

TAIJIWUXIGONG



**Self healing
by
Spontaneous movement**

Dr. Shen Hongxun

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Registration number

4.105891.003

Inspectie der registratie Haarlem

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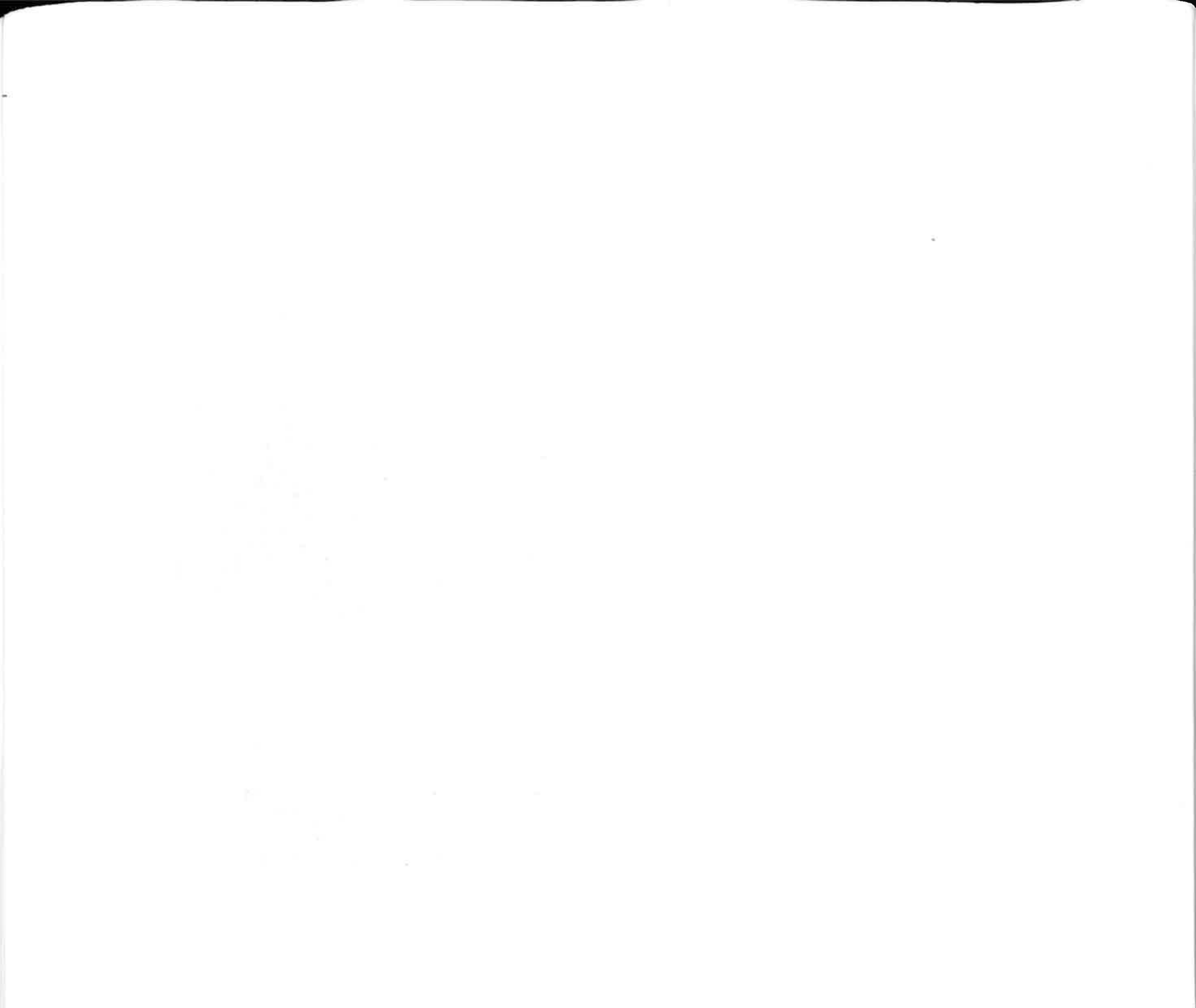
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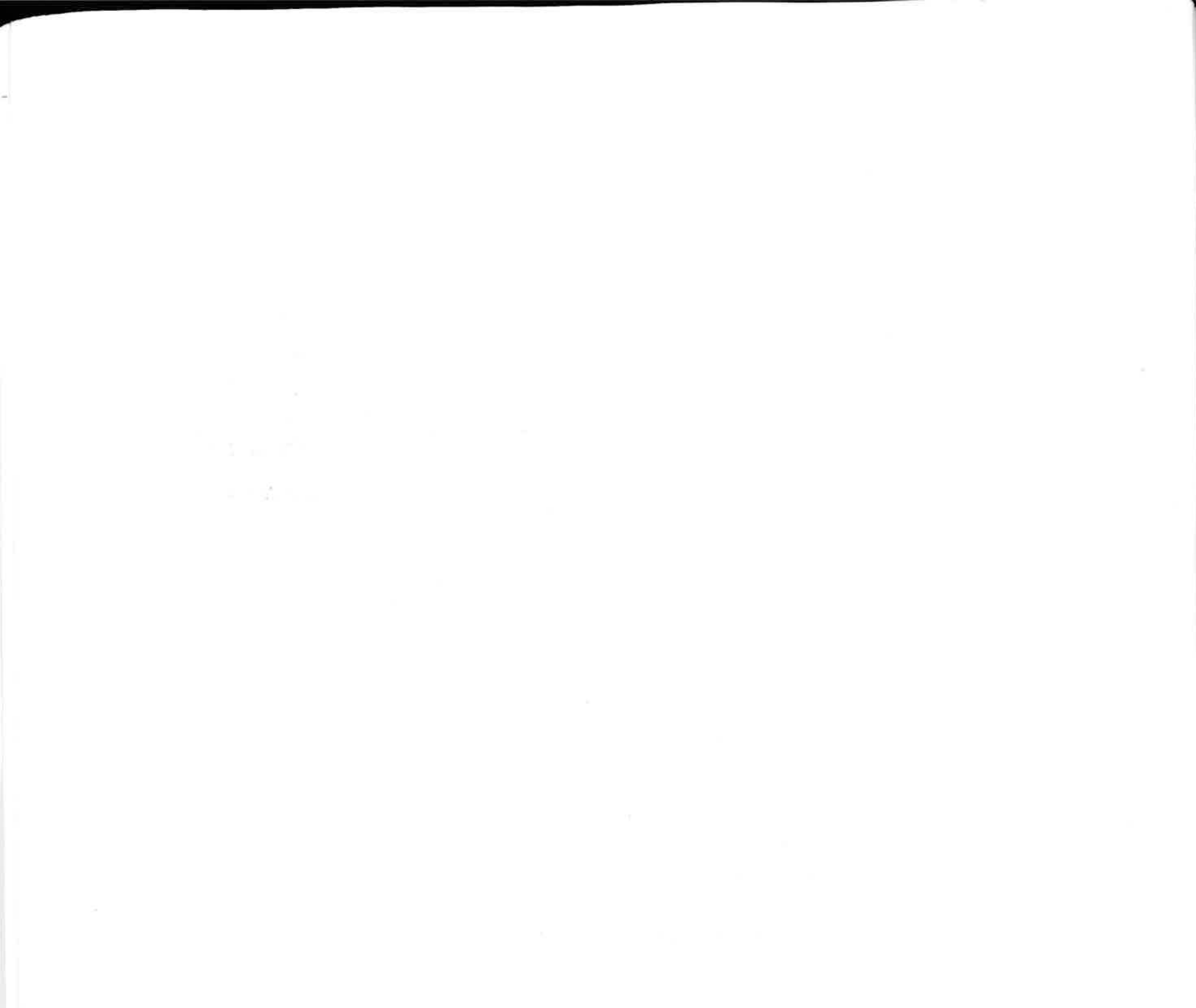
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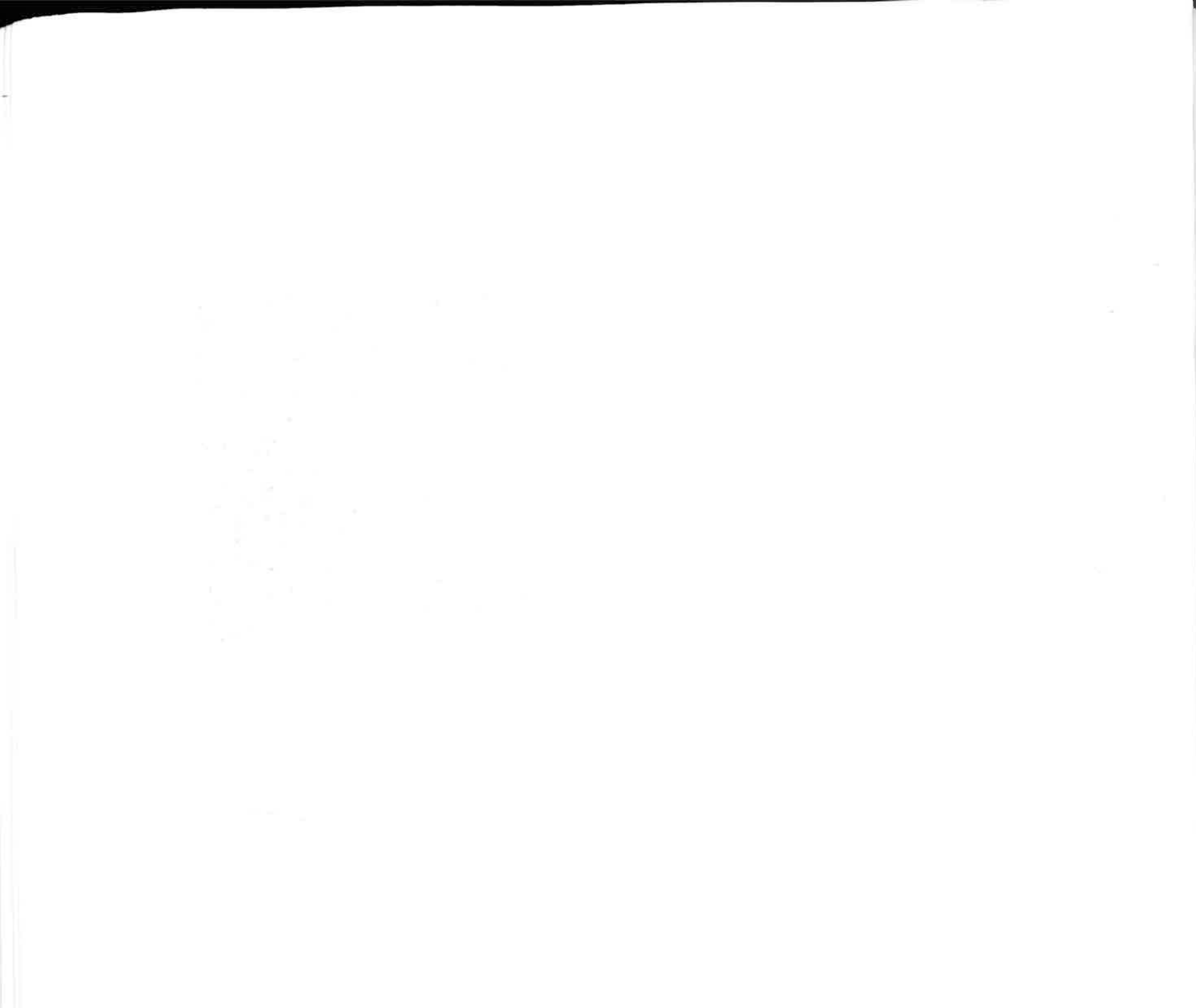
Dr. Shen while practising
(16 years old)



