉（图 2-3）。



3) 推山功

上动略停，调整 2 次呼吸后，两腿伸直，自然站立。同时，两臂外旋，两手随之向内上抬，掌根部停靠于两乳下。双手指尖向前，掌心向上。与之同时，丹田向内凹、吸气。舌顶上腭，牙齿轻扣，目视前方（图 2-4）。

上动不停，身体重心下降，两腿屈膝下蹲成马步。同时，两臂内旋，掌根用力，向前平推。两掌心之间距离与两乳同宽，掌心向前，指尖向上方。与之同时，丹田向外凸、缓缓呼气。舌守下腭，牙齿微扣。目顺两掌中间向前远视，意在掌心劳宫穴（图 2-5）。



4) 混元一气

上动略停，调整2次呼吸后，两腿伸直，自然站立。同时，两臂外旋，两手随之向内上抬，掌根部停靠于两乳下。双手指尖向前，掌心向上。与之同时，丹田向内凹、吸气。舌顶上腭，牙齿轻扣，目视前方（图 2-6）。

动作方法完全同无极功混元一气（参阅图1-8）。



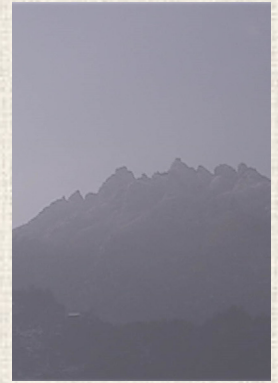
要领与功能：

推山功主要练习劳宫穴向外发气。由太初无形无象的“道”生出了真元之气。真气分阴阳，阴阳衍出三才、四象、五行、八卦乃生化万物。从而重返源本，达到健体长寿之目的。抬臂呼气时，要求肩松、肘坠。动作与呼吸要紧密配合，完整一致，手停时气要吸足。精神内守，周身放松，脚趾抓地气向上行。上体正直，会阴穴与头顶心百会穴上下垂照。

呼气时，与身体下降的动作要同步，速度缓慢均匀。劳宫穴向外发气推掌时，如同推水上浮木，也好象在水中推球。周身被一种“外气”笼罩着，将混沌之气略加以收敛。用意发气，要防止太过与不及。可以采用勿望勿助之法，恰当发气行功。

练习方法：

每次练习以 6次或 9次为一组，可以反复连续练习。动作的幅度大小、高低不限，以练功者的年龄老少、力量大小、体质强弱而定。



Wudang Mountains, The Nine Peaks. Photo taken from the road leading up to the mountains. Winter 1999

无物
气行
气行
绝象
绝象
觉明

从 遵守八要当忌三害

W武当气功. 1999.



Earlier Heaven Bagua pattern from a bras key fob, 1989.

The internal arts are varied with many practice methods.

Quiet and subtle, strong and resilient.

Baguazhang Basics

Bagua practice is based on circles around a circle. There are linear movements, directed motion, and clear lines to be sure.

The foundations of bagua are found in the circle that connects the eight directions.

North, South, East, West. These are the cardinal

directions. They are the center of the edges in a square.

Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, and Southwest are the angular directions. They are the corners of the square.

As we walk the circle in practice, use these Eight Directions to coordinate the palm changes.

Each palm change corresponds to one of the eight directions.

The Ba Gua 八卦, literally the eight gua (trigrams), correspond to each of the eight directions.

The trigrams give us both the placement and the nature of the movements. These connections are part of practice.

Practice Methods: Focus

All the internal arts include both external and internal practice methods.

If the body is not strong enough to do a particular movement, we can't do it. The remedy is to develop that strength.

Each time we practice, we develop some type of

strength. It may be holding strength in the legs. It may be quieting strength for the mind. It may be supple strength to complete a movement. Or, it could be another aspect of practice.

The ability to be still, to stop moving is another element of practice we want to develop.

Each practice method combines with what we happen to be doing today and with what we have been doing to improve our practice.

Focusing on suppleness gives us resilient strength. Focusing on the physical breath lets us connect with and develop the inner breath.

Applications

The applications for any of the internal arts rely on development of timing, internal strength, and the balance we carry through the whole body.

As we move, if we are not well placed, any opposing force will upset our balance. This is fundamental physics.

