

zhan zhuang 站樁

Also known as standing like a tree, post standing, tree hugging, standing stake etc. The exercise of doing standing post is Zhan zhuang gong: 站樁功.

Performing these gongs or exercises promotes or creates the "Three Treasures" or San Bao: 三寶. The Three Treasures are known as Jing 精, Qi 氣 and Shen 神 and can be loosely translated as Essence, Vitality and Spirit.

According to Daoist doctrine the Three Treasures can be described as three types of energy available to humans. The Dao De Jing by Lao Zi states in chapter 42 that "The Dao 道 gives birth to the One, the One gives birth to the Two (Taiji 太極 or Yin and Yang 陰陽) and the Two gives birth to the Three; (which some interpret to mean Jing 精, Qi 氣 and Shen 神, or sometimes Heaven: Tian 天, Earth: Di 地 and Man: Ren 人).

Basic Stances:

Natural Stance, also known as the normal stance. The feet are centered under the armpits, toes pointed forwards, knees are relaxed, arms are at the sides, thumbs towards the front.

Horse Stance (Ma bu), should be known as horse riding stance, since the legs are more than shoulder width apart, knees bent, feet forwards. Hands can be kept palms up on thighs, or in fists, at the hip, waist or at the lowest rib. Thumbs can be up or outwards.

Bow Stance (Gong Bu), forward leg bent, rear leg straight, rear foot is usually kept at a 45 degree angle. Hips are pointing forwards.

Cat Stance (Xu bu or Mao bu), forward leg bent, toes down and heel up, back leg less bent, foot flat on the ground. Toes are pointing 45 degrees from front.

Crane Stance (Guan bu), Various one legged stances. The raised foot can be just off the ground like a higher cat stance, or the foot can be placed on the calf, knee 45 degrees or 90 degrees to the side. In addition there are variations where the raised foot is at the height of the knee, either knee forwards or the leg twisted so the sole of the raised foot is on the other knee.

Back Stance (San qi bu), The reverse of the bow stance.

Bear Stance (Hung bu), Feet are more than shoulder width apart, toes are pointed inwards or heels are out, 15 to 30 degrees from forwards. Knees are bent, and the hand are either held at sternum level, out from the body in a bear claw (palms flat and fingers bent) palms facing, or one hand is at this level and the other on the back, palm out over the kidney.

Low Stance (Pu bu), body rests on rear bent leg, forward leg out straight. A very low back

stance.

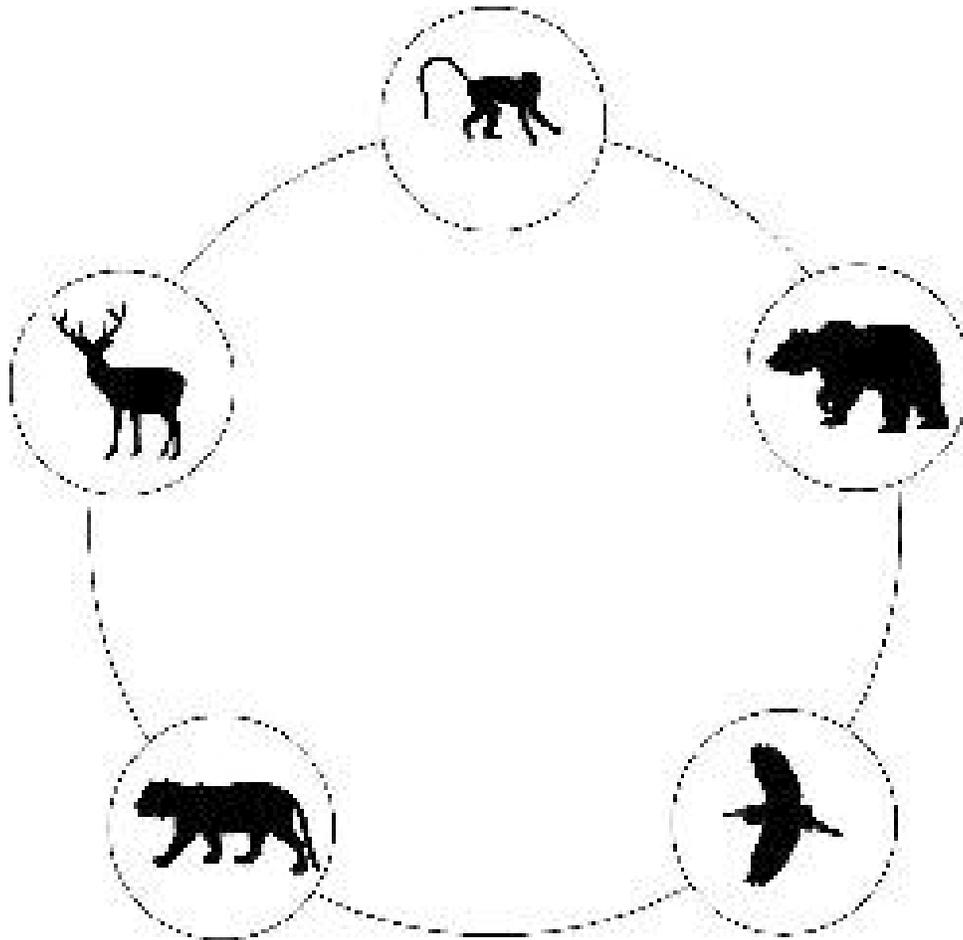
Note: "Bu" can also be translated as step. I would prefer to use the term zhitai, which means stance or form, since there are so many variations.

From stillness comes movement. All of the basic still stances lead to various moving forms. If the forms are done using Silk Reeling skill: chánstīgōng, 纏絲功, one then creates "Winding Silk Power" (or Silk Reeling Power): chánstījīng, 纏絲勁. It is this silk reeling power (jing) that creates peng jing 棚勁 (ward off power). It is the combination of both that is the power behind the internal martial arts and Qigong. Without these two primary jings, Taijiquan is just slow dancing and Qigong is just slow breathing.

Using the technique "Yin-Ru-Yang-Chu" (陰入陽出): "moving-in when breathing-in" and "moving-out when breathing-out", Qigong practice channels Qi through the body with movements that are synchronized with breathing. Moving in or closing and moving out or opening refer to parts of the body. However, with the principle of Yin Yang, when one part of the body is closing, another is opening. As an example: You are inhaling and your arms are spreading from directly in front of you, to out to the side. This is opening of the chest; however, it is also closing of the back. Reverse the movement of your arms and exhale; you are closing the chest and opening the back.

My masters have stated that if you are going to practice Qigong for an hour a day, then 33% should be Zhan zhuang, and if you can only do 20 minutes, 45% should be Zhan zhuang.

YuliQigong Ancient Five Animals form.



This form is very similar to the Guo family form used to treat cancer and other tumors. *It should be used in conjunction with other disciplines and modalities, with the permission of your primary health care providers.*

The chart is to help you find the points referenced in the text, and can also be used for the microcosmic orbit.

* Remember to keep your tongue lightly on your upper palette except when instructed to make a sound. Return it to the palette after each sound.

Each animal represents one of the five elements.

Ape

1. Stand easily, with your feet at shoulder width and toes pointed outwards at a 45 degree angle. Hands are hanging at your sides. Inhale and slide hands up so they are just below the dantien, with palms up and fingers bent so that all four fingertips are touching. Exhale.

2. Inhale and raise your hands to chest level, at the middle point of the sternum (Shan Zhong), with the palms facing up and fingertips touching. Exhale.
3. Inhale and lower the hands back to the dantien and then raise them forwards in an arc over your head, while keeping the fingertips touching. Exhale and bring the hands to your sides.
4. Inhale, bend your elbows and move your hands to palms down and fingers facing forward, fingers together. Exhale and inhale four times. Inhale and bring your hands together with tops touching each other so that your arms are mid-chest high and extended forward, feel Qi moving from the Qi Hu points to the Zhong Kui points on the same side. Exhale and inhale three times.
5. Inhale and move your feet until you are standing with your feet a little more than shoulder length apart. Bend your knees until you cannot see your toes. Exhale and bend the elbows and extend the arms to the side of the body, shoulder high, rotating to palms up, then curl your fingers and make fists. Inhale and exhale twelve times feeling Qi travel from the dantien to the Da Bao to the Lao Gong points.
6. Inhale and rotate the feet back under the body and lower your arms to the side. Exhale.
7. Inhale, place both hands over the dantien, palms in, and begin rotating your hands in a spiral: down to the right, up and around to the left, down the left side to the right (clockwise, looking at you from the front). Slowly increase the size of the spiral so that the palms reach your sternum (Shan Zhong) at the high section and just above the pubis at the lower (below Du Qi). It should take nine turns. Breathe while spiraling. Then stop for a second, then spiral smaller, nine times until you are back at the dantien.
8. Relax.

Deer:

1. Place your hands, with palms facing up and fingertips touching, at dantien level. Inhale and exhale.
2. Inhale and raise your hands to your chest, just below Shan Zhong, palms touching your chest. Exhale.
3. Inhale and place your hands together in a prayer position in front of your chest, exhale, then inhale and raise your hands above your head and rotate your arms, opening them up to palms facing out, fingers lightly extended, like antlers.
4. Exhale and rotate them in circular motions down until you reach shoulder height and the arms are pointing forwards. Inhale and exhale five times. The palms should be facing outward with the elbows bent.
5. Inhale while swinging your arms out so they are level with the shoulders (to the side of the body) and palms are facing down. Exhale and inhale.
6. Exhale and bring the hands back to the front, making two fists, touching thumbs. Inhale and put the left fist under the right, rotating your arms so your knuckles face away from you. Make sure the arms are extended almost completely and exhale.

7. Inhale and swing your arms so your fists are on your back at the Ming Men point, knuckles touching your back. Breathe nine times while rubbing from the Ming men up to your lower ribs. Your knuckles should be at the BI 22 points and your wrists at GB 25 at the top of the movement.

8. Exhale and return the hands to the sides.

9. Inhale, place both hands over the dantien, palms in, and begin rotating your hands in a spiral: down to the right, up and around to the left, down the left side to the right (clockwise, looking at you from the front). Slowly increase the size of the spiral so that the palms reach your sternum (Shan Zhong) at the high section and just above the pubis at the lower (below Du Qi). It should take nine turns. Breathe while spiraling. Then stop for a second, then spiral smaller, nine times until you are back at the dantien.

10. Relax.

Tiger:

1. Place your hands at the dantien level with palms facing up and fingers interlocked. Inhale and raise hands to Shan Zhong level and exhale.

2. Inhale as you flip your wrists, keeping fingers interlocked and extend the arms to your right side and up as far as you can. Your palms should be facing upward.

3. Exhale, swinging your the arms to the left while keeping the fingers interlocked and inhale.

4. Exhale and lower the arms and hands to shoulder level. Keep them on the left side for one breath.

5. Exhale and swing to the right side slowly for a count of four, then inhale.

6. Exhale and lower the hands to waist level. Swing the arms and hands again twice as fast to the left and then back to the right while inhaling. Stop and exhale.

7. Drop both hands to your sides while inhaling.

8. Exhale and raise your left arm and hand to shoulder level fully extended and perpendicular to the body. Breathe six times.

9. Inhale and move the right arm so your right hand is below the left with palms facing. Exhale. Drop both hands to your sides while inhaling.

10. Exhale and bring the right arm to your right side and hand to shoulder level fully extended and perpendicular to the body. Breathe six times.

11. Inhale and move the left arm so your left hand is below the right with palms facing. Exhale. Drop both hands to your sides while inhaling.

12. Exhale and bring both hands to waist, palms up and fingers curled into claws. Inhale while pushing both hands out to shoulder level, palms out.

13. Exhale and claw down so your hands are at your thighs. While exhaling, make the "Ha" sound. Inhale, then exhale and bring both hands to waist, palms up and fingers curled into claws.

14. Inhale while pushing both hands out to shoulder level, palms out. Exhale and claw down so your hands are at your thighs. While exhaling, make the "Heng" sound. Repeat three to nine times.

15. Relax.

Bear:

1. Start with hands in front of your dantien with the palms up and the fingers interlocked. Inhale and raise your hands to the Shan Zhong level and exhale.
2. Inhale and rotate your hands while keeping your fingers interlocked and raise them overhead.
3. Exhale and rotate your hands to palms down, keeping the arms raised over your head. Touch the palms together and the Lao Gong points should touch.
4. Inhale and lower your arms forward so they are perpendicular to the body keeping your elbows almost fully extended. Now your palms should not touch, but face each other with about ½ inch between them.
5. Exhale and swing your arms slowly to the left side while taking four breaths.
6. Inhale and swing your arms to the right slowly while taking four breaths. Exhale while bringing your arms to the front. Inhale and lower your arms to your sides.
7. Inhale and raise the left hand with elbow extended fully above the head and your palm facing outward. Your arm and hand should be parallel to the body. Exhale and inhale five times. Exhale and lower your arm to your side and clench your fingers into fists (both hands). Inhale and extend your fingers, exhale and clench into fists five times. Relax both hands.
8. Inhale and raise the right hand with elbow extended fully above the head and your palm facing outward. Your arm and hand should be parallel to the body. Exhale and inhale five times. Exhale and lower your arm to your side and clench your fingers into fists (both hands). Inhale and extend your fingers, exhale and clench into fists five times. Relax both hands.
9. Inhale and step forward with your left foot, a half step, toes lifted, heel down, left hand at waist, palm down, fingers in a claw. As you lower your toes to the floor, your left hand circles to your mid-line at Shan Zhong level and you make the sound “Heng” while exhaling.
10. Inhale and return to the relaxed position. Exhale.
11. Inhale and step forward with your right foot, a half step, toes lifted, heel down, right hand at waist, palm down, fingers in a claw. As you lower your toes to the floor, your right hand circles to your mid-line at Shan Zhong level and you make the sound “Heng” while exhaling.
12. Repeat left and right sides five to nine times.
13. Tap your teeth together lightly thirty six times to generate saliva, then swallow it in three sections as you bring Qi to your dantien.
14. Relax.

Crane: (in three sections)

A. Assume right crane stance: Most of your weight is on the right leg, right knee is slightly bent, the left heel is raised and the toes of the left foot are touching the ground about three to six inches in front of the right toes.