Researching the antibiotal function of Chinese herbs
(25 years old)



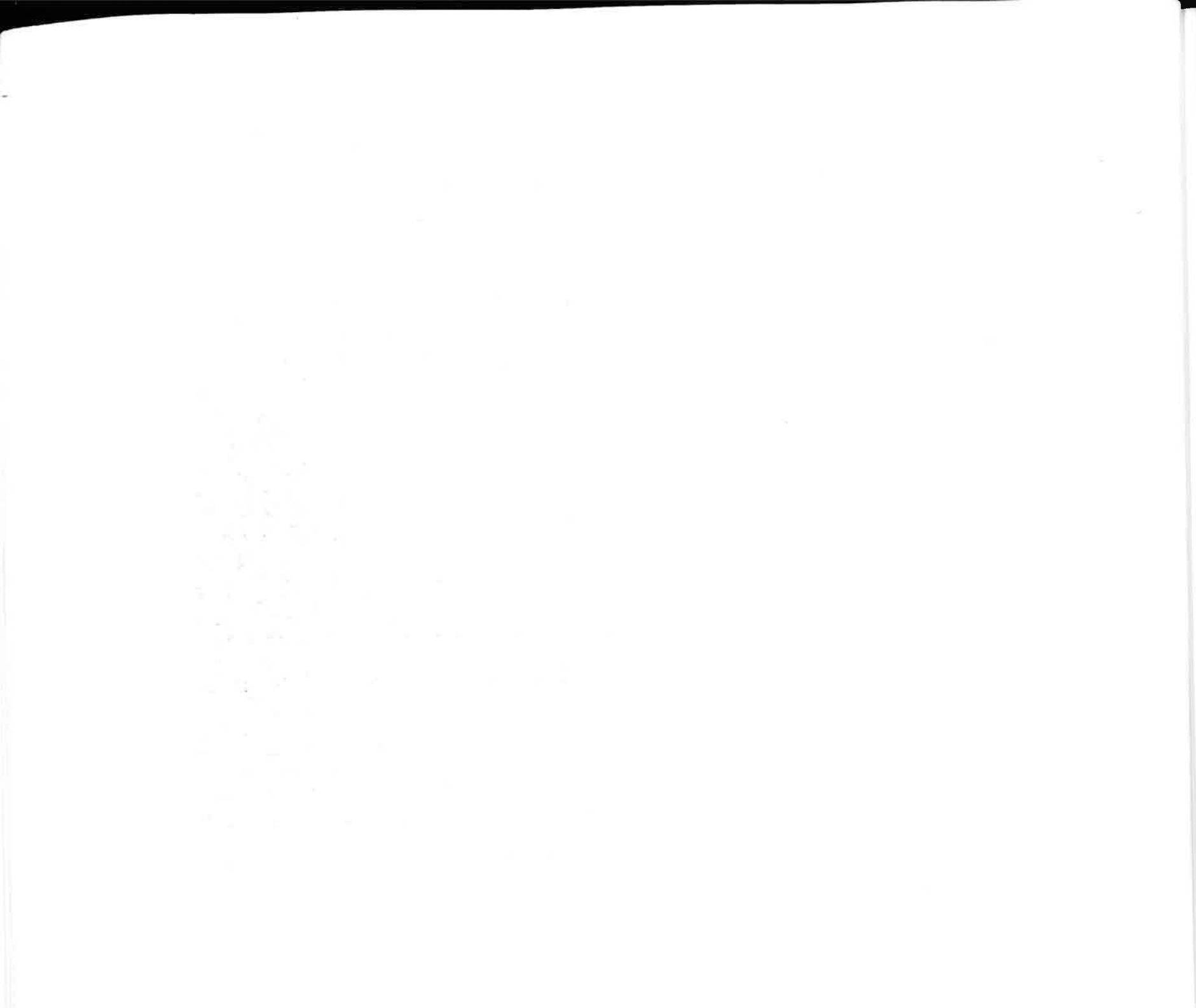
Writing the original Chinese Taijiwuxigong book (42 years old)