When we are well-placed and in good balance, we can engage the whole body through the movement.

This use of whole body movement connected with the inner breath is a foundation practice in the internal arts.

The movements of a form are not separate from

applications, they are the applications.

The way in which we move is the fundamental application.

So with a movement that draws downward and shifts backward, we have at least two possible applications: twist and pull down.

Xingyiquan Basics

The movements of Xingyi are prompt, sudden, full and complete. They are not soft and they are not stiff. They are strong.

Xingyi moves quickly. It doesn't wait. There is a directness in the way the movements are done. When moving, there is no question about where the movement is going and very little question about

what the underlying application might be. It's clear. This clarity makes xing yi at once very simple and very complex.

The simple movements of the five elements aren't quite as simple or as easy to do as they appear.

Timing, placement, and remaining in balance while using strength and force

must be developed. Knowing what to do and being able to do it are not the same thing. The first comes through understanding; the second through practice.

Understanding the five elements—Metal, Water, Wood, Fire, Earth—and how the nature of each is expressed in practice is another.

Philosophy: Practice

The elements of philosophy in the internal arts stem from Taoist and Buddhist teachings, from the ideas of harmony and quiet.

Developing internal strength isn't about what shows outwardly. It's about seeking inwardly for that perfection, that sense of

being that comes from our own practice.

The inner and outer connections we seek to develop between our movements and our breath, between our intent and our energy are pervasive. They apply to more than our practice of the internal arts.

The goal of the ancient alchemists was to develop the golden pill of immortality. They didn't succeed.

The ancient philosophy teaches us that the golden pill is the ability to develop and store our energy and our breath. This is one goal of practice.

Language Clues

The original language of these internal arts is Mandarin Chinese. This makes understanding the meaning and what we need to do in an exercise difficult.

It's not only the language, but the culture that must be understood.

The old masters used

metaphors and colorful phrases to describe the forms. They hold the key to understanding what the original intent was.

"Swallow flies through the forest" is the name of a movement in Xingyi's 12 Animals. It captures the nature of the movement, the dynamic of the movement, and the way in

which the movement should be done. All in the name.

This is a simple example. The concept of qi, inner breath, is more difficult.

The more we look at and explore the words used and their meaning, the more advanced our practice can become.



Small pagoda in People's Park, Zhengzhou, Henan. Summer 1995

There is meaning in the language, in the choice of words.

How we develop our understanding depends on which words we know.



Weaving the

Threads™

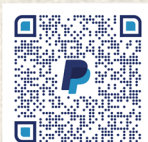


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Support our work

Learning to practice takes time. It's not instant. What we do and how we pay attention to what we are doing matter. The skills we actively pursue are only part of what we actually learn. With each new skill, there are side benefits. These include being able to better balance through the movements as well as being able to breathe more fully.

The best method for learning to practice is to find something you like and practice that. The internal arts including taiji, bagua, xingyi, qigong, and more all have different forms, different uses of the physical body and can be used to develop internal workmanship, literally 内功 nei gong. Practice is the key.

***Sink the breath to
the lower dan tian,
open the back,
expand the lungs,
and smile.***



***You cannot grab what
you seek. You must wait
for it to come to you.***

From the Taiji Classics

"In applying ward off, the arm must be round and alive; In extending the hand, emphasize sensitivity. If the opponent is empty, I use press; If he is full, I drop the elbows and deflect. By warding off diagonally upward, my opponent will be forced to lean backward and lose his balance."

Early interpretation of the applications by Li I-yu (1832-92) in Wile, Douglas, Lost Tai Chi Classics from the Late Ching Dynasty. SUNY, 1996.

Traditional Taiji Practice

The soft, fluid movements of taiji are designed to develop a continuous flow of movement and energy.



To keep the movements continuous, we must do two (at least) things: 1) breathe and 2) connect each movement with the next.

Breathing with and through each movement requires

practice and time to develop. Knowing it and being able to do it are not the same thing. The timing, the coordination, and the overall physical effort must all be well-connected.

Connecting each movement with the next is quite literal in taiji. We use a circular path for the movements, all of them. Even the ones that appear straight.

So the previous movement is one point on the circle and the next is another.

When we can find the circles in each movement, we can keep the movements smooth and continuous.