Arm movements:

1. Inhale and interlace fingers, palms up, hands resting at dantien. Exhale.

2. Inhale, keeping the same hand position, bring hands up to Shan Zhong. Exhale.

3. Inhale while turning palms forward, push arms straight out front and then raise just above your head. Exhale.

4. While keeping arms in the same position inhale and turn your body to the right. Exhale and turn to the left.

5. Inhale and release hands, make a cranes beak (all fingers touching) and bring hands straight down to shoulder height out to the sides. Exhale and inhale nine times.

6. Inhale, relax your hands and bend forwards at the waist, palms rotate to the rear.

7. Exhale and return to the erect position, palms relaxed.

8. Inhale, relax your hands and bend forwards at the waist, palms rotate to the rear and arms come forwards until the backs of your wrists touch.

9. Exhale and return to the erect position, palms relaxed.

B. Assume left crane stance: Most of your weight is on the left leg, left knee is slightly bent, the right heel is raised and the toes of the right foot are touching the ground about three to six inches in front of the left toes.

Arm movements:

1. Inhale and interlace fingers, palms up, hands resting at dantien. Exhale.

2. Inhale, keeping the same hand position, bring hands up to Shan Zhong. Exhale.

3. Inhale while turning palms forward, push arms straight out front and then raise just above your head. They should be just above the Yin Tang level, and you should be looking at your hands. Exhale.

4. While keeping arms in the same position inhale and turn your body to the right. Exhale and turn to the left. Repeat three to nine times.

5. Inhale and release hands, make a cranes beak (all fingers touching) for each hand and bring hands straight down to shoulder height out to the sides. Fingers pointing out and down. Exhale and inhale nine times.

6. Inhale, relax your hands and bend forwards at the waist, palms rotate to the rear. Fingers loose.

7. Exhale and return to the erect position, palms relaxed.

8. Inhale, relax your hands and bend forwards at the waist, palms rotate to the rear and arms come forwards until the backs of your wrists touch.

9. Exhale and return to the erect position, palms relaxed arms out to the sides. Eight and nine can be repeated three to nine times.

Final Section.

C. Inhale, move feet shoulder width apart. Toes pointed straight ahead. Exhale.

1. Inhale and make fists, bringing them to the Ming Men point.

2. Exhale and push your elbows back, keeping the fists touching your back. Do not over stretch.

3. Inhale and bring elbows forwards, keeping the fists touching your back. Do not over stretch.

4. Repeat nine times.

5. Inhale, place both hands over the dantien, palms in, and begin rotating your hands in a spiral: down to the right, up and around to the left, down the left side to the right (clockwise, looking at you from the front). Slowly increase the size of the spiral so that the palms reach your sternum (Shan Zhong) at the high section and just above the pubis at the lower (below Du Qi). It should take nine turns. Breathe while spiraling. Then stop for a second, then spiral smaller, nine times until you are back at the dantien.

6. Relax.

If you need to, you can add an inhale and exhale (or two) between each section until you are fit enough to reduce the breaths needed.

The Wuji Qigong Short set.

Wujigong Post Standing:

Stand normally, relaxed. Place your feet shoulder width apart and parallel (outside heels are shoulder width, you can measure your shoulders (use the widest point at the middle deltoid muscle) and keep a small stick of the correct length on the floor). This “parallel” is with the outside edges of your feet parallel, not the inside, your toes should then be pointing forwards. The balance of your weight should be about 55% / 45%

between the balls of your foot to your heel, just enough so you feel a slight forward sense. Slightly “grip the ground” with your toes.

The kua is the area from the thickest part of one thigh (inside of the thigh), up through the genitals, to the same point on the other thigh. Slightly bend your knees, and tuck your lower pelvis forward just a bit, as if you are thinking about sitting down. This allows you to relax the “kua” and keep it rounded. Remember to maintain the curl of your toes, you are being song (relaxed). Drop your shoulders and relax the arms. Keep your head straight with the chin just in enough so that the crown of your head, the hole of your ear, the mid point of the shoulders, hips and ankles are in line. As if you are being suspended from a string attached to the crown of your head. The crown of the head is the baihui or DU20 point. Put your tongue tip lightly on your palate, just behind your teeth, you should feel a little dip or ridge. Your middle finger should be touching your leg on the Gallbladder 31 point. This is on the outside of your leg in the indentation between muscles. Breathe abdominally.

One of your goals is to make abdominal breathing your normal breath. Now, imagine or visualize you are in a warm shower, or, for you outdoor types, in a warm spring rain. The water runs over your body, washing away tension and stress. As you continue to breathe, imaging this water is able to run through your body as well, washing away more stress and tension. It is also washing away stale Qi, and washing past any places Qi is blocked to open up the flow. The stale Qi washes down though your body and out the kidney 1 or bubbling well point. Repeat the breaths 9 times, up to 38 times until you are relaxed (song); your breathing should be slowing down as you relax. You can do this same exercise seated, but with the hands palm up on the top of your thighs. It is a great way to reduce stress, relax and lower your blood pressure. This is a zhangzhuān or post standing gong.

Wujigong Buddha’s Attendant:



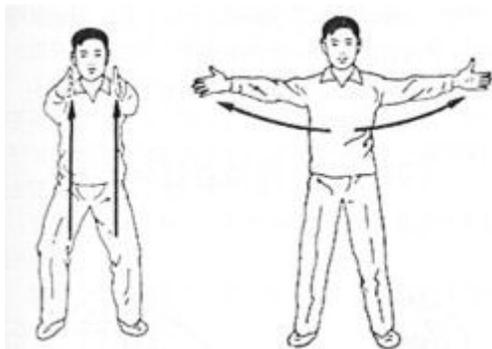
Now move your hands until they are on the front of your thighs, palms toward the rear. Bend your knees slightly more, begin a slow inhale, as your arms begin to float up to shoulder height and your knees extent slightly. Do not lock your knees. Imagine you are in thick water or warm honey, so that as your arms rise, your hands naturally drop so that your fingers point down. Elbows stay pointing down; do not swing the elbows out to the sides as the arms rise up. As you inhale and raise your arms, you are expanding. Your arms should be just away from the body, so the armpits are not compressed. When your hands reach shoulder height, they are hanging

naturally, the fingers should be pointing at the lower dantien. Imagine you are sucking in pure earth Qi in through your Kidney 1 points on your feet as your hands rise.

As you lower your arms, exhale through your mouth (tongue still up), with stale Qi leaving your mouth and out the PC 8 (laogong) points on the palms. As your hands drop, keep your elbows down, leading the hands, and in this thick honey, your hands (wrists) naturally bend so the fingers point up. You should stop the exhalation when your hands touch your body, and the Qi flow stops as the fingers drop to touch your thighs. When your fingers touch your thighs, pause for a second or two, then begin to inhale. What you have done is create a Qi pump. The abdomen acts like a bellows, when it expands Qi is pulled in through the foot points and mouth, and when it contracts bad Qi is expelled through the palm points and mouth. As the air and the Qi enters your body, think of a balloon under your skin, expanding with the incoming air and Qi, and let the pressure help lift your arms. Don't think about lifting your arms; just know they will reach your shoulders.

Now, as the Qi enters your feet, not only does it flow up the meridians, it flows up inside the body, spiraling as it moves. Think about Qi and strength (power) spiraling from your right foot to your right hand traveling up the meridians and in the tissues that surround your muscles. Then think about it spiraling from your left foot to your left hand, then both feet to both hands. Now imagine it flows across your body from one foot to the opposite hand. Then Qi flows from both feet to one hand and as it spirals from the shoulder out to your hand, you can feel great strength, so that your rising hand could lift a hundred pounds. Repeat this up to 38 times, depending on your health and condition, do not over stress.

Wuji Qigong Butterfly Wings:



This is a continuation of the Wujigong Buddha's Attendant. I call it Butterfly Wings since you can imagine the strength generated by the tiny body of a butterfly to flap those big wings. Not only the strength but also the spiral motion needed to move forward and fly. If the wings only went up and down, the butterfly would go nowhere.

Begin by raising your hands on the inhale, just as before, but now, when the hands reach chest high, they rotate so that the fingers point to each other, and the arms flow out to the side, rotating so they are palm up when fully extended; just past your shoulders. You do not breathe into the chest, but the chest naturally expands (opens)

as the arms move past your mid-line (front to back). Elbows still point down. As the arms go back, the hands rotate again, so that as the arms come forward the palms point together. As your hands reach straight in front of you, they rotate again to face down, and the hands sink towards your Dan Tien. You exhale from the time your hands reach their most rearward point, until they touch your DanTien. As you exhale the balloon acts like the air is being sucked out and it contracts, hollowing the chest and pulling the hands towards the center and then down. Your hands are gathering Qi and bringing it to your Dan Tien. The power is still coming from the ground; the Ming Men point in the small of your back is where it concentrates to power the arms as the chest opens and the back closes.

On your last cycle, when the hands go back behind your shoulders for the last time; the hands rise to overhead, palms facing your head. They collect an armful of golden (Sun) Qi and as they move down, fingers almost touching, the Qi is gently pressed into the baihui (DU20) point at the top of the skull, then into the third eye, then into the eyes and Bladder 1 points, into the nose and mouth and is drawn down to the dantien where it is stored.

Wuji Qigong Crane Form:

Start with your legs about ½ shoulder width apart. Place both hands on the front of your thighs. As you inhale, raise your right knee and your right hand. The hand rotates slowly so that when it is shoulder high, it is palm up, then the fingers turn to the right, so that when your arm is extended the palm points up and the fingers point to the rear. Your upper leg is parallel to the floor. When you exhale, the foot slowly drops and the hand and arm fall vertically, elbow leading until the palm reaches your thigh. You are drawing Qi from the ground, spiraling up to your hand where it mixes with the Qi from the air and you draw both in through the Laogong point. It travels down your arm to your Dantien.

Your weight then shifts to the left leg and you repeat the sequence. Inhale up and exhale down. Repeat up to 18 times per side.

Now begin the same way, but raise the left hand when the right leg rises, and the right hand moves down and the arm straightens, but the fingers point forwards. As the left hand drops, the right hand begins to rise, when the right foot lands, the weight shifts and the left foot rises. Your tongue still is kept on the palate and the breathing is abdominal, one breath per up / down cycle. The knee is raised high and if you can, bring it almost to the chest. The toes of the foot point down when the knee is raised up.

Wujigong Closing:

Click your teeth together 36 times, allowing the saliva to collect in your mouth, and then swallow it in three sections. As you swallow feel Qi flow down with the saliva, continuing to the Dantien.

Now that you have a supply of good Qi, you want to circulate it to your central organs. Place your hands (one on top of the other) over the dantien (about 2 inches below the navel), with the Laogong (PC 8) points of each hand in line. I have heard that if you are male the left hand goes over the right and if female, the opposite. Coming from a martial background, where you need to be able to do anything with either hand, I don't see this is important. You can alternate hands each time you practice.

Begin a spiral from small to large, down to the right, then up and over to the left side, down again etc. so that you complete 9 turns until your hands reach the solar plexus at the top, and the Kidney 11 point at the bottom. Then spiral back in to your lower Dan Tien. Breathe abdominally and slowly. Finish at the end of an exhale, and then relax hands to sides.

Zhan Zhuang - foundation of Internal Martial Arts

by Karel Koskuba

Most Internal Martial Arts use some form of standing practice as foundation training (and Taijiquan is no exception in this regard). These standing exercises are usually called **Zhan Zhuang** (pole standing); sometimes they are called 'standing Qigong'. I think it's fair to say that most students are baffled by them. They are supposed to be good for you but most students find them difficult to understand, boring and painful. Yet they are supposed to relax you and help you to 'accumulate *Qi*'.

In this article I shall try to outline my theory that should explain, from western perspective, why these exercises are so important both for Internal Martial Arts and Qigong, how this western view correlates with the traditional *Qi* view and give training advice on how to practice them. In writing this article I have drawn upon my experience from Taijiquan, Yiquan and information from medical postural rehabilitation research and sports science.

Before I start, I would like to establish some facts about how we use our body that I will use in my explanation.

Posture, Movement and Balance

We generally think of posture and movement as being separate - we are either still or we move. Movement and posture place different demands on our muscles and so it is not surprising that

our muscles reflect this. For example, those muscles used mainly for posture have a high content of slow-twitch fibres whereas the muscles used mainly for movement have a high content of fast twitch fibres. But not only are muscles different from each other, one muscle can be quite different in different functions. For example a muscle when used in a **postural (stabilising or tonic)** function will act differently from the same muscle when used for movement (**mobilising or phasic** function). So for ease of explanation, let me pretend that each muscle is really two muscles - a postural one and a phasic one (sometimes called stabilisers and mobilisers). As a further simplification, when I say a muscle, what I will mean is the muscle with all the various sensors associated with it plus its controlling mechanism within the Central Nervous System. So please keep it in mind when I talk about muscles 'feeling this' or 'doing that'.

What is important about postural muscles from our perspective is the fact that they react against the force of gravity and that they act outside of our volition - we cannot normally control postural muscles directly, only indirectly - through intent. For example when we ride a bicycle, we keep our balance by the use of postural muscles. Our intent is not to fall down but we do not consciously control their operation in the way we can control voluntary movement. Conscious control would be too slow - before we could react, we would fall down. This is in fact what happens when we start learning to ride a bicycle - we start by using phasic muscles and through trial and error the postural muscles take over and we 'find our balance'.

Our postural muscles are not only used in holding a posture or in balancing as was mentioned above, but during movement, too. If we think of movement as a transition between postures, we can see that postural muscles are active all the time. But what is the relevance of postural muscles to Taijiquan?

Effortless and Natural

If someone pushes against you and you do not want to be pushed off balance, the chances are that you will resist using strength. If this happens, you are using phasic muscles. But it will be different if someone pushes down on your shoulders. In this situation you do not push back up - you just absorb the push effortlessly into your posture. So in the first example if, instead of phasic muscles, you were to use postural muscles to absorb the push into your posture, you would use far less effort. You could then also use the 'balancing' ability of postural muscles to effortlessly counteract any sudden change of direction. In other words, as the Taiji Classics say: "*when he doesn't move, you don't move; when he moves, you've already moved*". So using postural muscles in this way would make Pushing Hands a far more enjoyable experience!