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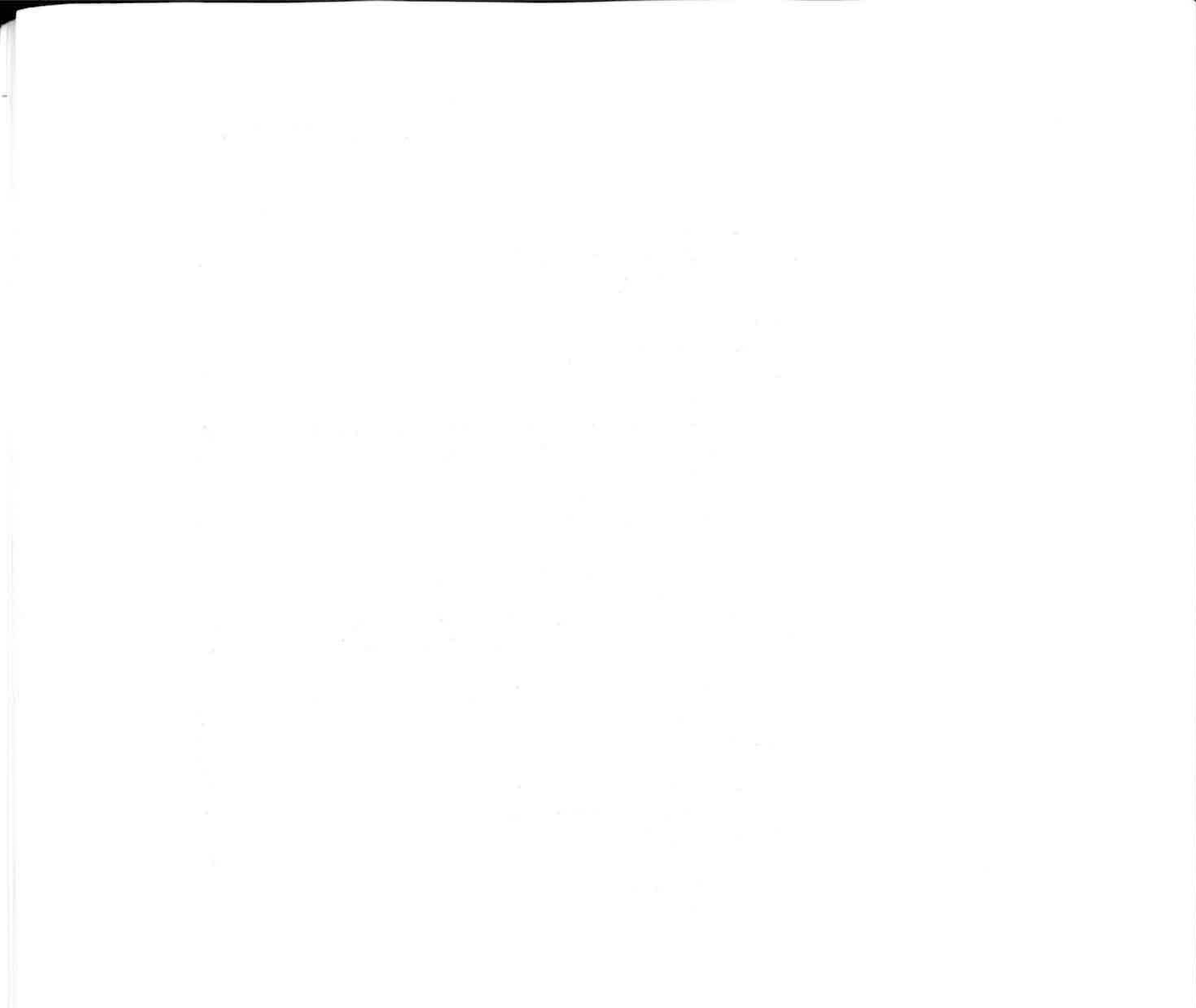


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FOREWORD

How can we achieve the best possible state of body and mind?

For more than 5,000 years the Chinese have been interested in the subject of health and spirituality, and have investigated these subjects very deeply. In doing so, they have discovered various effective methods of making themselves healthier, stronger and happier, of increasing their life-expectancy, and of awakening certain latent special functions. But, because these methods were kept secret and used mainly within certain religious circles¹, they appeared mysterious, occult, and exclusive.

For over forty years I have carefully explored these traditions, and I have been able to separate the wheat from the chaff. Based on my own experience and that of my students, I have found what I believe is a short-cut for attaining a high level of health and spirituality. I call this method *Taijiwuxigong*. It constitutes a simple but powerful system for the cultivation of body and mind.

The history of *Taijiwuxigong* is not mysterious, and I do not intend to dramatise it. I merely desire to point out the most important elements which contributed to its development.

In 1957 a small group of retired friends invited me to teach them *Taijiquan*. They were elderly, and so it was hard for them to remember the *Taijiquan* form. I had to go back over the same positions day after day, and still they were unable to remember the order of the movements.

As a result, instead of teaching them the whole *Taijiquan* sequence, I selected some of the most important positions and taught them those instead, not in any particular order. This led to an interesting discovery. I noticed that several students experienced *spontaneous movements* when they practised the same exercise continuously. Moreover, the students experienced very good results from this combination of studying individual exercises and the occurrence of spontaneous movements; as a result, they told their friends, and the size of the group grew larger and larger.

¹Only a few people knew these methods and could understand them. Not all Daoist Monks were taught these methods. They were kept secret, and in addition used to control people.

I found this very interesting. I had studied spontaneous movement exercises before, but I was not then able to control these movements in other people. I became very eager to investigate this, so I experimented with different *Taiji* postures in order to discover their effects. As a result I was able to discover the exact position in each that was most likely to cause spontaneous movement.

However, when people asked me: "What do you teach?" I could not answer, because I did not yet have a name for the exercise system.

One student however, gave me a good idea. He said: "In the past you studied *Longmen Wuxigong* with your grandfather. Now you are teaching *Taiji* exercises. Why don't you call it *Taijiwuxigong*?" At that moment the *Taijiwuxigong* system was born and everyone started to call it by that name.

But *Taijiwuxigong* was still in its infancy. Because of my medical education and further training with other masters (including Daoist and Buddhist monks, lamas from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and Wushu masters), *Taijiwuxigong* continued to evolve. Lama Fahai, who was both an acupuncturist and an accomplished Buddhist master, was a particular influence on its development.

Strangely enough, during the Cultural Revolution in China *Taijiwuxigong* expanded. During those years, I stopped my work as physician and hospital director in Xinjiang and returned to Shanghai. Because I needed work in order to live I created a new job for myself there. I started giving private *Taijiquan* and *Taijiwuxigong* lessons. Every day around 300 students took my lessons. During those four years as well as teaching my students I learned a great deal from them.

After the Cultural Revolution, I returned to Xinjiang to head a pharmaceutical factory.

In 1979 The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Sports in Luwan District, Shanghai, wanted to develop *Qigong*. They organised a big class, and invited me to do the teaching. Afterwards, many more big classes were organised. I enlisted my more senior students, including my son and daughter, to help me to teach.

The Ministries also organised a group of doctors to do research into the effects of *Taijiwuxigong*. The results demonstrated that *Taijiwuxigong* improved the condition of many different diseases.

From that time on, *Taijiwuxigong* developed very quickly. Before I left China in 1987, nearly 50,000 people were studying it.

As *Taijiwuxigong* became more and more famous in China, Westerners also began to be interested in it. Many people from different countries came to China to study it. As a consequence, I received invitations from a number of universities, for instance the Universities of Ghent, Venice, Padua, and Naples. At the University of Venice an important part of the Doctorate of one of the students was on the subject of *Taijiwuxigong*.

In 1988 I was invited to attend the First World Congress on Medical *Qigong* in Beijing. I could not attend because my work in Europe was just beginning to flourish, so I sent one of my students, Mrs Ma, to represent me. At the Congress, ten Chinese *Qigong* systems were introduced: *Taijiwuxigong* was one of them. At this Congress it was unanimously decided that *Taijiwuxigong* was the best and most effective system, since everyone present experienced spontaneous movement within five minutes.

I have now been teaching *Taijiwuxigong* in the West for eight years. My daughter and son have also taught it during that period. In all, I have taught *Taijiwuxigong* to about 6000 students in the West. However, because these students are mostly younger, more sensitive, and healthier than the students I taught in China, the teaching style has been modified.

This account of the development of *Taijiwuxigong* is not only a history of the evolution of an exercise method. It also shows—and this, I think, is of much greater significance—that traditional Chinese exercise systems and Chinese medicine can be developed in a way that is consistent with Western science.

This *Taijiwuxigong* book has been revised several times since it first appeared. It was initially published as a series of nine articles in the *Xinjiang Science and Technology Gazette* from April to July, 1983. Shortly afterwards the first Chinese edition was issued in book form in 1984. In 1985, the second edition of this was published. This was revised extensively, and included a third part, written in co-operation with Dr. Xia Tingyu, which described the results of research into the effects of *Taijiwuxigong* on different diseases.

In 1987, new editions were published in English, Dutch and French to act as reference works for European and American students. In 1992 I published a revised edition in English as a workbook for students.

Two years ago for the first time some students who had studied and practised *Taijiwuxigong* for five years got permission to teach *Taijiwuxigong*.

Therefore, to celebrate the last ten years of Western teaching, I decided to publish this edition. The contents have been revised and new material has been added.

I would like to invite you to read this book and to perform the exercises. After a few days you will feel stronger and happier. If you exercise a little longer, you will discover some special functions, and your development will go on and on.

Traditional Chinese exercise systems are said, above all, to extend the life-span of their practitioners. Will *Taijiwuxigong* give you a long life? I do not know. I myself am only 57 years old. In any case, I believe that being happy and strong is more interesting and important than any age that you might reach by practising *Taijiwuxigong*.

Shen Hongxun
Ghent, July 1996

INTRODUCTION

As an introduction to *Taijiwuxigong*, you can try the exercise whose basic position is shown here below.

If you relax your legs and empty your mind, it may well be that after a while you will feel a force from the earth running first through your legs and then through your whole body. This force can make the body vibrate. The vibration starts in the lower abdomen and spreads gradually throughout the whole body. When this force increases, it can become so strong that it makes you jump up and down, or perform various different kinds of movements. These movements arise spontaneously, and therefore we call them *spontaneous movements of the body* or simply *spontaneous movement*. My experience and that of many of my students shows that spontaneous movement has different functions.

If there is any pain in the body, spontaneous movement can make it move around the body until it is finally expelled. During the exercises, there is a force that is built up that pushes this pain downwards through the arms or the legs towards the hands or the feet until the practitioner has the experience of something leaving the body. As a result, the pain is gone.

If a practitioner has emotional problems, this exercise can suddenly open the area at the middle of the chest, release the emotions that are blocked there, and restore equanimity.

If a practitioner has spinal problems because of chronic bad body posture, the practice creates a force that pushes the spinal column upwards and realigns the vertebrae so that the posture of the spinal column is corrected.

After practising for a long time, some people experience the awakening of special functions, for example what I call *mental power*. This *mental power* can be felt by people who are at a distance of several metres from the practitioner. This is one of the vital forces that we use in *Buqi* for healing.

Many people enjoy the experience of spontaneous movement, but if it is practised for a long time the practitioner might relax too much during the exercise and this could have negative side effects. Too much relaxation can make the spinal column contract, irritate the nerves that are connected to the different organs, and put pressure on the blood vessels.

Part two

SPONTANEOUS MOVEMENT

Definition

Spontaneous movement occurs constantly in the human body: the pumping of the heart, breathing and the peristaltic movement of stomach and intestines are all examples of what I call 'natural spontaneous movement'. This natural spontaneous movement usually does not occur in other muscles than those associated with the specific activity of, for instance, breathing.

A special body posture, in combination with breathing and a specific mental attitude, can result in spontaneous movement.

There is, however, another kind of spontaneous movement. During exercise a special body posture, in combination with breathing and a specific mental attitude, can result in a spontaneous movement which will spread throughout the whole body. This phenomenon I call 'induced spontaneous movement'.

In this book the term 'spontaneous movement' will always refer to 'induced spontaneous movement'.

The important functions of spontaneous movement

Spontaneous movement regulates in a natural way the balance between body and mind.

The crucial characteristic of spontaneous movement is that it regulates in a natural way the balance between body and mind. Spontaneous movement is a very important means to expel *binqi*¹ from the body, to stretch and to increase the suppleness of the ligaments of the joints, and to make the informational residue of blocked emotions leave the body.

Therefore we can use spontaneous movement exercises in order to stay in good health, to cure some diseases, as a catalyst for creating emotional changes, and to cure psychological problems.

¹ Another word for *binqi* is sick qi, indicating pathogenic factors. In the Chinese tradition there are six different types of *binqi*: feng, han, shi, chu, zhao, hou.

In addition, athletes can use spontaneous movement to discover, develop, and learn how to control *spontaneous movement force* so that they can use it in various forms of athletic competition.

Spontaneous movement can also help in artistic disciplines such as calligraphy, dancing, acting, singing, painting, and so on.

The basic principles for practising spontaneous movement

1. I subscribe to the ancient theory that says that energy can be increased by activating the *dantian*. As I have said, scientific analysis has shown that an activated *dantian* excites the iliac nerve. This is connected with the adrenal glands, and this excitation improves the overall functioning of the hormonal and energy system of the body.

In order to receive spontaneous movement, the *dantian* has to be activated. In general, there are three ways to do this. The first is to lower the centre of gravity so that it coincides with the *dantian*; the second is to focus the mind on the *dantian*; and the third is to direct the breathing towards the *dantian*.

The best way to receive spontaneous movement is by lowering the centre of gravity so that it coincides with the *dantian*. The literal translation of the Chinese description of this method is 'the centre of gravity kisses the *dantian*'. This method is mostly used in the *wuxi* standing and *wuxi* sitting exercises. However, since it is hard to use this method while lying down, breathing for the activation of the *dantian* is used in the *wuxi* lying down exercise.

2. There is a danger that during spontaneous movement while standing and sitting, the mind is not simply quiet, as it should be, but becomes too relaxed. Similarly the body may be too relaxed so that it loses the proper posture, leading to contraction of the spinal column. Either of these occurrences can mean that prolonged practice will have an opposite effect to that intended.

Therefore practising the *wuxi* standing or *wuxi* sitting exercises must be counterbalanced by physical exercises which stretch the spinal column, and mental exercises that enhance concentration. In practice what this means is that they must be combined with *daoyin* exercises.

To receive spontaneous movement, the *dantian* has to be activated.

Practising spontaneous movement must be counterbalanced by *daoyin* exercises.