Where the Mind Goes, the *Qi* Follows

The parallels between *Qi* and the use of postural muscles should be becoming a bit clearer now. When I use intent (*Yi*) to guide my postural muscles to lift my arms, I do not feel any effort - it is as if my arms are being lifted by invisible threads. When I use postural muscles to absorb or neutralise a push, I don't feel any effort and my body reacts automatically to produce a balanced outcome for me. And when you start using postural muscles, you develop a feedback through subtle sensations such as heat, ache, flow and others. All these are properties of *Qi*. If we

describe (human) *Qi* as 'those processes of the body/mind that are outside conscious control' than we would cover most aspects.

Qi* originates in the *Dantian

When you make any movement, before the movement begins there is a short delay during which the body prepares by stabilising your lumbar spine using deep abdominal postural muscles. Normally you will not feel this 'preparation', but it is there and as your awareness increases you can feel it. As we said in the above paragraph, usage of postural muscles equates to usage of *Qi*. Thus any movement is preceded by activation of your *Qi* in your *Dantian* (think of it loosely as the lower abdomen).

Your body will not move till it is properly stabilised. This is important for fast moves, especially explosive *fa-jin*. The delay produced by stabilisation of your lumbar spine makes you slower. This does not matter very much for slow movements. But when you want to move fast, you do want to move fast! There is a way to eliminate or at least minimise this delay by holding your body in a posture where your postural muscles are already engaged.

Song

The posture just described is what is called *Song* (loose, relaxed) in Taiji Classics. What is important in this posture is that everything that can be supported by postural muscles, is indeed so supported. Your body feels light (you can't feel postural muscles) and poised for action, perfectly balanced. You could even say that (quoting Taiji Classics again) "a feather cannot be added to the body nor a fly alight without setting you in motion".

Whole Body Movement

If you stand on one leg and observe for a time what you do to keep upright, you may notice that the adjustment to your posture can happen anywhere from your ankles all the way to your head. That's because postural muscles co-ordinate across the whole body. When you use postural muscles, rather than phasic muscles, you will naturally produce whole body movement.

Postural Dysfunctions

From what you've read so far, you can see that training postural muscles is quite important. But there are still other reasons to be concerned about them. Due to our fairly recent transition (in evolutionary timescale) into upright posture, the postural function related to this upright posture is not yet securely embedded into our neuro-muscular system and can be easily disrupted. It seems the 'new' postural muscles need the input that they get from functioning as postural muscles (i.e. balancing against gravity) to remind them that they are postural muscles. For example if they are held in a fixed position for a long time, they may start to forget their proper role. Our lifestyle unfortunately encourages this (school, office, computers,...). And there are still other ways for things to go wrong. Sometimes phasic muscles can take over the postural role because we did not 'let go' of them at the end of a move and so they may start holding part of our posture. As the posture muscles weaken through inactivity, the phasic muscles' postural role will

be strengthened. Or we may strengthen a phasic muscle too much during training and it may start taking over the postural function within its domain.

All this has implications for our strength. When pushing something whilst standing on a slippery surface, we cannot generate much strength. In order to use force effectively, we need a stable base. This applies within our body, too. If our postural muscles are weak or not working properly, our phasic muscles will not develop their maximum strength. This means that often we can use only a fraction of our potential strength.

It affects our speed, too. If we can't produce enough strength due to weak postural muscles, our speed will suffer. If we use phasic muscles to act as postural muscles, they will not be very effective when we try to use them for movement.

As a result of all this, the majority of us do not use our core postural muscles properly. More than 95% of all musculo-skeletal problems can be attributed to the imbalance between postural and phasic muscles. And it's not only musculo-skeletal problems. As the research in this area is still fairly new, I'm sure the importance of postural re-education will grow steadily.

Having, I hope, established the case for postural training, let's have a look at it in detail. I will present Yiquan's approach to Zhan Zhuang training. Yiquan (pronounced yee-chuan) is an internal martial art with main principles and stages of training quite similar to those of Taijiquan and, with the exception of Zhan Zhuang, quite a lot simpler. Zhan Zhuang in Yiquan, on the other hand, is more detailed and it is the main training tool all the way from beginner to the most advanced level. I will describe several health postures and one combat posture but there are sitting postures, lying down postures (very popular with students!), one-legged postures, slanted postures, etc. However, the ones I describe here are sufficient for the purpose of illustrating the method of practice.

Standing - Zhan Zhuang

General Points

Any worry or anxiety impedes our learning progress. So the first task is to create a calm and happy mental state and it is important to keep it throughout all training. This is a skill, like any other and will improve with training. So create some image that will make your mind tranquil and happy. In doing so, engage as many senses as possible. For example, imagine yourself in a beautiful garden. You can see pretty flowers and trees all around you. You can smell the flowers' scent on a soft breeze. You can feel the soft breeze on your skin. You can hear birds singing in the trees. There are few white clouds in the blue sky. Or you may prefer to picture a scene by the sea, with the white surf breaking on the beach. Any image that will make you as peaceful and happy as possible. Try to express the tranquil feeling in your face and body.

The next step is to relax the whole body. We shall use mental images again, this time directed towards relaxing specific areas of the body. Try to create kinaesthetic images (sensations in the body) rather than visual images.

Health Postures

Stand with your feet about the width of your shoulders apart, feet parallel or toes pointing slightly out, whichever is more comfortable. Bend your knees slightly so that you can relax the lower back. Feel the whole body soft and balanced. Feel that your head is held as if suspended from above by a string attached to the crown of the head. The neck will then be relaxed and free from any tension. The spine, and especially the coccyx, should hang down - an image of reaching down with your bottom, as if about to sit on a high stool, can help with this. Eyes can be either open or closed, mouth nearly open (but not quite), breathing softly and quietly, preferably through the nose. Feeling calm and happy.

After a period of settling down, start observing how your body keeps the balance. Gradually you will become aware of small movements of your body. At the beginning, you are likely to feel the whole body sway a little and get automatically corrected into a balanced position. Try not to control these movements but imagine standing in (warm) water and feel your body swaying as if moved by slow waves. Feel the whole body swaying as one unit - do not move your arms independently of the body. Some people, because they think their body should be still in standing postures, try to keep the body motionless. That is a mistake - the body should be as soft and relaxed as possible.

The emphasis should be on relaxing all (phasic) muscles and feeling how the body balances against gravity. Slow, very subtle movements can be felt and these are used and controlled, first in a passive manner, later actively, using kinaesthetic visualisation.

The role of the Health Postures is to relax the body and develop whole-body connection. This means that a movement in any part of the body can be felt to propagate through the whole body in a natural fashion. The process is characterised by gradually becoming aware of the internal structure of the body and then gaining some measure of control over it.

Empty Posture (Wu Ji Zhuang)



Observe the **General Points** and then the description in **Health Postures** above. Let your arms hang by the sides.

Master Chen Xiaowang correcting Wuji posture of
Kathy Webb

Embracing Posture (Ping Bu Cheng Bao Zhuang)

Start in the **Empty Posture** as described above. When you have settled down and feel calm, lift your arms slowly in front of you in a shape of embracing a big balloon in front of your chest. The hands should be in front of your shoulders, with the palms facing you and the fingers of both hands pointing at each other. Keep your fingers open and imagine small cotton pads placed between fingers, supporting them in their open position. Your hands are soft and slightly curved. Feel your elbows resting on soft pillows.



Karel Koskuba in Cheng Bao Zhuang

With practice, you will be able to achieve a very relaxed feeling. When that happens, you can move on to the next step, creating kinaesthetic images.

Up to now, your elbows were as if resting on soft pillows, keeping your shoulders relaxed. Now imagine that your elbows are touching balloons floating on water. Your task is to keep the balloons under your elbows. If you lift your elbows, the balloons will be free to float away. If you press a little more, they will be pressed into the water and pop out to float away again. Imagine that the big balloon you are embracing is very fragile and filled with helium - if you press a little more, it will burst, if you press a little less, it will float away. The feeling created is that of sticking very lightly to the balloon but making sure not to let it slip from your embrace. The purpose of these types of images is not to become skilful in creating them but in exploring how the body feeling changes and gradually becoming aware of the inside body structure and body's unity. You can start slowly swaying forward and back. Keep your body balanced and experience the movement as a passive movement; for example as if standing in a slowly flowing river that keeps changing its direction. As you get better in experiencing the 'inner flow' within your body, you can discard the images.

Covering Posture (Ping Bu Fu An Zhuang)

From the *Embracing Posture*, keeping your elbows still, slowly lower your forearms and turn your hands palms down. The arms should be horizontal, with fingers of each hand pointing inwards at around 45 degrees angle. Feel as if your arms and hands are resting on a plank of wood that is floating on water. Feel the plank floating on water away from you and follow that motion with your body. There should not be any change of your arms in relation to your body. Then feel the plank floating towards you and again follow the motion. All other points remain the same.

Combat Postures

Practice of Combat Postures is the first step in acquiring Internal Power. Their role is to make the Combat Stance (see immediately below) seem as natural as possible, strengthen legs and create a connection between them, and start using the whole-body connection to 'sense strength' in the body (see 'Almost-Movement' below).

Combat Stance

Stand with your heels about fist-width apart, toes pointing slightly out. Transfer your weight onto your right leg and shift the left foot forward, in the direction the foot is pointing and lift the front heel off the ground. Put about a quarter to a third of your weight onto the front foot. Keep a slight push from the front foot into the back one and vice versa. Each of your knees should point in the same direction as the respective foot. Feel as if there is an elastic band between the front toes and your forehead and between the front knee and the opposite hip. At all times feel that you are holding these elastic bands slightly stretched. The body should be held as described for the Health Postures. Eyes should be open, looking into distance.

Almost-Movement

Observe closely what happens in your body just before you move. Say you get ready to move but you 'abort' the move just before it actually happens. If you try it few times, you are quite likely to notice a certain type of feeling in the part of the body that you were going to move. At the beginning, it is probably easier to feel it in your hands or arms, so if you have difficulty with it, choose a hand movement. Eventually you will be able to feel a sort of 'inner' activity in your body. What happens is that as you form an intention to move and as you get ready to move, there will be some muscular activity associated with stabilising your body in such a way so as to enable the movement to take place. Normally this muscular activity is not noticed as it gets subsumed in the sensations of the actual move that normally takes place. We can't call it a movement, as there is nothing actually moving yet it is more than 'not moving' - that's why I call it almost-movement. This is the basis of 'sensing strength'. In the following Zhan Zhuang exercise we practise moving or sensing (*Moli* - sensing strength) in forward-back direction.

'Primordial Void' Posture (Hun Yuan Zhuang)



Master Yao Chengguang in Hun Yuan
Zhuang

Stand in a Combat Stance and as in the **Health Postures** above, create some image in your mind that will make you calm and happy; keep it in your mind and your body throughout the training.

Slowly lift your arms in front of you as in the **Embracing Posture** described above but this time the left hand (assuming the left foot is in front) is slightly more forward and up than the right hand.

Apart from the position of your arms and legs, the rest should be the same as in the **Embracing Posture** (including creation of a calm and peaceful feeling).

Sensing Strength in a Forward-Back Direction (Qian-Hou Moli)

Keep a very soft and relaxed body structure and create a kinaesthetic image of exerting a great deal of strength. For example, imagine that you are embracing a tree and try to uproot it by pushing with your body forwards. At the same time, imagine that you are inside another, hollow, tree with your arms and the back in contact with the tree and you try to uproot that one by pushing with the back of your arms. Alternate this effort with 'moving' in the opposite direction - pulling the inside tree with your arms and pushing the outside tree with the back of your body. Always use the whole body. Do not imagine that you are actually succeeding in any of these tasks - the trees are too big and just won't budge. During your practice, you stay relaxed and nearly still with perhaps just very small movement. Little by little you will get a feeling of almost-movement.

After a period of practice (say several weeks), slowly work the following six points into your posture:

- lift your foot arches and feel as if your feet are grasping the ground
- feel your pelvis horizontal and from there a slight lifting of your perineum
- feel your diaphragm horizontal by relaxing down the front bottom edge of your ribcage which should fill-out your lower back ("**relax your chest and raise the back**")
- feel the top of the chest/bottom of your neck horizontal
- feel the bottom of your mouth relaxed and horizontal
- feel the top of your head horizontal

These are all important points for re-inforcing the work of your main postural muscles throughout your body.

Tips for Zhan Zhuang practice

Establish a regular routine

The best way to achieve that is to start with *very little* but *every day*. What is 'very little'? Say 10 seconds - and I do not mean it as a joke! If you start with 10 seconds, you'll eventually be able to go to hours with no problem (if you wish).

In Zhan Zhuang you are training your Mind

The best way to train your mind is to *practice only when you concentrate*. That's why 10 seconds is probably a good starting point. As you keep practising, you naturally start to concentrate for longer and so you practise longer. Even when you can stand for a long time, if one day you can't concentrate, stop practising. If you force yourself to stand for a set period, you learn not to concentrate, the practice becomes boring and soon you would give up. When you concentrate, it's enjoyable and you progress faster.

Pain is not necessary

Pain is distracting. Remember, you are training your mind - if the pain in your legs or arms distracts you, you can't concentrate, so stop practising or change to another posture. If you have pain in any of your joints, stop practising - you should never feel pain in your joints. Muscle pain could be OK, but best to check with someone who would know (for example your teacher).

Get someone to correct your posture

It's a good idea not to worry about your posture at the very beginning. First you need to relax and settle into the practice. But fairly soon you should get someone to check your posture, preferably several times and then from time to time till you can feel yourself whether it's correct or not. It can save you a lot of time!

Further Training

Zhan Zhuang is the first step in Yiquan training. For completeness, I show the whole syllabus with both 'modern' and 'traditional' explanations.