Reaction scheme *Taijiwuxigong* exercises

<p>FIRST LEVEL</p> <p>Activation of the lower dantian</p>	<p>Don't think about your breathing</p> <p>Abdominal respiration</p>	<p>Relax</p> <p>The centre of gravity goes down</p> <p>Return of <i>qi</i> to the lower dantian</p> <p>The dantian is activated</p>	<p>Vibration</p>	<p>Forget yourself</p> <p>Crying Laughing Screaming Singing Sighing</p>	<p>Belching Breaking wind Yawning Sweating Vomiting Diarrhoea Vapor is coming out Wind leaves from fingers and toes</p>
<p>SECOND LEVEL</p> <p>Draining of the <i>mai</i> and its branches</p>	<p>The respiration stops naturally</p>	<p><i>Qi</i> movement from the lower dantian to the middle dantian and vice versa</p> <p>Opening of <i>zhong mai</i></p> <p><i>Qi</i> circulation in front <i>mai</i> and back <i>mai</i></p> <p><i>Qi</i> circulation in left <i>mai</i> and right <i>mai</i></p> <p><i>Qi</i> circulation in the lower dantian</p>	<p>Moving the upper part of the body forward and backward</p> <p>Jumping</p> <p>Tendency to bend to the ground and/or kneel</p> <p>Movements resembling dancing, gymnastics or martial arts</p>		
<p>THIRD LEVEL</p> <p>Spiritual level</p>	<p>Navel respiration</p> <p>Skin respiration</p> <p>Wintersleep</p>	<p>Heaven force and earth force meet in the lower dantian</p> <p>The awakening of latent functions</p>	<p>The spontaneous movement stops: sitting and lying down</p>		
	<p>Reactions upon the respiration</p>	<p>Reactions upon <i>qi</i> movements</p>	<p>Reactions upon body movements</p>	<p>Emotional reactions</p>	<p>Reactions the moment sick <i>qi</i> leaves the body</p>

Part three

THE 8 STAGES OF TAIJIWUXIGONG

1. Overview

People practising *Taijiwuxigong* do so for different reasons. All do it in order to stay in good health; some however also use it in order to study the dynamics of body and mind.

To study the dynamics of body and mind, practice must pass through different stages.

If one only wants to stay in good health, then one does not have to be concerned with the different stages and levels in *Taijiwuxigong*. One can just practise all the different exercises and, regardless of whatever stage one reaches, they will always have a good effect on one's health.

If however one wants to research deeply the energy of body and mind, practising is very important and, as in any other system, practice must pass through different stages.

However many people are reluctant to spend the necessary amount of time that detailed study requires; instead, they want to know how quickly they can profit from what they learn. Sometimes people actually start to teach when they have only reached the first stage, or reach only the third or fourth stage and already want to sell this knowledge. Therefore nowadays books on *qi* exercises rarely speak about different levels and stages.

Taijiwuxigong has eight stages or in simple terms three levels.

Taijiwuxigong has different stages. In simple terms one can say there are three levels. More detailed analysis enables one to discriminate eight stages.

Comparison of the 3 levels with the 8 stages of *Taijiwuxigong*

Functions of the 3 levels	Functions of the 8 stages
3. Development of the spiritual level	8. The latent functions are activated.
	7. <i>Heaven and earth force meet in the lower dantian.</i>
2. Draining of the <i>mai</i> and its branches	6. <i>Qi</i> circulation in the <i>lower dantian</i> .
	5. <i>Qi</i> circulation in <i>left mai</i> and <i>right mai</i>
	4. <i>Qi</i> circulation in <i>front mai</i> and <i>back mai</i> .
	3. Opening of <i>zhong mai</i> .
	2. <i>Qi</i> movement from the <i>lower dantian</i> to the <i>middle dantian</i> and vice versa.
1. Activation of the <i>lower dantian</i>	1. Return of <i>qi</i> to the <i>lower dantian</i> .

The information in this table is very condensed and not easy to understand. Therefore on the following pages I will explain the eight stages of the *Taijiwuxigong* system in detail.

Part four DAOYIN

Introduction

The word *daoyin* is 4600 years old.

In ancient times many tribes lived along the Yellow River, which runs through central China. Frequently the river-mouth would silt up and cause the river to flood, which meant that people lived in damp and humid conditions. This meant that rheumatoid arthritis was very prevalent.

4,600 years ago Tang Yao ruled supreme over a community of tribes in central China. His territory nowadays corresponds to the modern Hunan province. He popularised a set of physical exercises in order to cure this disease. This is recorded in *The Yellow Emperor's Book of Internal Medicine* and other historical texts. They call these exercises *daoyin* or *dawu*. In that time these *daoyin* were pure body movements like prostration, gymnastics, and dancing.

The oldest depiction of *daoyin*:
the *Ma Wang Duai* silk painting.

In 1973 a painting on silk depicting *daoyin* was found in a burial site dating from the 168 BCE (*Han* Dynasty). It is named after the place where it was found: *Ma Wang Duai*.



Forty-four realistic pictures were excavated from that burial site. In an early phase only 28 pictures and later all the 44 pictures were restored. After restoration the size of the painting is 53 cm height on 110 cm breadth.

The founder of the five animal *daoyin* is Huatuo (145-208).

Each person depicted in these pictures is 9-12 cm high. They include men and women, old and young, clothed or naked above the waist. The painting technique is characterised by fine brushwork and close attention to details. Black is used to delineate the outlines and the colour of the clothes is a combination of red and grey-blue. During restoration work, Chinese characters were found for only 31 of the positions, giving their names.

Most famous is *Wuqingxi*, the five animals *daoyin*. The five animals are a tiger, a deer, a bear, a monkey and a bird, and the *daoyin* imitate the movement of these five animals. Huatuo (145-208 [BC or AD?]) was a famous physician during the *Han* Dynasty (25-220). He used a herbal tea as an anaesthetic for brain operations. A story about the five animals *daoyin* is recorded in the history book *The third kingdom Wei*. Afterwards many books reproduced this story. Another famous book *Yang Xing Yen Ming Lu* written by Tao Hong Jing dates from the Northern and Southern Dynasties (502-557). In this book he describes the *daoyin* of his time and of the times before.

The *wuxi daoyin*, a new *daoyin* system, are:

Beginning daoyin
Head daoyin A
Head daoyin B
Shoulder daoyin A
Shoulder daoyin B
Chest daoyin A
Chest daoyin B
Abdomen daoyin
Heel daoyin
Ending daoyin.

Nowadays there are many different *daoyin* systems, and thus many different exercises. How is it possible to choose one from another?

My own clinical practice gave me the opportunity to examine and experiment with different kinds of exercise designed to enable patients to heal themselves. As a result, I was able to select and refine a series of *daoyin* that are simple, effective, and form a single coherent system. The *daoyin* of the *Taijiwuxigong* system are an important part of this system.

The *wuxi daoyin* are: *beginning daoyin*, *head daoyin*, *shoulder daoyin*, *chest daoyin*, *abdomen daoyin*, *heel daoyin* and *ending daoyin*.

Daoyin are exercises which combine mental, physical, and breathing practices in order to direct the movement of *qi* inside or out the body.

Definition

In ancient books one cannot find a complete explanation of the concept of *daoyin*. Therefore before explaining the different *daoyin*, we will clarify the concept of *daoyin* in *Taijiwuxigong*.

Daoyin are exercises which combine mental, physical, and breathing practices in order to direct the movement of *qi* inside or out the body.

As we already know, the word *qi* can have different meanings. In *daoyin*, its meaning differs depending on whether we are talking about what is happening inside or outside the body. Inside the body *qi* can refer to one or more of the following: blood and other body-fluids; the results of the activation of the energy system of the body; or the excretory by-products of metabolism or other pathogenic factors. Outside the body, *qi* denotes what can best be described as mental power.

The three important functions of *daoyin*

1. Stretching the spinal column and all joints

Most people at the age of 40-50 start to have neck problems because of the calcification of the cervical vertebral bodies. From that age on this problem increases every day.

Moreover, the contraction of different intervertebral spaces gives rise to different diseases. Therefore the protection of the vertebrae is very important. Animals, in fact, appear to know this very well. Every morning the first thing a dog or a cat does is to stretch the spinal column. Very few human beings, whether through laziness or ignorance, do this, although it is even more important for them than for animals, because humans spend most of their waking lives with their spines vertical, thus causing pressure on the intervertebral spaces.

The theory has been advanced that human beings live (at best) only a third of their possible life span. This theory derives from a comparison between the total life span of an animal and the period of time in which it is able to reproduce itself. If you compare that with the same ratio in a human being, you find a discrepancy amounting to something like 70%. Whether this percentage is correct or not is not important: what is

important is that it should motivate us to look for a way of recovering this lost part of our lives.

The practice of *daoyin* teaches us to stretch the spinal column, to correct the body posture, and to make the intervertebral distances larger, thus enabling us to have a longer and healthier life.

2. Expelling sick qi

Often *sick qi* collects in the joints, blocking the free flow of *qi* through the meridians. The meridians connect the organs to the hands or the feet and are responsible for the expulsion of *sick qi* from the body.

Daoyin practice stretches the joints, thus opening the meridians: this frees the flow of *sick qi* through the meridians and enhances its expulsion.

3. Strengthening the three qi circulations

As we said in Part One, the human body has five *mai*. They form three *qi* circulations and their branches are the twelve meridians.

In many people these *qi* circulations are blocked or constricted, either because of emotional causes, or because of *sick qi*, or both. Regularly practising *daoyin* initially helps to make them open again, and then serves to strengthen the three *qi* circulations.

A strong *qi* flow in these three *qi* circulations is important because they have a number of important functions in the body:

- They organise and activate the flow of *qi* through the five *mai*.
- Because the five *mai* contact different organs, activation of a *qi* circulation also activates the circulation in the organs that are connected with it.

- They activate the transmission of information (in addition to the transmission of information via the nervous system) through the whole body.
- They make it possible to contact vital forces originating outside the body.

The opening of the five *mai* and the strengthening of the three *qi* circulations that result from the practise of *daoyin* correspond with the completion of the first five stages of the *Taijiwuxigong* system.

Two basic principles for practising *daoyin*

Each *daoyin* is designed to have a specific effect on a different *mai*, together with its branches and the organs that it contacts.

If one changes one of the components of the *daoyin* even slightly the outcome will not be the same. Therefore the more correctly one performs a *daoyin*, the better the result will be. However, getting to this level of practice is not very easy and one has to build up to it little by little.

But whatever *daoyin* one practises, if you do not forget the following two essential principles, the result of the exercises will always be good.

Principle 1: The centre of gravity "kisses" the *dantian*

Not only in the *wuxi*-stance but in whatever exercise one practises this is the first and the most important principle.

How can we integrate this principle while practising a *daoyin*?

First of all make the centre of gravity "kiss" the *dantian* in the preparatory posture (see p.45). Afterwards, concentrate on keeping it that way during the whole exercise. This will allow you to use the force that accumulates in the *dantian* to guide each body movement. If you can do this, then movement of any part of the body will be a

Each *daoyin* has a specific effect on a different *mai*, together with its branches and the organs that it contacts.

movement in which the whole body participates. However, it is important to connect the pressure created by breathing out to the activated *dantian* so that its force will be even stronger.

Principle 2: Simultaneously relax the muscles and stretch the ligaments

Often people think that relaxing the muscles is the same as loosening the muscles. But if you loosen the muscles, the spinal column will contract, which is harmful. This misunderstanding of the nature of relaxation stems from a meditation technique that has been widely misunderstood. Many people who have practised relaxation under this delusion have by now experienced its negative side-effects.

The principle of balancing *yin* and *yang* in the *Taiji* philosophy¹ shows us the importance of balancing opposites.

Therefore the true principle of relaxation is to relax the muscles and to stretch the ligaments at the same time: *the stretching is as important as the relaxation*.

The whole process of practising *daoyin* means precisely this: to develop to a high degree the ability at one and the same time to relax the muscles and stretch the ligaments.

While performing a movement one can, of course, never relax the muscles completely. However, if one concentrates continuously while relaxing the muscles then one can feel a sense of muscular relaxation. But the relaxed performance of an exercise does not mean that at that moment every single muscle is relaxed. How then does this relaxation work?

In our body there are two different groups of muscles. Many of the muscles we most frequently use are the ones that are superficially located in the body and therefore visible: this group of muscles is called the *extrinsic* muscles. There is, however, another

¹Most people equate *Taiji* with *Taijiquan*. However *Taiji* is in the first place a philosophy that says that everything has two opposite sides and that these opposites are united and antagonistic at the same time. The *Taiji* philosophy researches how to balance the opposites in everything. *Taijiquan* integrates this philosophy in its exercises as well as in its fighting strategy. Nowadays most people use *Taijiquan* to keep in good health because *Taijiquan* also helps to balance the body and mind.

group of muscles that we use less often: this group, which is less visible, is called the *intrinsic* muscles.

When practising *daoyin*, relaxation means the relaxation of the extrinsic muscle group together with the activation of the intrinsic muscle group. So during relaxation the functioning of the intrinsic muscle group *replaces* the functioning of the extrinsic muscles.

This kind of relaxation has a healing effect. It makes it possible for the body to transport more nutrient substances to the intrinsic muscles. In that way the result of relaxation is the strengthening of both muscle groups. Moreover the relaxation of the muscles will have a feedback function that leads to a relaxed mind.

As we mentioned in the section about the three important functions of *daoyin* the stretching of the ligaments is essential for the expelling of *sick qi*.

The interrelationship between *daoyin* and the 8 stages of *Taijiwuxigong*

DAOYIN		FUNCTIONS	STAGE
<i>Beginning daoyin</i>		Brings the <i>qi</i> back to the <i>lower dantian</i> and stimulates the <i>qi</i> circulation through the <i>zhong mai</i>	1,3,7
<i>Head daoyin</i>	<i>A</i>	Stimulates the <i>qi</i> circulation in <i>left mai</i> and <i>right mai</i>	5
	<i>B</i>	Stimulates the <i>qi</i> circulation in <i>front mai</i> and <i>back mai</i>	4
<i>Shoulder daoyin</i>	<i>A</i>	Stimulates <i>qi</i> to flow from the <i>lower dantian</i> to the shoulders, to expel <i>sick qi</i> from the body via the arms and the hands	1
	<i>B</i>		
<i>Chest daoyin</i>	<i>A</i>	Facilitates the <i>qi</i> movement from the <i>lower dantian</i> to the <i>middle dantian</i> and vice versa	2
	<i>B</i>	Facilitates the opening of the <i>zhong mai</i>	3
<i>Abdomen daoyin</i>		Facilitates the <i>qi</i> circulation in the <i>lower dantian</i>	6
<i>Heel daoyin</i>		Facilitates the meeting of <i>heaven force</i> and <i>earth force</i> in the <i>lower dantian</i>	7
<i>Ending daoyin</i>		Expels <i>sick qi</i> from the body and stimulates an inwards movement of the <i>qi</i> back to the <i>lower dantian</i>	1,3,7

BEGINNING DAOYIN

In many religions prostrations are practised. The devotee bends the knees and kneels prostrate on the ground. The purpose of this is to attune oneself to the Cosmos. The secondary goal is to maintain good health and promote longevity. My teacher Lama Fahai said: If one prostrates a hundred thousand times, the body becomes as light as a bird. It is because people are too lazy to practice properly that the benefit of practising prostration can be lost.

The *beginning daoyin* is a prostration practice that does not involve kneeling on the ground. If you are too busy to spend a great deal of time practising, then you could simply practice *beginning daoyin*. This *daoyin*, if done every day, will promote health and long life.

If one wants to practice a spontaneous movement exercise, one should combine it with the practice of the *beginning daoyin*. The *beginning daoyin* stretches the spinal column and empowers the nuclei of the intervertebral discs. These nuclei will then have enough power so that the relaxation that occurs during spontaneous movement will not result in an irritation of the nerves or in blood vessels being squeezed.