Yiquan Training - modern (and traditional) explanation

Zhan Zhuang (Pole Standing) - the Health Stances are primarily for relaxing and retraining the body to use postural muscles (accumulating *Qi*). The Combat Stances are for learning how to control the postural

	muscles using intent (how to use <i>Yi</i> to lead <i>Qi</i>).
Shi Li (Testing of Strength)	- learning how to move upper body using postural muscles (how to use <i>Qi</i> to lead body or strength) and patterning the body for subsequent Fa Li training.
Mo Ca Bu (Friction Step) -	same as Shi Li but for legs.
Fa Li (Release of Power) -	learning how to 'release' power by using phasic muscles supported by postural muscles (learning how to produce Jin by combining <i>Qi</i> with physical strength) along the lines practised at the Shi Li stage and later based on advanced Zhan Zhuang training.
Tui Shou (Pushing Hands) -	this stage is similar to Taijiquan's Pushing Hands. Sometimes called Shi Li with a partner though later fa-jin is also used.
Shi Sheng (Testing of Voice) -	learning to augment power and integrate the centre of the body in a more natural way using breathing musculature.
Ji Ji Fa (Combat Practice) -	fixed and free sparring drills and sparring.

If you miss out the Combat Stances, instead of the 'Shi Li' and 'Mo Ca Bu' stages substitute practice of the Taijiquan Forms(s) and add weapons training after the 'Tui Shou' stage, you get a Taijiquan syllabus.

Yiquan for health

Zhan Zhuang training of Yiquan is ideally suited for correcting all kinds of problems stemming from the imbalance between phasic muscles and postural muscles, some of which were mentioned under the 'Postural Dysfunctions' heading above but there are other benefits that result from Yiquan training. The emphasis on tranquillity is very beneficial in any stress-related problems; the training method of slow and careful movements improves dramatically co-ordination and balance. It is an excellent method of regulating one's metabolism and sleep pattern. The list could go on but the space is limited!

Conclusion and Summary

Zhan Zhuang is the first step in acquiring Internal Power. The emphasis should be on *relaxing* all muscles and *feeling* how the body balances against gravity. Gradually the use of phasic muscles is eliminated from the postural function of the body. Slow, very subtle movements can be felt under the guide of *kinaesthetic visualisation (movement in stillness)*. Later on, when learning to move using 'intent', the body's structure should always be supported by postural muscles only, producing the feeling of standing at any point in the movement (*stillness in movement*).

Do You Make This Zhan Zhuang Mistake?



Yao Chengguang performs *zhan zhuang*

Even an exercise as simple as zhan zhuang has its subtle points, the ignorance of which may hinder your progress in wushu. [Wang Xiangzhai](#), the founder of Yiquan and a master of *zhanzhuang*, said:

We must, first and foremost, avoid the use of clumsy force, in body and in mind. Using this force makes the *qi* stagnant. When the *qi* is stagnant, than the *yi* stops; when the *yi* stops, than the spirit is broken.

To be sure, this is good advice, but even the greenest student is familiar with this principle of no-force. So, instead of dwelling on that, I would like to examine a more specific problem.

Zhan zhuang practice typically begins with *wuji zhuang*, a balanced posture with arms down at the sides of the body. A transition into *cheng bao zhuang* ('Embracing the Ball' Stance) consists of raising the arms up and forward. This action shifts your center of gravity forwards, and unless you compensate for this shift with another part of your body, you will immediately topple over.

The easiest way to compensate for this forward shift is to move another part of your body backwards: butt, back, or head. This type of adjustment may seem correct, because you can thereby maintain your balance without much effort. But it is wrong; it defies the basic requirement of a straight back and impairs circulation. Moreover, these adjustments make it difficult to receive and issue force.



Fuhuzhuang
(‘Taming the Tiger’ Stance)

Instead, accept that **when you adopt different postures with the arms, you must engage different muscles in the legs and back** to remain upright. At first, this will feel uncomfortable, as it increases the load on your entire body; nevertheless, it is correct. This discomfort does not necessarily mean you have violated the principle of no-force; rather, it simply shows that your body is not yet strong enough.

One of the signature benefits of *zhan zhuang* practice is development of *hunyuan li*, or unified martial force. To gain this benefit to the fullest degree, be sure to practice with your whole body.

Zhan Zhuang

Entering the Heart of Trees

Standing Meditation, Wuji, Tadasana, Zhan Zhuang (Stance Keeping, Standing Post)

***San Ti Shi*, Embrace the One, Yi Quan, Hugging the Tree, Bear Posture**

Rooting Deeply Into Tranquility, Power and Vitality

A Chinese Meditation and Qigong (Energy Work) Discipline

A Hatha Yoga Posture: *Tadasana*

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Research by

Michael P. Garofalo

March 29, 2008



A monk asked Zhaozhou, "What is the living meaning of Chan Buddhism?." Zhaozhou said, "The cypress tree in the courtyard."
- *Mumonkan*, Koan 37

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Zhan Zhuang

Entering the Heart of Trees

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Wu Ji or Tadasana: Standing Tall, Basic Standing Posture - Instructions

Wuji (Primordial) Qigong from Wudang Mountain Taoists. By Mike Garofalo.

Wuyiquan: Zhan Zhuang

Xing Yi Nei Gong: Xing Yi Health Maintenance and Internal Strength Development. Compiled and edited by Dan Miller and Tim Cartmell. Orange, CA, Unique Publications, 1999. 200 pages. ISBN: 0865681740. "*Xing Yi Nei Gong* includes (1) the Sixteen Nei Gong exercises handed down by the famous Xing Yi master Wang Ji Wu (1891-1991) described in detail and shown in clear, easy-to-follow photographs of Wang Ji Wu's disciple Zhang Bao Yang (1922-) plus historic photographs of Wang performing the same set, (2) invaluable 25+ pages chapter on Xing Yi's foundational Standing Practice (San Ti Shi) ..." *Xing Yi Quan Standing Practice*, by Tim Cartmell, pp. 58-75.

Xing Yi Quan (Hsing I Chuan): Bibliography, Links, Resources, Quotes, Notes

Yak Riders on Meditation Methods

Yiquan. By Karel Koskuba.

"Yiquan and the Nature of Energy: The Fine Art of Doing Nothing and Achieving Everything."
By Hong Fa. California, 1994.

[Yi Quan - General Principles](#)

Yi Quan Online

Yiquan: Power of Mind. Karel Koskuba. 31Kb. A very good read.

[Yi Quan and Relaxation](#). By Gregory Fong.

[Yi Quan: Up/Down Training: The Key to I Chuan's Six Powers](#) By Gregory Fong.

[Yi Quan - Wikipedia](#) Yi Quan , also known as *Dacheng Quan*, is a martial art system which was founded by the Chinese [xingyiquan](#) master, [Wang Xiangzhai](#) (王薌齋). Wang Xiangzhai ([Chinese](#):王薌齋; [Wade-Giles](#): Wang Hsiang-chai, 1885-1963), also known as Nibao, Zhenghe, Yuseng or as "demon's fist" - was a [Chinese xingyiquan](#) master, responsible for founding the martial art of [yiquan](#). Yi Quan uses Zhan zhuang (站樁) - Motionless postures, where emphasis is put on relaxation, working to improve perception of the body and on developing Hunyuan Li, or "all round force". [Zhan zhuang](#) can also be divided into two different types of postures; health postures and combat postures.

Yoga: Guides, Bibliographies, Links, Resources, Quotations, Notes

Yoga of the Mahamudra: The Mystical Way of Balance. By Will Johnson. Rochester, Vermont, Inner Traditions, 2005. 151 pages. ISBN: 0892816996.

[Yuli Qigong](#). By Jeff Smoley. Wujigong, Zhan Zhuang, 5 Animal Frolics, Jade Power Qigong, and Eight Section Brocade. Jeff borrowed my [disclaimer](#).

Zhan Zhuang

Zhan Zhuang. In German.

Zhan Zhuang: Details Anatomiques.

Zhan Zhuang From an I-Chuan Perspective. By Gregory Fong.

Zhan Zhuang: Meditar Como Un Arbol

Zhan Zhuang Qi Gong In German.

Zhang Zhuang - Foundation of Internal Martial Arts. By Karel Koskuba. 33Kb. An excellent informative article on the topic.

Zhan Zhuang Gong (Estar Quieto Como Un Arbol) A very good article with photographs in Spanish.

Zhan Zhuang Gong: Postures for Rooting

Zhan Zhuang Gong Music. Wind Records, 2000. CD. ASIN: B00004SR3K.

Zhan Zhuang: Posture de L'Arbre French

Zhan Zhuang: Standing Like a Tree

"Zhan Zhuang: The Art of Getting Fit." By Victoria Windholtz. *Tai Chi: The International Magazine of T'ai Chi Ch'uan*: Vol. 30, No. 3, June, 2006, pp 39-44. Photos and descriptions of a lying down version of Zhan Zhuang are provided.

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Zhan Zhuang

Entering the Heart of Trees Practices and Methods

1. [Wu Ji](#) or Tadasana: Standing Tall, Basic Standing Posture
2. [Embrace the One](#), Hold the Tree
3. [San Ti Shi](#), Three Body Posture, Trinity Posture, Heaven-Man-Earth Posture, Spirit-Mind-Body Posture
4. [Chen](#) Taijiquan Post Standing Posture
5. [Bear](#) Spirit Standing Posture

1. Wu Ji

Tadasana

Basic Standing Posture, Standing Tall

Stand up in a relaxed manner.

Your feet should be separated from 6" to 18".

Master Sun Lu-Tang kept his feet together for Wu Ji. Keeping your feet together will require more attention to balance and holding to the plumb-vertical.

A rule to use is "Place your feet at a "comfortable" distance apart."

Some keep the inside of the feet aligned with the inside of the armpits.

Both of your feet should be pointed straight ahead and flat on the floor.

Some turn the feet slightly outward to up to a 45° angle.

You should feel stable, centered, rooted to the earth.

Relax your body (Sung: loose, untensed, open, relaxed, calm).

Clear your mind. Set aside your thoughts on the work and worries of the day.

Keep a pleasant look on your face - a soft gentle smile is beneficial.

Keep your head up and look forward.

Your eyes should be open, with a soft and wide angle focus.

Use the method of looking/seeing called ping shi or "level gaze."

Some close the eyes during Wu Ji standing meditation.

Breathe in and out in a relaxed, easy, and regular manner.

Use the abdominal breathing techniques.

Breathe deeply and exhale fully.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Keep your lips parted slightly.

Breathing should be natural, relaxed, and not requiring your attention.

Your arms should hang down in a relaxed manner at your sides.

The palms of the hands should face the thighs and lightly touch them.

The palms of your hands should face your thighs.

Relax the shoulders and let them hang down.

Some recommend that you keep the tip of your tongue lightly touching the roof of your mouth.

"This posture is often called the "Wu Ji" posture in Taijiquan. It is the resting position, the position

before any motion begins, a state of "grand emptiness." It is the primordial condition - empty, free,

motionless, without qualities. It precedes the movement of Yin/Yang both logically and temporally.

The classics talk of *Wu Ji* giving birth to *Tai Ji*, emptiness transforming itself into the manifold of

cyclic dualities. Our course, our bodies are never completely at rest: our hearts contract and relax,

our blood moves up and down, we breath in and out, our two feet and two arms help keep us in balance as we stand, our mind may be calm and focused but billions of neurons are quite busy in our brains creating that phenomenon we directly apprehend as consciousness. So, the "Wu Ji" state of this posture is more symbolic, allegorical, or figuratively interpreted. Students should note that this posture is very similar to the Yoga posture of *Tadasana* - the Mountain Pose.

We should stand like a Mountain: strong, stable, unmoving, grand, still, aloof, above the mundane,

powerful, accepting but unbroken by the storms of ideas, and avalanches of strong emotions and real worries. "

- Michael P. Garofalo, The Eight Section Brocade Qigong

Empty Standing Posture: Wu Ji Zhuang

"Body is the bow,
asana is the arrow,
and soul is the target."
- B.K.S. Iyengar

"The body extends upwards, with the base as firm as a rock; the mind is steady and attentive. Tadasana teaches balance, centering and evenness and direction of extensions. These principles apply to all the postures."
- [B.K.S. Iyengar](#)

I recommend the following books:

Warriors of Stillness: Meditative Traditions in the Chinese Martial Arts. By Jan Diepersloot.

Xing Yi Nei Gong. Compiled and edited by Dan Miller and Tim Cartmell. Pages 58-93.

Di Guyong on Xingyiquan. Translated and edited by Andrea Falk. Pages 7-36.

"Start in a standing position, with your feet parallel and spaced a shoulder-width apart. Slightly bend your knees. Your back should be straight, with your buttocks tucked and your pelvis thrust slightly forward. Your shoulders must be relaxed and your chest slightly concave, with the chest muscles relaxed. Do not slouch or round your shoulders too much. Your body should be relaxed. Focus your eyes straight ahead, mentally lining up your nose with your navel."
- Jane Hallander, Tai Chi Chuan's Internal Secrets, p. 17

"Stand with the bases of your big toes touching, heels slightly apart (so that your second toes are parallel). Lift and spread your toes and the balls of your feet, then lay them softly down on the floor. Rock back and forth and side to side. Gradually reduce this swaying to a standstill, with your weight balanced evenly on the feet.

Firm your thigh muscles and lift the knee caps, without hardening your lower belly. Lift the inner ankles to strengthen the inner arches, then imagine a line of energy all the way up along your inner thighs to your groins, and from there through the core of your torso, neck, and head, and out through the crown of your head. Turn the upper thighs slightly inward. Lengthen your tailbone toward the floor and lift the pubis toward the navel.

Press your shoulder blades into your back, then widen them across and release them down your back. Without pushing your lower front ribs forward, lift the top of your sternum straight toward the ceiling. Widen your collarbones. Hang your arms beside the torso.

Balance the crown of your head directly over the center of your pelvis, with the underside of your chin parallel to the floor, throat soft, and the tongue wide and flat on the floor of your mouth. Soften your eyes.

Tadasana is usually the starting position for all the standing poses. But it's useful to practice Tadasana as a pose in itself. Stay in the pose for 30 seconds to 1 minute, breathing easily."

- [Tadasana, Yoga Journal](#)

[Tadasana - Google Search](#)

"Our legs are the foundation for movement and action since they carry our weight while walking. They should be firm and steady to hold the brain, which is the seat of intelligence, in correct alignment with the spine. Hence, the standing poses are elementary to yoga. They are designed to bring flexibility and make the body strong and steady.

'Tada' means a mountain and *sama* upright, unmoved. 'Sthiti' means standing still. 'Tadasana', therefore, implies a pose where you stand firm and erect like a mountain. 'Tada' also means a palm tree growing straight. This is the basic standing pose.