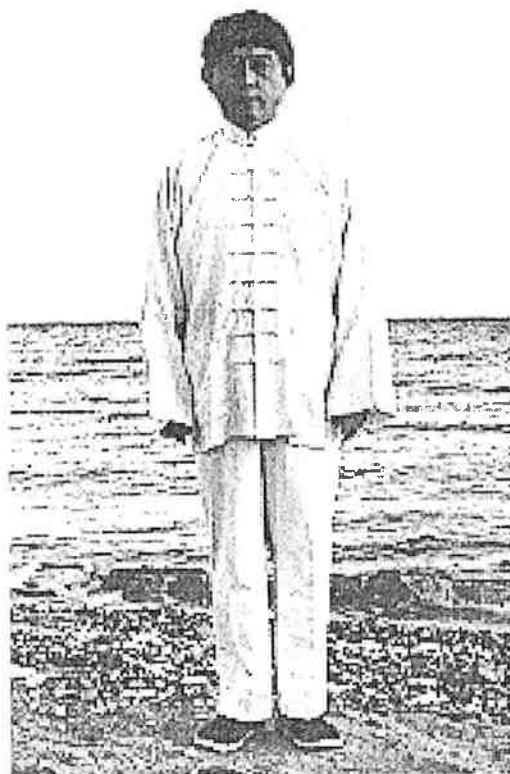
For this reason one starts the practice of *Taijiwuxigong* by doing the *beginning daoyin*. This is not only important for the practice of *Taijiwuxigong* but also for any exercise system in which relaxation is an important component.

Physiological effect The *beginning daoyin* is a particularly good exercise for stretching the *ligamentum flavum*²; this makes the spinal column open easily and lengthens the straight muscles of the whole body.

Qi circulation effect This exercise uses the forces of heaven and earth to activate the *zhong mai* and some special areas as the *upper dantian*, the throat, the heart and the *lower dantian*.

²The yellow ligament which binds together the laminae of adjoining vertebrae.

A. Basic position



1. Stand straight, and allow the arms to hang parallel with the body in a natural way. Quieten the mind for a few minutes.



2. Put the right foot rather more than shoulder width apart from the left foot. Bend the upper part of the body slightly forward. Let the body-weight rest on the *foot gate* areas.

B. Movement



1. Lower the shoulders and open the shoulder joints in a downward direction. Slightly open the joints of the elbows, wrists and fingers. The force created by opening the joints of the arms will naturally make the hands open and turn so that the palms face forwards.



2. Continue opening the joints of the shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingers. This force will make the arms raise automatically to shoulder height.



3. Continue opening the joints of the arms, in particular pushing the under-side of the arms sideways. This will cause the arms to rise higher, until the wrists are at the same height as the top of the head.



4. Slightly pull in the palms of the hands. Imagine taking *heaven force* into the hands. Compress the *heaven force* between the hands. The hands will slowly close until they are pushed together. Meanwhile continue to open the joints of the arms so that they are straight upwards. Push the hands together for a few minutes.



5. Relax the arms, but push the hands slightly against each other. Bend the elbows and slowly bring down the hands until the edge of each wrist is one finger width above the front fontanel. Pause for a few seconds. As the hands move down, bend the knees as in the illustration.

* The acupuncture point located one finger width above the front fontanel is called *konglun*.



6. Continue the downward movement of the hands until the centre of the balls of the thumbs is in front of the area one finger above the middle of the eyebrows. Pause for a few seconds. As the hands move down, so the knees continue to bend

* The area located one finger above the middle of the eyebrows is called *heaven gate*. It is similar to the acupuncture point *tianmu* and the Western concept of the Third Eye.



7. Continue until the centre of the balls of the thumbs is in front of the throat. Stop for a few seconds.

* The area located at the level of the throat is called *throat gate*. It is similar to the acupuncture point *tiantu*.



8. Continue until the centre of the balls of the thumbs is at the level of the *heart gate*. Pause for a few seconds.

* This area is called *heart gate*. It is similar to the acupuncture point *chanzhong*. This is where emotional information is stored.



9. Continue to move the hands downwards until they part. Opening the hands should begin with opening the wrists. Open the hands until the fingertips are directed downwards and the palms are turned downwards and outwards. They should now be at groin-level. The hands do not touch the body. Imagine pushing something downwards through the legs starting from the area *groin gate*.

* The *groin gate* is an area located in the inguinal femoralis and contacts a branch of the *left* and *right mai*.



10. Push the hands from the groin downwards towards the earth. Pause for a few seconds at the *ankle gate*. During this movement, slowly continue to bend the knees. The body assumes the position shown in the illustration.

* The *ankle gate* is located four fingers above the ankles at the inner side of the leg.



11. The external movement stops when the fingertips almost reach the ground. However the internal opening of the joints of the arms and the hands should continue, and so should the mental sensation of pushing into the earth. It is important that you imagine pushing as deeply as possible: one meter deep into the ground, two metres, and so on, until your pushing force reaches the other side of the earth.



12. Turn the hands around the feet following first the toes and then the outer edges of the feet until they reach the heels.



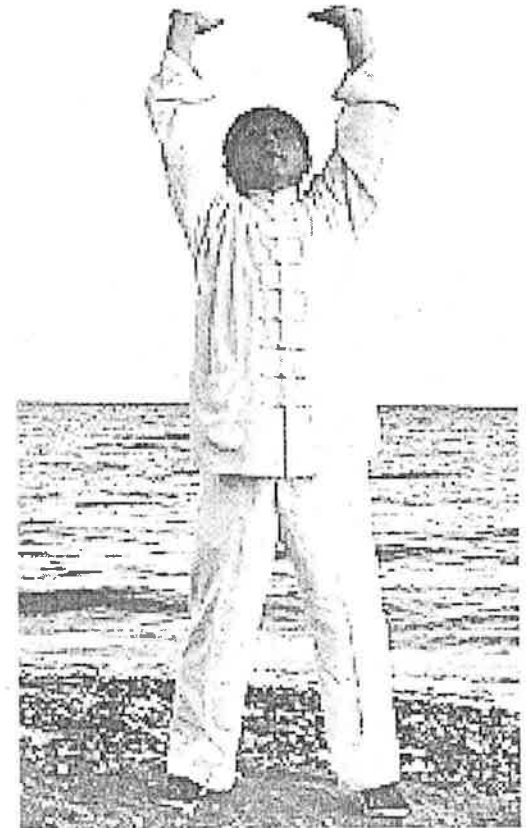
13. Bring the hands upwards, following the backs of the legs, at the same time slowly straightening the legs at the knees, until the hands reach the level of the waist.



14. Bend all the joints of the fingers towards the waist. The hands do not touch the body. Move the hands around the waist to the front of the body. The energy channel *dai mai* is located in the waist, and this movement activates *qi* in this channel.



15. Relax the arms. Turn the fingertips of both hands forwards, sideways, and backwards so that finally the hands are beside the cheeks with the palms facing upwards.



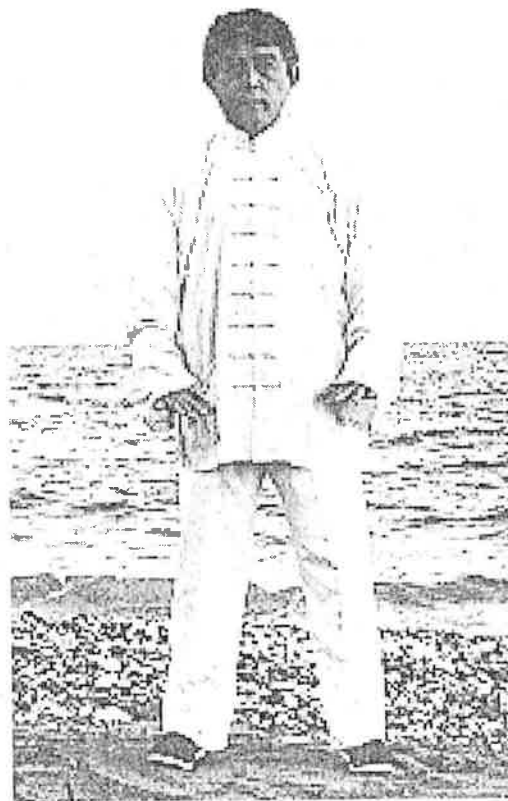
16. Push the hands upwards past the ears and the top of the head, up towards the ceiling or the sky, slowly straightening the arms by opening all of the joints; at the same time continue to stretch the legs. Keep pushing upwards for a few minutes and imagine pushing through the ceiling or far into the sky. This pushing upwards causes the whole body to straighten naturally.