1. Remain as natural as you are when standing.
2. Keep the feet together, toes and inner heels touching and the arch raised.
3. Rest the feet flat on the ground and stretch all toes.
4. Heels should not come off the floor and the weight should be exactly in the center of the feet.
5. Tighten the knees and pull up the kneecaps. Compress the hips and pull the muscles at the back of the thighs up.
6. Keep the spine erect, raise the sternum and expand the chest.

7. Keep the stomach in and the neck straight.

8. Do not lift the shoulders when you keep the arms by the sides of the body, fingertips extending downwards and palms facing the thighs.

9. Stand still for 20 to 30 seconds and breathe normally."

- B.K.S. Iyengar

"Tadasana, a position in [Yoga](#), is also called Mountain Pose. It is a very basic standing pose with the feet together and the hands at the sides of the body. Yoga practitioners consider it a pose that promotes confidence and happiness as well as improving posture and creating space within the body. This creating space within the body may allow internal organs to work more efficiently thus improving respiration, digestion and elimination. The pose strengthens the abdomen and the legs. It may help relieve [sciatica](#) and reduce flat feet. Poses that help prepare for Tadasana include [Adho Mukha Svanasana](#) and [Uttanasana](#). Although Tadasana is a very basic pose it is the basis for many standing poses. Urdhva Hastasana is a very similar pose with the hands raised above the head."

- [Tadasana](#), Wikipedia

"Tadasana is perhaps the most basic [yoga](#) pose. All yoga poses are called [asana](#) and the word *tada* translates from [Sanskrit](#) to mountain, thus this is the 'mountain posture'. As it is a very simple and [restful](#) pose it is usually one of the very first that must be mastered by [a new student](#). It is the base for all the other asanas, particularly the standing ones.

The pose is often done at the beginning of a yoga routine, either as the first one, or perhaps after some simple sitting poses such as [virasana](#) or [sukhasana](#). It can also be practised in between more strenuous poses to regain an even [control of the breath](#) and refocus and re-center the body. For the same reasons, it can also be done before entering a [meditation](#) period. Many people also find it beneficial to practise [first thing in the morning](#) after getting out of bed to align and refresh the body before the day.

Although the pose [looks simple](#), and indeed is the most simple of the asanas, it still takes much [practise and concentration](#) to master all the different areas of the body and combine them into a strong yet relaxed posture. Placing the body correctly [from the beginning](#) is of utmost importance as this will help the pose to be balanced for its entirety.

The ideal when practising tadasana is that the [ankles](#), knees, hips, shoulders and ears are exactly in a straight, [vertical line](#). At first, this may take a surprising amount of [concentration](#) and effort.

In order for your body to be lined up this way, its base, that is [your feet](#), must be lined up. Think about [the way people stand](#) most of the time, they pretty much always lean one way or the other. Resting most of their [weight](#) on one leg, perhaps switching between the two, or standing with one leg placed more forward than the other. Even when sitting ones feet are hardly ever [planted flat](#) and together on the floor.

That is why this pose is so important and teaches many of the [fundamental disciplines](#) needed to carry out other standing poses successfully. Balance, alignment, concentration and [awareness of the body](#) are all focused on whilst practicing *tadasana*. When one first begins to practise it is very important to [take care](#) when doing each of the following steps so that the end result is good. As one becomes more [experienced](#) the body will more naturally align its self, and many of the steps will become [less conscious](#).

If this all sounds a bit [confusing](#) just reading through it - and it can be - just stand up and try do it step by step, [it makes a lot more sense that way](#), as you can feel what your body naturally does and what you should be trying to achieve."

- [Tadasana@Everything](#)

"To review, the basic elements of the Paleolithic Posture are: Feet under the shoulders. Slightly bent knees. Receiving and feeling the ground. Long, straight spine. Relaxed as possible. Eyes open with a wide, level gaze. Slow, quiet belly breathing. Awareness. Whole body alive."

- Kenneth Cohen, *Honoring the Medicine*, p.246

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2. Embrace the One

Ping Bu Cheng Bao Zhuang

Holding the Cosmic Ball
Holding the Sphere of Qi
Being Mindful of the Sphere

Holding the Balloon
Hugging the Tree

Description:

Opening Hands, Closing Hands
By Michael P. Garofalo

"Standing at the Mysterious Pass
Centered in the Eternal Now,
Balanced in Body and Open in Mind,
Rooted into the Sacred Space,
Motionless as the Golden Mountain,
Fingers around the Primeval Sphere.

Dragons and Tigers are still dreaming -
Ready for Rebirth.

I breathe in, the World Breathes Out.
The Gate of Space opens;
Heaven moves and Yang is born.
The hands move out, embracing the One.
The mind settles and is clear.
The Dragon Howls,
Ravens fill the Vast Cauldron,
Mind forms melt like mercury,
Spirit rises in the Clouds of Eternity.
Yin appears like the moon at dusk.

I breathe out, the World Breathes In.
The Doors of Emptiness close;
Earth quiets and Yin is born.
The hands move in, entering the One.
The body settles and becomes whole.
The Tiger Roars,
The Great Ox is nourished by the Valley Spirit,
Substances spark from flaming furnaces,
Essence roots in the Watery Flesh.
Yang appears like the sun at dawn.

Dragons and Tigers

Transformed within the Mysterious Pass -
Chanting and Purring.
Awakened,
Peaceful,
Free."

- Michael P. Garofalo, *Opening at the Mysterious Pass*
Opening Hands and Closing Hands

"Please stand in a big circle, and give each other some space, small people in front. Could you please close your eyes and just be in touch with the ground. Feel the earth under your feet, even through the soles of your shoes. And allow yourself to arrive here, everybody on their own, just being grounded like a tree. Imagine that you are a tree, a big, wonderful tree, with strong roots going down into the earth, spreading out deeper, and deeper. You are standing firm as a tree, nothing can shake you too much. Allow your body to shift slightly sideward, to the left, to the right, and back and forth, enjoying these soft movements. And now lift your arms just a little bit and allow your fingers to move, to dance like leaves, so that your whole body becomes responsive with small movements, and you can connect your heart to what is around you. Just stay for a while transparent like this to the environment. And now, still with eyes closed and no speaking, open yourself to the world of sound. And now, slowly open your eyes, and just quietly watch the leaves of the trees, light and shadow, shades of colors, movements. Just open yourself with all senses to what is alive in the woods."

- [Standing Meditation, Amarvati Buddhist Monastery](#)

3. San Ti Shi

Trinity Posture (Heaven-Man-Earth, Spirit-Mind-Body Posture)
Three Elements Form or Posture
Three Body Posture

San Ti Chi is the standard on guard posture used in nearly all styles of Hsing I Chuan (Xing Yi Quan) internal martial arts.

The Sun Lu Tang's martial arts system makes extensive use of San Ti Shi.

Description:

"Posture One - Three Body Posture (San Ti Shi):

The Five Element Creation Fist routine begins as with most Xingyiquan routines in the Three Body Posture (San Ti Shi). The San Ti Shi is the most important and most basic training method in Xingyiquan. All movements in the style do not stray away from the principles of the San Ti Shi. There is a saying which states that "ten thousand methods originate from the San Ti Shi". The San Ti Shi is formed by first placing the feet together with body erect. The arms hang down beside the body. The toes of the right foot turn out at a 45 degree angle. The legs bend at the knees as the weight of the body shifts to the right leg. The left arm rises up to the front of the chest with the palm facing down and fingers pointing to the front. The right hand rises up directly above the left hand (the right index finger is in line with the left middle finger). Both elbows are bent. The left foot steps to the front with the two heels in line with each other. The distance between the two feet should conform to the length of the lower leg. To check the width of one's stance, place the knee of the right rear leg down to the ground. The knee should fall directly next to the left front heel. Should the distance be different, simply adjust the feet to fit this width. The knees are bent with the weight distributed 60 percent on the rear leg and 40 percent on the front leg. Consequently, this stance is often referred to as the 60/40 stance. At the same time, the left hand straightens to the front. The fingers point up with the palm facing out at an angle. The wrist is at shoulder level. The elbow is bent at an angle of approximately 135 degrees. The wrist of the left arm should be directly above the ankle of the left leg; the elbow of the left arm should be directly above the knee of the left leg; and the left shoulder should be directly above the left hip.

The nose, the index finger of the left hand, and the toes of the left foot should be aligned in a straight line. The right hand lowers down to the front of the lower abdomen. The base of the right thumb is pressed against the navel. The eyes look in the direction of the left hand. The head should be held upright with the chin slightly tucked in. The tail bone should be slightly curled under to allow the spine to become straight. The chest should be hollowed and the abdomen should be filled. These requirements should be maintained throughout the entire routine."

- Ted W. Knecht, Yongnian Taiji Martial Arts, Xingyi





"From wuji we move into another standing posture that is called san-ti. The san-ti is the primary posture of Hsing-i. In fact, about 60 % of the Hsing-i student's time is spent holding this posture. The transition from wuji to san-ti is made by bringing the feet together and then raising the arms with the palms facing up along your sides. As your hands reach above your head, they begin to close into fists with the thumb side closest to your body. Sink your chi as the fists are lowered to the pelvis level. The right fist screws inward and up along the center line of the body. This screwing is started in the ground and involves the entire right side of the body. However, do not sacrifice your vertical posture. As the right fist screws upward along your center, the hands rise at a 45 degree angle away from the body. When the right fist reaches the level of the chin, the left side begins its movement. Just as on the right side, the left's movement starts from the ground and is done in unison. The left fist screws and follows a path along the center of your body. The fist moves away at a 45 degree angle and passes over the right fist. As the left fist passes the right, the hands rotate and the right hand is pulled back to a position to the right of the tan tien. The left hand goes forward and is held as shown. Examine the photographs closely. But I must point out that which can not be captured on film. The intent of the lead hand is to project forward while the intent of the rear hand is going back to counterbalance the action of the lead hand. This is an important point that will become more clear as we examine the requirements of the san-ti posture. As the left foot extends forward, the left foot will also step out with the toe pointing straight. About 70% of your weight will be held in the rear leg.

The Hsing-i classics address this transition. Essentially the classics state: "the movement is started with the intent of the mind." With this intent the bear and eagle combine to move the body without further thought or consideration. In regard to this, here is a translation of the Song of Tai chi: "The mind has already moved, and the boxing has started. (The boxing) is hard and soft, empty and full, opening and closing, rising and falling. "

Hsing-i postures, to include the fists and animals, have four requirements that must be met at all times if a sound structure is to be maintained. Let us look at the four requirements we need for standing practice. They are: chicken leg, dragon body, bear shoulder, and tiger embrace. The details of these requirements are spelled out in the Hsing-i classics. I will attempt to summarize them for you here.

"Chicken Leg" refers to the manner in which the feet and legs are held. First, the toes must grasp the ground to secure the feet in their place. The legs are held as if screwing into the ground. The

effect of which is felt in the knees which are inclined slightly inward. The heels will feel as though they want to push out, but the toes hold the feet in place. As a result of the inward inclination of the knee, the inner thigh is opened. The pelvis is relaxed and allowed to sit back and rest on the rear leg. The hui yin is raised. The focus of the balance should be on the bubbling well of the foot. The toe of the lead foot points straight while the toe of the rear foot points about 45 degrees outward. The knee of the lead foot should be above its heel. The distance between the two feet should be comfortable.

"Dragon Body" refers to the turning of the torso in the direction of the rear foot. The head will remain looking straight ahead, however. A key point here is to relax the inner groin and sit back on the rear leg. The muscles along the ribs should also relax as much as possible to allow for good rotation. Do not rotate the pelvis. It remains oriented toward the front. Also, keep your posture straight and erect. The dragon body accentuates the intent of the lead hand to go forward and the rear hand to counter balance it to the rear.

"Bear Shoulder" helps keep the structure sound by relaxing the shoulders and allowing them to roll forward from the side as opposed to hunching them over the top. Think of hollowing the chest through relaxation to help you fulfill this requirement.

"Tiger Embrace" ensures that the arms will keep a sound structure while sending and receiving energy. The palms will be hollow and the tiger mouth open (area between the thumb and index finger). You must always drop the elbow and sink the shoulder. This ensures sound structure and also acts to protect your ribs. Remember to relax and hollow the chest or there will be too much tension and your chi will rise. The index finger will be on the same plane as the big toe of the lead foot and the tip of the nose.

- Jim Dees, Hsing-I: An Examination of Principles

"The San Ti Shi is based on the stances used in the Xing Yi exercise which is said to have originated by General Yue Fei (1103-1142) of the Jin Dynasty or, according to authentic historical records, by Dai Longbang during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), who passed it on to Li Luoneng, a wushu master in Heibei Province. Using internal strength cultivated through this Xing Yi exercise, Li managed to conquer every single one of his adversaries in fighting contests and earned the nickname of Holy Fighter.

Li's style was later known as "nejia," or "internal school of boxing," which lays emphasis on developing internal strength through exercises. The most basic technique to be learned by a nejia practitioner is the standing exercise. As a saying among Li's descendants goes, "The standing exercise is to martial arts what a granary is to food grains."

The three-harmony standing exercise is explained in some of the writings by nejia masters, with the main points as follows:

1) Stand upright and turn the body 45 degrees to the right, using both heels as pivots. Bend both legs slightly so that the knees are directly above the toes. Meanwhile, clench both hands into fists and place them on the hips with palm side down.

2) As you inhale deeply, bring the right fist up to nose level with the arm held close to the body and turned externally so that the knuckles of the fist face forward, while the left fist remains on the hip with the knuckles turned downward.

3) As you exhale, lower the right fist to chest level and, with the left arm drawn close to the body, bring up the left fist to nose level, unclenching it when it passes over the right hand.

4) Then move the left foot about two foot lengths to the front and strike out with the left hand at nose level while unclenching the right fist into a palm and pressing it down to the right "riyue" point as if to protect the rib cage.

5) As the foot and hand movements are completed at the end of exhalation, both legs are slightly bent and the bulk of the body weight is on the rear leg, with the left arm bent at an angle of 135 degrees and the palm facing obliquely downward like a tiger's claw, that is, with thumb and index finger forming a semi-circle and the other fingers naturally extended.

6) Keep standing in this position for as long as you don't feel tired. Traditionally, one would stand for at least three minutes on each foot.

By "three harmonies" we mean, externally, 1) proper alignment between hands and feet (with fingers above toes); 2) proper alignment between shoulders and hips (also with the two on a vertical line); and 3) proper alignment between shoulders and hips (also with the two on a vertical line)."

- International Sun Tai Association, [San Ti Shi: "Three Harmony" Standing Exercise](#)





Michael Garofalo standing in *San Ti Shi*
Red Bluff, California, November 2006

"Standing still in the circle of trees, in the sacred space,
one wet and chilly morn,
feet rooted, toes clawing the earth, sunk deeply down;
twisted like a dragon, alert, poised, ready to fly;
settled like a bear, strong, full of power, gathering;
looking through the tiger's eye, mind-intent, penetrating;
embracing the Trinity of Body, Mind, and Spirit,
as ancient as Now, the Three Bodies, all still, all one.

From the edge, the cosmic circle opened,
Chang San-Feng slipped inside, smiling,
he stroked his long beard and spoke softly,
"Ah, another old man standing so still in *San Ti Shi*.
Continue, my friend, stand in peace, touch the mind.
The subtle winds of understanding blow down the centuries.
When still, fly like the Eagle; when moving, walk like the Mountain.
Tame the Tiger within, ride the Tiger to the temple, and roar in silence.
Awaken like the Bear from the winter of the soul, and rise like a Man.
Feel the vital energies from bone to brain,
Sense the Great Tao before you Now,
Drop delusions, break through the Gate of Mystery,

Embrace the Center, Empty, unattached, ready to be filled
With boundless beauty, everything There, marvelous beyond words."

The cottonwood leaves spoke with the wind,
the sun rose over the shadows,
my legs shook a little;
the cosmic circle trembled,
the Master had gone."

- Michael Garofalo, *Poetic Relections on Chang San-Feng*



"The San-t'i ("three essentials") posture, the basic Hsing-i posture, generates both the Five Fists and the Twelve Animals. Your head should press up as if balancing a book, you elbows and shoulders should be held down, and you knees should be well bent, thus lowering you hips, forming a crease where you lower abdomen and thighs meet (the inguinal area). You weight should be distributed so that the rear leg supports 60% of it. You left arm should be extended, the elbow slightly bent and the fingertips at eyebrow level. You left hand should be open and stretched to form the "tiger mouth" as it strikes forward. Your open right hand should be held palm down, but the fingers pointed upward to protect the groin. Finally, your eyes look at your left index finger, gazing past it, focusing on a point ahead. ... Your left foot is now on a line slightly to the left (about a fist's width) of your right heel. The length of your advancing step should accord with your height."

- Robert K. Smith and Allen Pitman, *Hsing-I: Chinese Internal Boxing*, 1989, p. 34

"The foundation of Xingyiquan is it's stance keeping practice called San Ti Shi (also known as San Cai) , which means "Three Body Posture" or "Trinity Posture." It is the very core of training and develops many of the qualities essential to the development of martial ability.

The "three bodies" refers to the three phases all together, i.e. heaven, earth, and the human being. It corresponds to the head, hands, and feet in Xingyiquan. These phases are again divided into three sections.

Head - The position of the head is the key to the alignment of the whole body. When standing, the head is gently lifted upwards allowing the entire body to release tension and align itself properly with gravity. The chin is slightly tucked down and in while the head is pulled back and slightly up, as if hung on a meat hook. The Eyes are level, looking straight ahead and into the distance. Sometimes the eyes will be closed. The ears "listen" behind you and to the sounds of the body. The facial muscles remain relaxed; one should not wrinkle the forehead creating tension between the eyebrows. The tongue is curved upwards, touching the roof of the mouth and thus connecting the Ren and Du meridians, allowing the circuit to complete and the qi flow smoothly.

Body - The body should be centered and balanced. The shoulders drop and "get behind" the arms as the chest is relaxed and sunk slightly inwards. The shoulders should never lift upwards and should align with the hips. The buttocks are relaxed and have a sinking feeling. "Get into your legs" by pulling the tailbone slightly forward and under. This roots you better to the earth and straightens out the spine. The testicles should be lifted. As the body moves forward, the head and shoulders should remain on the same horizontal plane.

Hands and Arms - The arms and hands are relaxed and held in gentle curves. They should never be fully extended. The fingers are separated and "shaped like hooks," allowing the qi to flow to the ends of the fingertips unimpeded. The hands are open and the palms deep. The elbows should feel heavy (with the mind) and remain dropped, protecting the ribs. "The hands never leave the heart, the elbows never leave the ribs." The index finger of both hands should be on the same vertical plane as the nose, or your centerline. The bottom hand should be at the navel or Dan Tian area.

Feet and Legs - The knees are slightly bent, never passing the vertical line which passes through the tips of the toes. Your weight should be in the back leg in a 70/30 distribution. This may vary a bit depending on the style. The feet grip the ground as if you were trying to pick up the ground with your toes. They should be visualized as twisting inwards and down like the powerful roots of a tree, gripping the ground - rooted, but ready to move without a thought."

- Konghua Xingyiquan Empty Flower Xingyiquan. By Dave Devere.

"Stand with front knee over heel, lead hand along center shoulders relaxed (allowing the elbows to drop inward) and second hand beside lead elbow. Second hand can be open or closed, depending on your school, or whatever you feel like 'expressing'. Generally the closed fist (heart) is a Phoenix eye, and an open palm can be either thumb and 4 fingers flat (as if on a table) and slightly open (cotton balls) or thumb underneath fingers, as if holding a small steel ball.

Feel your body sinking into the posture, as if you are continually sinking and never quite being able to 'arrive' in that posture. Imagine a 1000 lb. Steel ball suspended from a chain off your tail

bone into the center of the earth, and allow the feeling of downward pull to go through your legs from the sheer weight of it. Attach a string to the crown of your skull (bai hui point) and have it pull upward, the combined effect with the steel ball will elongate the spine and open meridians. Another analogy for bai hui is to imagine a 'meat hook' in the back of your skull pulling up, or to imagine a 'push button' for a light above your head, and you have to push up on the button to keep a light on.

Feel the skin from your elbows to your fingers getting heavy. All the weight in your arms and body is sinking into earth. The skin on your arms (elbow to finger) is starting to sag from its weight, and eventually hangs tattered off the bone. Feel the sinking in the bones as the body continues to 'fall' into this posture. Maintain this for a few minutes.

Between your fingers imagine there is cotton balls. Experience the feeling of them and embrace them with your fingers, but don't 'flatten' them, they are delicate. Feel the weight of a steel ball in each open hand; allow the weight to flow evenly through to the elbows, creating a balanced heaviness throughout the arm. Try to 'feed' the lead hand forward, as if pushing the steel ball through extremely thick mud, simultaneously drawing the reverse hand back. Feel the connect wrap around the body and through the spine and into the legs. This is the action of split (reverse, opening) and the element of metal (sinking, condensing)."

- [San Ti Shi Visualization Exercise](#)

"The most basic technique to be learned by a neijia practitioner is the standing exercise. As a saying among Li's descendants goes, "The standing exercise is to martial arts what a granary is to food grains."

The three-harmony standing exercise [San Ti Shi] is explained in some of the writings by neijia masters, with the main points as follows:

- 1) Stand upright and turn the body 45 degrees to the right, using both heels as pivots. Bend both legs slightly so that the knees are directly above the toes. Meanwhile, clench both hands into fists and place them on the hips with palm side down.
- 2) As you inhale deeply, bring the right fist up to nose level with the arm held close to the body and turned externally so that the knuckles of the fist face forward, while the left fist remains on the hip with the knuckles turned downward.
- 3) As you exhale, lower the right fist to chest level and, with the left arm drawn close to the body, bring up the left fist to nose level, unclenching it when it passes over the right hand.
- 4) Then move the left foot about two foot lengths to the front and strike out with the left hand at nose level while unclenching the right fist into a palm and pressing it down to the right "riyue"

point as if to protect the rib cage.

5) As the foot and hand movements are completed at the end of exhalation, both legs are slightly bent and the bulk of the body weight is on the rear leg, with the left arm bent at an angle of 135 degrees and the palm facing obliquely downward like a tiger's claw, that is, with thumb and index finger forming a semi-circle and the other fingers naturally extended.

6) Keep standing in this position for as long as you don't feel tired. Traditionally, one would stand for at least three minutes on each foot.

By "three harmonies" we mean, externally, 1) proper alignment between hands and feet (with fingers above toes); 2) proper alignment between shoulders and hips (also with the two on a vertical line); and 3) proper alignment between shoulders and hips (also with the two on a vertical line).

Furthermore, internally the term refers to 1) harmony between mind and will, which means that only with concentration of mind can you attain a state of tranquility and use the power of the will; 2) harmony between will and "chi", which means that only by the power of the will can chi be conducted up and down the body without interruption; and 3) harmony between chi and force, which means that the internal organs will relax when chi descends and contract when chi ascends, thus creating a force which, as vividly described in The Yellow Emperor's Canon of Internal Medicine, "lies hidden as if in a drawn crossbow and which is capable of displaying the power of a released arrow," a force that is often effectively used by wushu masters for knocking down their adversaries and by qigong masters for treating their patients. "

- [San Ti Shi, International Sun Taijiquan Association](#)

4. Chen Taijiquan Post Standing Posture

I began the study of the Chen style of Taijiquan in March, 2007, at the age of 61. In my very first lesson from [Carmine Farruggia](#), he gave me instructions on how to do Chen style post standing. His descriptions closely match those provided by Mark Chen in his fine book "Old Frame Chen Family Taijiquan," 2004, pp. 68-72. Mark Chen said that the standing meditation exercise is from Small Frame Chen Style (*xiao jia*).

Stand in a horse stance, knees bent, back straight, with the insteps in line with the outsides of your shoulders.

Your feet should point outwards very slightly, with the knees forward. Keep the weight evenly on the ball and heel of the foot.

Some tension in the perineum area should be maintained, as with yoga postures like *mula banda* (root energy lock).

Tuck your bottom of the pelvis/hips forward to open the inguinal area (*Kua*).

Keep your shoulders down, and your head erect.

Both eyes focus on the tip of the middle finger of the right hand, with a soft focus. Eyes should be halfway closed.

Your weight is centered. Aim at feeling deeply rooted, sunk, connected with earth energies.

Your right hand is held in front of your face, fingers pointing upward, fingers straight and close together. The middle finger is in line with the nose.

The middle finger is about 8" inches from the front of the nose. The palm faces to the left. The elbow should be soft and buoyant.

The left hand makes a hook hand (i.e., left thumb touches the four fingers). The hand is placed on the lower back, at the Ming Men point, in the lower lumbar area. The fingers of the left hand point up and the side of the hand rests on the back.

You settle and sink into the horse stance as low as you can go and hold the posture.

Breathe as slowly, gently, and evenly as possible.

The mind should try to center one's awareness on the central abdomen, in the *Dantien*.

Try to maintain a feeling of *Sung*: alert, open, and "relaxed."

The correct posture is rather uncomfortable, and can be quite painful to maintain.

A beginner might want to aim at practicing, for example, four times a day for 3 minutes each practice session, for the first month of practice. Gradually increase the length of the practice time.

Although attention should be on the *Dantien*, practitioners will need to monitor the aspects of their posture and make corrections as is necessary.

Mark Chen writes: "Correct, move on, correct again. If you do this diligently over a period of months, you will find that your posture drifts less during each successive practice session because your awareness expands; part of your consciousness remains where you made a correction, even when the center of your attention moves elsewhere. You will eventually develop a comprehensive awareness of your entire posture so that your mind is free to focus where it will without losing track of any individual part. This is the primary objective of this exercise, and a necessary step in learning Taijiquan."

Carmine Farruggia wrote to me by email on 3/5/07: "Right hand about 8 inches from nose. Eyes half way closed. Concentrate on the *Dantien*. Left hand fingers all touching thumb. Left hand on the Ming Men. Sit in your *Kua* as far as you can. Suspend from the top, drop down from below. Do this from 1 to 3 minutes. If this time is easy then you are standing too high."

5. Bear Spirit Standing Posture

"The Bear Spirit Posture: The name of this posture is derived from a wonderful carving of the Northwest Pacific Coast Indians in which the Grandfather Bear Spirit, the Great Healer, stands behind a shaman who holds the pose. It is very old and, of all the postures, is the most widely known. Evidence of it has been found in countries throughout the world, and

historically it has existed from 6,000 B. C. to the present."

- Belinda Gore, Ecstatic Body Postures, p. 49. See my comments on Wu Ji.

Five Animal Frolics

Description:

站樁氣功

Zhan Zhuang

Entering the Heart of Trees

Quotations, Sayings, Poems

"Standing Meditation is the single most important and widely practiced form of qigong, integrating all elements of posture, relaxation, and breathing previously described. It is a way of developing better alignment and balance, stronger legs and waist, deeper respiration, accurate body awareness, and a tranquil mind."

- Kenneth S. Cohen, The Way of Qigong, p. 133.

"This practice is part of an ancient Chinese health system of exercises. One of the first references found about this type of exercise is in the *Huang-Ti Nei Ching (Classics of Medicine by the Yellow Emperor, 2690-2590 B.C.E.)* which is, by the way, probably one of the oldest books in the medical field. This posture, practiced and transmitted secretly in martial arts circles, has been openly shown to the public since the last century. Wang Xiang Zhai, a very famous martial arts master of that period in China, made of this technique the base of a new martial art that he called I Chuan (Mind Boxing). He used to say, "The immobility is the mother of any movement or technique."

- Victoria Windholtz, *Standing Like a Tree*

"Although there is no obvious movement, they are deeply engaged in one of the most demanding and powerful forms of exercise ever developed. It is so utterly focused on deep, internal growth that it literally requires learning to stand like a tree. It is known in Chinese as Zhan Zhuang, 'standing like a stake', or 'standing like a tree.' It is pronounced 'Jan Jong', or in southern China, 'Jam Jong'.

- Mater Lam, Kam Chuen, *The Way of Energy*, p. 11

"Classical admonitions for standing practice include: keep head upright (raise the *baihui*) and the body straight; eyes gaze forward and level; hollow the chest and raise the back (careful, does not mean "hunch"); relax the waist and *huiyin* (perineum); sink the shoulders and elbows; extend the fingers; keep the *kua* (inguinal crease) open and the *dang* (crotch) rounded; tailbone hangs straight down; weight balanced over *yongquan* (bubbling well points behind balls of feet); qi circulates freely and completely throughout body."

- Michael Jones, *Zhan Zhuang*

"If I had to choose one qigong technique to practice, it would undoubtedly be this one. Many Chinese call standing meditation "the million dollar secret of qigong." Whether you are practicing qigong for self healing, for building healing ch'i, for massage or healing work on others, standing is an essential practice. Acupuncturists feel that by practicing standing meditation they can connect with the ch'i of the universe, and be able to send it through their bodies when they hold the acupuncture needle ... Standing is probably the single most important qigong exercise. One of the reasons that standing is such a powerful way to gather and accumulate fresh ch'i in the body is that during the practice of standing the body is in the optimal posture for ch'i gathering and flow."

- Kenneth S. Cohen

"The most basic method of training is zhan zhuang. Zhan zhuang is an exercise common to many Chinese martial arts, including Taijiquan. Usually, the practitioner stands with the arms

held as if holding a large ball. However, the zhan zhuang exercise can be practiced using any of the end postures of the Taiji form. During "standing" practice a static posture is maintained for a period of time while using just enough strength to maintain the posture. ... Benefits of zhan zhuang include deep relaxation, strengthening of the legs, and increased internal qi. The first requirement is to have a calm mind. This can be achieved in a number of ways - for instance, concentrating on the Dantian, paying attention to one's breath, or silently counting. Through standing practice, emphasis is placed upon developing awareness of maintaining the most efficient and relaxed structural alignment necessary to hold the position. Prolonged practice, along with enhancing postural awareness and tranquility of mind, greatly develops the strength of the legs. When the legs are strong and can bear weight firmly, then the upper body can relax and sink down into them, making the top more flexible. ... Taijiquan requires lightness and sensitivity in the upper body. At the same time, the lower body should have a feeling of extreme heaviness and connection to the ground. This feeling is often compared to a large tree with deep roots. While the branches move and sway in the wind, the trunk is solidly anchored by its roots."

- Davidine Siaw-Voon Sim and David Gaffney, *Chen Style Taijiquan*, 2002, p. 106.

" Stand naturally, the hands loosely at the sides. The ears, shoulders, hips, knees, and ankles should all be aligned when viewed from the side. Close the mouth, and place the tip of the tongue on the upper palate behind the teeth. The eyes may be open or closed. Fangsong (relax the mind and body)

Mentally repeat the verse "weight balanced, mind balanced, listen behind, qi balanced in the dantien."

Slowly bend the knees, lowering the center of gravity, and relax the hips. Shift weight to the right leg. Sink down, and lift the left heel, followed by the toes.

Step out to shoulder width, with weight still on the right leg. Slowly shift weight back to the center of the body, so it is evenly distributed on both legs.

Mentally repeat the verse ♦weight balanced, mind balanced, listen behind, qi balanced in the dantien."

Beginning from the medulla and proceeding downward, relax each vertebrae in the spine, counting to 9 for each vertebrae.

Slowly raise the arms to a shoulder height and width position, as if holding a large ball. Depending on one's ♦ fitness, the arms may be held at a greater than shoulder width. As the arms rise, simultaneously sink the hips more. Relax. Keep wrists and fingers loose and relaxed.

Mentally repeat the verse "weight balanced, mind balanced, listen behind, qi balanced in the dantien. ❖"

Assume a posture with the chest concave, shoulders and hips relaxed, the dantien area relaxed, the back straight. When all these requirements are met, your body will feel comfortable. Hold this position for a set period of time. Beginners should work gradually to a time frame of at least 20 minutes.

Mentally repeat the verse "weight balanced, mind balanced, listen behind, qi balanced in the dantien. ❖"

Very slowly lower hands to the sides, standing up as they drop, but not completely. Keep the hips relaxed. Allow the qi of the shoulders to flow downward to the hips: the elbow qi to flow downward to the knees: and the qi of the hands to flow downward to the feet. Mentally repeat the verse "weight balanced, mind balanced, listen behind, qi balanced in the dantien. ❖ Relax any tense areas in the body.

Slowly shift weight to the right leg. Lift heel and then toes of the left foot, and move it inward next to the right foot. Place first toes, then heels on the ground.

Mentally repeat the verse "weight balanced, mind balanced, listen behind, qi balanced in the dantien. ❖ Count silently to 9. Stand up fully."

- Hun Yuan Zhuang, The Practice of Zhuang Gong

"Taming the Playful Monkey

The Chinese refer to the mind as the playful monkey always jumping from one thing to another.

Zhan Zhuang Standing is about being mindful. Mindfulness of your presence in the present moment. Mindfulness of your body. Mindfulness of your relation to your surroundings. Awareness on the waves of energy that ripples through you and the universe. Awareness of the field of energy that unites everything into one great being. Simply being mindfull of the way (tao).

If your mind start to wander off, while standing there are quite a few remedies to tame the playful monkey and enter into the present moment.

Open your eyes and glare into the far distant horizon with a soft focus on everything without any specific attachment (to avoid daydreaming)

Start watching your own thinking without any attachment to the different thought patterns that naturally arises in your mind.

Accept the present moment what ever it brings and you will release the mind.

Try becoming intensely aware of all sensory input to the finest detail in the far background.

Enter into your body with your mind and listen to the myriad of changes that constantly takes place.

Seek out tensions in your body and then release the tensions with your mind by softly blowing hot hair into the areas of tension, and then tensions will dissolve themselves.

Glare into the far distant imaging your are on beautiful island in the Caribbean standing on the beach looking at the sunset.

See your self standing out on the face of the earth as a single hair follicle.

Imagine your are standing in water to your nose (if you wobble).

Imagine your are rocket about to take off into the far space (if your feet feels numb or your lower part feels heavy).

Imagine your whole body as light as a feather. Or a balloon that can blow away in an instant with the wind (if you feel heavy).

Rest the mind on the center of the body (dan tian) and feel the raise and fall of the waves of energy. Expanding the energy to the skin of the body and beyond. Contracting and storing up the energy. Feel the energy bouncing to the center of the earth and back.

Circulate the energy in the micro-cosmic orbit.

Just barely notice your own breath through the nostrils when you breathe in and out.

Articulate the sound ㊦heng㊦ as a long soft in-breath with your center (dan tian) when breathing in and articulate the sound ㊦ha㊦ as a deep bass humming in your center when breathing out.

Say ㊦I am here or just here㊦ breathing in, say ㊦now㊦ breathing out.

Say ㊦I have arrived㊦ breathing in, breathing out say ㊦I am home㊦ .

Smile to your self. Smile to your body. Smile to your heart, liver, lungs, spleen and kidneys in appreciation. Smile to the world. Release your mind. Be happy and full of joy."

- Suggestions from Thomas, *All-Round Pole Standing Qigong*

"Stand with feet apart at shoulder width, toes point forward or slightly outward. Bend the knees and sit down slightly, weight centered firmly on the soles of the feet. Keep the head and spine erect from tip to tail, chest empty (i.e. relaxed and slightly concave, never stuck out) and stomach full and relaxed, not pulled in. Gaze straight ahead, eyelids hanging relaxed over the eyes. Rest the tip of the tongue on the upper palate behind the front teeth, let the lips and the teeth hang slightly open. Arms hang by the sides. The body should feel perfectly poised, relaxed but not slack, breathing completely natural and no joint locked, as if the body is suspended in air, hanging from the top of the head by a string.

This is the basic standing posture. Stand like this for a few moments relaxing the whole body and collecting one's thoughts before assuming the following posture.

Raise the arms to shoulder level, keeping them curved as if holding a ball in each arm. Keep the fingers apart slightly curved, palms pointing in and slightly down. Hands are at shoulder distance apart, and about three fists distance from the chest. Elbows should be slightly below the level of the wrists. Shoulders must be relaxed, not hunched, with a slight sense of outward stretching, so the chest feels open, neither sticking out nor constricted. Curved arms should also have a slight sense of inward force, as if not letting a ball drop, though not physically in tension.

The posture is most suitable for those without any particular illness to strengthen the constitution, prevent illness and promote health into old age.

- J. P. C. Moffett, Wang Xuanjie, Traditional Chinese Therapeutic Exercises: Standing Pole. Foreign Languages Press May 1994. ISBN: 7119006967. Pages: 49-52

"Find a comfortable and convenient place to stand, with your feet about shoulder width apart and parallel, and start to feel the support of the Golden Cord holding you up from the top of your head, held by Kuan Yin, the Chinese Goddess of universal compassion. Just allow your body to relax and hang off that cord. Allow Kuan Yin to do the work of holding you up, just trust her to do her job.

Allow the weight of your body, and any tension in your body, to start to drain out, starting from your head, through your face, your neck, your shoulders, your arms, your wrists, your hands, your torso, your belly, your pelvis, your thighs, your knees, your ankles, your feet, all the way

down into a reservoir three feet under the ground.

Allow even your feet to relax, with your weight going down into the ground just forward of the heels, so the front parts of your feet don't have to exert any force on the ground, and can sit easy and relaxed on the ground, kind of like the webbed feet of a duck.

Imagine you have a horse between your legs, and that the very bottom part of your body is resting on the saddle of that horse. So there's a feeling of the weight being taken on your perineum - that's the very bottom point of the body. Relax into the support you're feeling there. Relax the buttocks and the anus - create a feeling of everything opening down to the ground.

Feel your pelvis like a bowl full of water.

Now imagine strings attached to your wrists, held by Kuan Yin, the Chinese goddess of compassion.

In a few moments you will feel her lifting up your wrists by these strings. And as she lifts up your wrists, allow the shoulders to relax and open as much as they can. One good way to do this is to imagine all the joints of the shoulders expanding, just a little more space in all the joints of the shoulders, as if every bone in the shoulders is getting just a little further apart from all its neighbors.

Have your palms facing your body at around the height of your heart, so that there's a round space between your arms and your body, as if you were hugging somebody. By the way, one of the Chinese names of this position is 'Hugging the tree.' You can even do this while really hugging a tree if you want to.

Allow the shoulders and elbows to roll down and back, making more space, as if opening your arms to hug somebody, greeting a long-lost friend, opening your arms, saying 'AAAah!, good to see you!'"

- *Chi Kung Standing Meditation*, Instructional CD, by Martin ?

"In its most pure form, kyudo is practiced as an art and as a means of moral and spiritual development. Many archers practice kyudo as a sport, with marksmanship being paramount. However, the highest ideal of kyudo is "seisha seichu", "correct shooting is correct hitting". In kyudo the unique action of expansion (nobiai) that results in a natural release, is strived for. When the spirit and balance of the shooting is correct the result will be for the arrow to arrive in the target. To give oneself completely to the shooting is the spiritual goal. In this respect, many kyudo practitioners believe that competition, examination, and any opportunity that places the archer in this uncompromising situation is important, while other practitioners will avoid

competitions or examinations of any kind."

- [Kyudo - Wikipedia](#)

"By yourself, try all the same things standing with your feet parallel to each other, about shoulder width (or less) apart, with your knees just slightly bent. Relax your shoulders, shoulder blades, and chest. Gently adjust your coccyx (tail bone) so that it is more or less pointed directly down toward the ground. When this happens, the arch in your lower back will naturally flatten out. See if you can sense your lower back and sacrum connecting directly to your legs. (Remember to let your arms hang naturally at your sides with your palms facing back.) Once you are more or less comfortable in this posture, use your attention to slowly scan your entire body from the top of your head to the bottoms of your feet, noting where there is any unnecessary tension in your muscles. As you scan your body, do not attempt to change anything. Simply observe and sense. Once you reach the bottoms of your feet, start again from the top of your head and see if you can gradually release any unnecessary tension in your muscles downward through your body into the earth. As you try this, you will begin to sense a new dimension of inner balance, a sense of being supported by and rooted to the earth. Start out by standing this way for at least five minutes a day. Once your legs and pelvis begin to feel comfortable in this posture you can move on to ten or fifteen minutes a day or more.

After undertaking this practice for a couple of weeks, begin to experiment with it in your ordinary life—as you talk to friends, wait in line, and so on. The idea is not to take the same exact posture that you take when working alone, but rather to have the continuing sensation of releasing all your muscular tension downward through your body into the earth. See if you can "just stand" with your weight equally distributed through both feet and your arms at your sides, totally open to whatever impressions or perceptions the moment may bring. If you observe a thought or emotion making some part of your body tense, just return to the sensation of releasing this tension downward into the earth. As you continue to work in this way in whatever circumstances you may find yourself, you will begin to discover a deep sense of relaxation not just physically, but also mentally and emotionally. You will find yourself spontaneously "letting go" of much that is unnecessary in your life."

- Dennis Lewis, [The Transformative Power of Conscious Standing](#)

An old Chinese Zen Master once said, "Some of you are taking me literally when I say, 'Don't think,' and you are making your minds like a rock. This is a cause of in-sentientcy and an obstruction to the Way. When I say not to think, I mean that if you have a thought, think nothing of it."

"Body is the bow,
asana is the arrow,
and soul is the target."

- B.K.S. Iyengar

"The foundation of the internal martial arts (and many external martial arts as well) is the practice of "stance keeping" or Zhan Zhuang. In the Xing Yi Quan system, stance keeping is the very core of training and develops many of the qualities essential to the development of martial ability. ... The root of efficient movement is stillness. Therefore, a logical place to begin training is simply standing still. Standing still, one may reduce the number of variables to be dealt with to the bare minimum. The mind may naturally quiet and focus itself on the feeling of correct posture and true balance. The first goal of standing is to return to the state of "not-doing" anything, thereby inhibiting previously acquired bad habits and allowing the neuromuscular system to register the feeling of natural balance until it once again becomes the predominant state. Any movement initiated from this state of true balance will naturally have power."

- Tim Cartmell, p. 58, *Xing Yi Nei Gong*

"Beginning students must first stand 'hun yuan zhuang' (Standing meditation. 'Hun' = mixed, foggy, obscure, confused, all over etc. yuan = beginning, zhuang = 'post') The body must be stilled and intentioned must be focused on 'wuji'. From stillness into motion is the taiji. ... The single palm change is the mother of ten thousand palms. The mother palms give birth to them all. Its place is between stillness and motion. It could be moving; it could be still. Towards movement but not moving. The San Jian Zhao (3 points stance) of Bajiquan, the San Ti Shi of Xing Yi Quan, the Bu Chan Shi (Snatching a Cicada Stance) of Preying Mantis, The Ti Shou Shi (rising hands stance; the opening position) of Taijiquan, all of them follow this logic. The incredible power of baguazhang can all be found within the single palm change."

- [Baguazhang of Liu Yun Chiao](#)

"In the *zhan zhuang* form, you do literally "stand like a tree;" your arms assume positions resembling the branches of a tree while your feet and legs remain motionless. Some instructors include the visualization of roots reaching out from the soles of your feet and spreading into the soil. Like all *qigong*, the intent of this form is to maintain the free-flow of your internal energy (*qi* or *chi*) since stagnant or blocked energy is at the root of most illnesses. *Zhan zhuang* delivers the added benefit of actually increasing your internal energy and making you stronger as you stand while holding your arms in each of the five basic positions. It is recommended that you begin with five minutes and build up to standing for about thirty minutes each day."

- [Standing Meditation, Living Stress Free](#)

"Zhan zhuang practice typically begins with *wuji zhuang*, a balanced posture with arms down at the sides of the body. A transition into *cheng bao zhuang* (◆Embracing the Ball◆ Stance) consists of raising the arms up and forward. This action shifts your center of gravity forwards, and unless you compensate for this shift with another part of your body, you will immediately topple over. When you adopt different postures with the arms, you must engage different muscles in the legs and back to remain upright. At first, this will feel uncomfortable, as it increases the load on your entire body; nevertheless, it is correct. This discomfort does not necessarily mean you have violated the principle of no-force; rather, it simply shows that your body is not yet strong enough. One of the signature benefits of *zhan zhuang* practice is development of *hunyuan li*, or unified martial force. To gain this benefit to the fullest degree, be sure to practice with your whole body."

- [Do You Make This Zhan Zhuang Mistake](#)

"Begin by standing with your feet parallel and about shoulder-width apart. Take a couple of deep long breaths, saying ◆aaah◆ (either out loud or to yourself) with the exhales. Let go of any tension you find in your shoulders, neck or face ~ simply let it ◆melt◆ away, with the exhale ◆ as though that tension were a frozen river, being touched now by a warm sun, and flowing downward, like the gentle cascade of a waterfall, forming pools at your feet. Feel your energy, your awareness, settling into your feet & legs & hips & belly, connecting you strongly to the earth. Bend your knees just slightly ~ just enough to feel a softness at the backs of your knees.

Let your arms hang down next to your sides, so that your thumbs are gently touching your outer thighs (which means the backs of your hands will be facing forward). Separate and extend your fingers downward, so that they◆re straight without being rigid, and so there◆s space between each pair of fingers (as though you had webbed fingers). Now, float your hands directly forward, three or four inches, so they◆re hovering now just in front of (but still to the sides) of your thighs. This should create a feeling of hollowness in your armpits. Let your elbows be bent just enough to create a feeling of softness in them.

Now choose a gazing point, eight or ten feet in front of you. Rest your eyes very softly on that point (or area). (The meditation Masters of the past have discovered that there◆s a connection between the movement of our eyes, and the movement of thoughts in our mind ◆ So making the eyes still is a wonderful way to calm the mind.) Try to let that spot you◆re looking at *come into* your eyes, instead of reaching out (with the energy of your eyes) to ◆grab◆ it. In other words, let your eyes become receptive, instead of active ◆ Relax your jaw, so that there◆s space between your upper & lower teeth, even though your lips are gently closed."

- [Qigong Standing Meditation by Elizabeth Reinger](#)

"I call the ancient, natural way of standing "the Paleolithic Posture." In the Paleolithic Posture, the knees are slightly bent, the spine is straight, and long, the breath is deep and quiet, and the eyes are open and alert. The body feels like a tree with deep roots for balance and tall branches for grace. Although we usually think of a "posture" as a static pose, it includes our carriage in movement as well. Since a straight and tall stance confers the greatest balance, sensitivity, awareness, and alertness, we see it in a scout standing still on a mountain lookout or walking through camp to a council meeting."

- Ken Cohen, *Honoring the Medicine*, p. 240

"Standing meditation or Zhan Zhuang is an ancient form of Chi Kung that is gaining popularity in China and the rest of the world. This system is simple on the outside, and as deep as the universe on the inside. Standing exercises are extremely important to Tai Chi training, and the essence of self-healing.

The basic idea for all standing exercises is the use of the mind to move energy. These exercises can be as easy as just standing in a normal posture and breathing naturally, or as complex as twisting the body or sinking into a very deep posture and moving the breath in quite intricate patterns. In any case, the exercises always proceed from simple to complex as the student gains the necessary skills needed to use the mind to move energy.

T. T. Liang, one of America's leading Tai Chi masters, used the term Imagination Becomes Reality to describe how Tai Chi and standing meditation works. At first you imagine certain things, like holding a ball and feeling it expand and contract, or feeling energy circle in an orbit inside the body. Before long, you will actually be able to feel these sensations as the mind (Yi) acts on the energy (Chi) to create internal energy (Jing or Shen). These sensations are, at the beginning, quite obvious like tingling, shaking, vibrating, or heat. As the body opens and relaxation happens, the grosser sensations vanish and the movement of the finer energies becomes possible. In the final stages, time seems to vanish, the separate ego identity merges with the universal energy or Tao, and the person has realized his or her own potential. It is a journey requiring diligent and constant practice, yet is attainable by everyone. Many individuals throughout history have walked on this path, and their teaching can and should guide you. There are many pitfalls, obstacles, and quite difficult places, yet if you follow the advice of those who have gone before, and listen to your inner self, the potential problems will be minimized."

- [Michael Gilman, Standing Meditation](#)

"Cross-culturally, the posture of standing meditation in one position with arms at sides and eyes open for at least fifteen minutes is used in the martial arts, spiritual practices and in the military as a way of reinforcing and coalescing the three universal powers and of connecting the practitioner with the greater being of who he or she is. ... The task of the warrior is to show up, to be visible and empower others through example and intention. ... Universally there are three kinds of power: power of presence, power to communicate, power of position. Shamanic societies recognize that a person who has all three powers embodies "big medicine." Every human being carries the power of presence. Some individuals carry such presence that we are drawn to and captivated by these charismatic people even before they speak or we know anything about them. A warrior or leader uses the power of communication to effectively align the content, timing and placement to deliver a message at the right time in the right place for the person involved to hear and receive it. A warrior demonstrates the power of position by the willingness to take a stand. Many politicians have great presence and great communication, but lose power when they allow constituents to wonder where they stand on specific issues."

- Angeles Arrien, [Four Ways to Wisdom](#)

"Hi, in the early 60's I lived and trained in ZZ with a man who was raised in the Sarmong Brotherhood monastery on the NW side of the Himalayas. For many years I did 1-2 hours of ZZ a day. (9 postures) I still go back to it at times...sort of like visiting an old friend.

He taught by the principles:

(1) All motion begins from a still point. Be the point and the knowing of how to defend is automatically yours. (No "method" of how to use it in self defense was necessary. This is the source of Ziranmen Boxing.)

(2) ZZ is in three modes according to the persons evolvment as a Being: Heaven, Man, and Earth. Earth...practitioners want martial uses for standing. That is their level of being. Man...practitioners want health uses for ZZ. Heaven...practitioners see the still point as a return to Source. They use ZZ as a vehicle to return to the clear Light of emptiness. (See Tibetan Dzogchen for example.)

(3) When "Heaven" ZZ is done correctly, the energy entering the body will begin to move the body without the brain/muscles being involved. (i.e. don't think, then move). Each day the energy will move the body as it needs it. When the moving is over the body will vibrate at a very fine frequency, like a tuning fork.

(4) Tai Chi came from this concept long ago. (A friend who lived off and on in the Chen village said the old men told him all Chen Tai Chi was originally only ZZ. Then the chi linked the ZZ positions together into a form.)

(5) Martial uses of ZZ...the body will move as driven by the energy (see (3) above) and this is called "No Form". (No contrived set of moves, brain muscle driven). This is balanced with "Form" wherein you use a memorized set of movements, but let the energy (in (3) above) move you in it's patterns. How to apply it is intuitive. The energy will protect you."

- Ron Loving, email on 3/20/2008

站樁氣功

Zhan Zhuang

Entering the Heart of Trees

Notes and Observations, Questions, Leads

Standing Relaxation and Meditation Posture

"Wu Ji" is the name of the Chinese Qigong Standing Meditation Posture

"Wu" means emptiness, the primordial undifferentiated Ground of Being

"Ji" means the limit, the boundary, the terminus, the end point

"Tadasana" is the name of the Indian Yoga Standing Meditation Posture

"Tad" means mountain

"asana" means posture, specific body position, ritual posture

X References: Wu Ji, Standing Meditation, Zhan Zhuang, Standing Post, Standing Like a Tree, Yi Quan, I Chuan, Pole Standing



Behind The Zhan Zhuang Training

[Neigong Discussion](#)

Zhan Zhuang training (Standing Exercise) is a significant component of the internal martial arts. The objective of Zhan Zhuang training is to improve the condition of the physiological organs'. As a result of [Solo Drill](#) one will develop stronger bones, better coordination in the contraction and extension of all muscle groups so that all movements will be powerful, improved oxygen utilization so that one will not get tired, and improved nervous system function so that all movements come from one center and all martial responses become natural reflexes.

In Zhan Zhuang training, a correct position is when the weight is equally balanced on two feet to form a comfortable and relaxing position, an opportunity for the intent to appear and work. Zhan Zhuang works by applying the concept of intent over physical force to improve all the physiological organs and their functions. Today, there are many publications confirming that one's mental condition is directly affected by the physical body. In Zhan Zhuang training, we use the mind to train the body.

Although one is standing in a physically still position, the intent is working very hard inside the body to harmonize all physiological organs with this particular position so that all parts of the body are contributing to maintain this static position. There are three steps of Zhan Zhuang training associated with martial art's high demand: recognition, harmony, and application.

1. Recognition

In this step, the intent is focused on positioning the body correctly to maximize the training of physical and mental conditions. Most people, standing still for only one

minute will begin to experience difficulty, such as physical discomfort, mental doubts and shortness of breath. When confronted with these situations, a practitioner should begin to develop different forms of intent to reduce physical pain, gain confidence and enjoyment. One common method of focusing and eliminating difficulties is to imagine standing in front of a tranquil environment. When one can stand in a position for 15 minutes without any problem, one can go onto the next step.

2. Harmony

In this step, the intent is focused on the body's togetherness by utilizing the 'method of opposition'. In any martial strike, a powerful strike is always associated with the whole body. The better the unification, the more power there is the strike and less possibility of physical injury to the practitioner. In this step of Zhan Zhuang a practitioner imagines every part of his body's muscles relaxing and stretching so that they end up with forces pulling from top and bottom, left and right, front and back, in all directions. When one can stand in a position for 10 minutes without tiring, one can go onto the next step.

3. Application

In this step, the intent is focused on the goal of martial application. One of the characteristics of martial arts is that they are dynamic. Therefore, martial arts techniques are always associated with physical movement in order to be effective. A practitioner should imagine an opponent is attacking from a certain direction and that one must mobilize the whole body from inside and outside, top and bottom, left and right, front and back to neutralize the threat. Since it is difficult to coordinate physical movement and intent's creativity, it is better control if one begins with a slower movement and simpler concept of intent.

Later on, when one is practicing Zhan Zhuang with a stronger intent and quicker physical motions, one will witness more power developed by discharging through physical movement. There are not many martial art styles that apply this bare handed Fa Jing method to developed power. One reason is that if the movement is not executed properly, one will end up with physical injury. Therefore, this method is not recommended for beginners, it is recommended for more experienced practitioners. A better method the beginner is to use a staff or spear.

The result of this Zhan Zhuang training is great. However, one should not fool himself. There is no short cut, begin with one step at a time. One must master the first step before engaging in the second and third steps. A tall building begins with a strong foundation.

Zhan Zhuang Expansiveness Effects

August 14, 2006 in [Taiji](#)

Last night, I was able to get back up to 20 mins of zhan zhuang. For the past couple of sessions, it's been quite difficult, but the time went rather quickly last night. I got into my posture, relaxed into my stance and calmed my breathing and mind. Not too much emphasis on the breathing, and not too much emphasis on forcing calm, just letting the feeling sink. To be more inwardly focused, I closed my eyes and felt my breath while slightly listening behind. It was actually quite calming and I didn't really feel the tension in my arms like I used to.

I went through the main 3 postures: wuji (hands at sides), holding ball at dantien level, holding ball at heart level, back to wuji. I didn't use any timing to note when I should switch to the next posture, instead I relied on my body telling me when it was time to switch. It was as if my body instinctively knew when the time was right and it controlled the posture switching, though quite gradual in movement. Towards the end of the session, I started feeling as if I was expanding in all directions simultaneously.

I opened my eyes, still feeling the expansiveness and went directly into the opening sequence of the yang form. I didn't force my hands to come up, but instead thought about the intention of my arms rising. About 3/4 the way up, I felt some slight tension in my shoulders, however instead of forcing the body to calm, I took my mind back to the zhan zhuang state until the tension dissipated. The hands then lowered and I let my intentions drive my movement.

While doing the form, I did not feel any soreness in my legs, I did not feel any tension in my back, I just let my body move. In doing so, I still felt this expansiveness in all of my movements. It felt as if my left ward off was able to cover the whole space of my bedroom, like there was no boundry to the ward off, it was not constricted to the sphere formed by my physical body, but was able to expand beyond my physical body. At the same time, it was as if I was seeing, but not looking. Listening, but not hearing. Moving, yet not moving.

When I finished the first section, I felt very good, very awake. I was not sore in any part of my body and I had a slight smile. It just felt good to move, and I wanted to do more. I remained in wuji posture for a bit and went through the section in my head, it was all vivid as if I was **really** doing it. Mentally, I ended with the first cross hands. Mentally, I performed the ending posture of lowering my hands and bringing me feet together. Physically, I got a sip of water and went to bed in a very calming, relaxed state.

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