Turn the hands outwards and upwards so that the palms of the hands face each other again. Repeat this movement 9, 18 or 36 times, each time starting again from illustration 4.

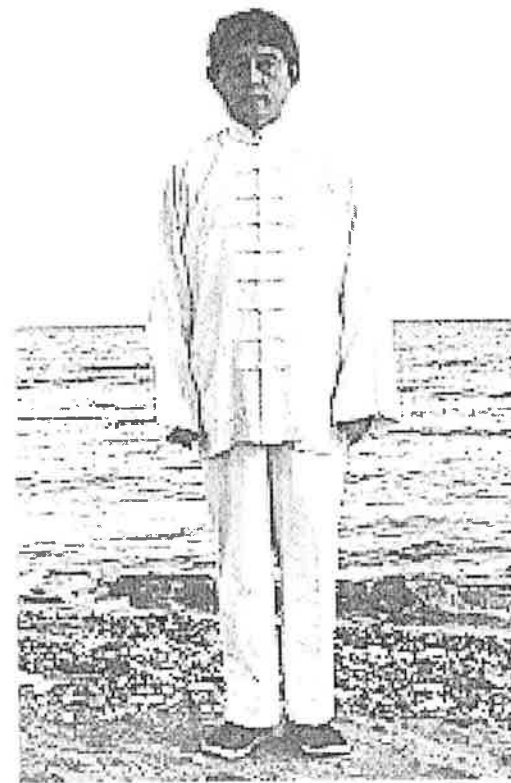
C. Finishing the exercise



1. After the push towards the ceiling or the heavens shown in illustration 16, repeat the movements of the arms as shown in illustrations 4 to 8, but do not bend the knees. Part the hands and bring them in front of the legs as shown in illustration 1.



2. Relax the arms and the hands so that they naturally hang parallel with the body.



3. Put the right foot next to the left. Stand straight and relax for a while.

Remarks

1. The time spent pushing towards the sky or ceiling should be the same as the time spent pushing into the earth. Make sure the palms of the hands are opened and the fingers are stretched whilst pushing.

2. When pushing to the heavens try to stretch the whole body as much as possible while concentrating on the ceiling or the sky, with a feeling of reaching for the stars. When pushing into the earth, imagine pushing something into the ground, deep into the earth, if possible to the other side of the earth. The higher you can push into the cosmos and the deeper you can push into the earth, the better the effect of the exercise will be. Moreover this will help to develop a strong mental force.

3. In the beginning pushing upwards can cause some pain in the spinal column. The painful point indicates that in that area a vertebra pushes against a nerve. If you experience this, don't stop the exercise but continue to stretch; persist in this. Then the intervertebral space will become larger, the vertebra will leave the nerves and the pain will naturally disappear. If the neck aches, it is better not to look completely upwards while pushing into the sky. After practising a while these complaints will disappear as the neck and the back become stronger. (These general rules one cannot apply to those cases in which a metal bar has been surgically placed in the spinal column, or when the practise of the *beginning daoyin* is really very painful. In the latter case it is essential to consult a doctor to find out the real cause of the pain.)

4. People who have studied the mantra "Om Ah Hong" can integrate it in this exercise. When the balls of the thumbs are at the height of the *heaven gate*, pause a few seconds and recite the sound 'Om'; at the height of the *throat gate*, pause a few seconds and recite the sound 'Ah'; at the height of the *heart gate*, pause a few seconds and recite the sound 'Hong'. Recite these three sounds always during the out-breath.

During the recitation of the mantra, one can also close the eyes and concentrate on 'looking' into the area of these three gates. When you concentrate on *heaven gate*, *throat gate* and *heart gate* it is possible to see in each of these areas a different coloured light.

5. When pushing towards the ceiling or into the earth one can have different reactions. The hands may start to tremble, which indicates that the *internal force* is moving towards the hands. Another possible reaction is that the body spontaneously jumps. One can also feel a force moving up and down in the *zhong mai*.

Appendix 1

PREPARATIONS BEFORE PRACTISING

1. The best time to practise.

Beginners can practise any time of the day. It is important that it is a quiet moment. Repeat the exercises according to your ability.

In the beginning it is important not to practise for too long. When one is tired from exercising, the body cannot expel all the *sick qi*. In fact the opposite result will take place: the body will start to produce *sick qi* because the waste products of the body increase and cannot be transported out the body. When you are too tired, do the *wuxi*-sitting posture or *wuxi* lying down. These exercises will help to relax the body again.

As with all things, be moderate. By practising regularly the condition of body and mind will improve. This will enable you gradually to practise more and more intensively.

For more advanced practitioners it is good to practise at sunrise. This time of the day can give what is called a 'spring-time sensation' in the body. It is a state in which it is easy to relax. Therefore it is easier for *sick qi* to leave the body.

One can also practise before going to sleep. At that time one easily relaxes because the daily activities are finished.

2. The best place to practise

One can practise *wuxi*-stance and *daoyin* both indoors and out of doors. One must have a reasonably flat surface to stand on, and for spontaneous movements there must be sufficient space so that there is no risk of bumping into something when one makes unexpected movements.

3. The best direction to practise

In the beginning the direction in which one practises is not important.

At a higher level when one has attained an increase of sensitivity it is important to practise facing to the North. Out of doors it is very interesting to practise near a tree. Try to find a tree that feels as if it is pushing you, rather than one that feels as if it is pulling you towards it. Evergreen trees which remain green in winter are very good to practice with.

4. Preparations

Relaxation is the basis of effective exercise. Therefore:

a. Create a quiet situation

Exercise at a quiet time. Tell your family or friends when you will be doing the practice. If someone interrupts you during an exercise, the *qi* circulation in your body is broken. This can have negative consequences on body and mind; also the interruption might stop the expulsion of *sick qi* and thereby allow it to concentrate in certain places in the body.

b. Prepare your body

1. Go to the toilet before you start to practise.
2. Remove phlegm as much as possible from the bronchial tubes.
3. Drink a cup of water or tea to keep up the level of body-fluids.
4. Eat something before you start to practise, for an empty stomach can stop the functioning of the peristalsis and inhibit the digestion. Don't practise with an empty stomach. Start to practise half hour after a meal. If you practise at sunrise it is best to eat soup or porridge a half hour before.
5. Wear ample and loose clothes. Silk or cotton is the best. Undo all tight clothes and belts. Take off your glasses, watches, ornaments, chains, anything magnetic, and any bracelets or rings. When a ring is tight, have it enlarged, because it will interrupt the *qi* flow through the meridians. When you practise outside and it is cold, wear a head-covering.
6. Wear shoes with a flat sole. Shoes with a cotton sole are the best. Very thick rubber soles disturb the energy contact with the earth.

c. Prepare your mind

The key is perseverance.

Mostly when one starts to practise, one has a strong motivation because the method is new and interesting or because of the special feelings one may have during the exercise. Expectations are very high. But high expectation leads to impatience; one is not satisfied with allowing ones development to grow naturally, and when the initial special feeling recedes dissatisfaction sets in, which can lead to the end of practice. Thinking too much about getting to a high level

as quickly as possible has the same effect: it is easy to forget that progress only occurs gradually and through constant practice.

Don't give up, continue with the practice. Sometimes one will have special sensations, sometimes not. Simply carry on: let what happens happen. It is this attitude that will give you the best possibility of arriving at a high level.

When you are too tense, too emotional (anxious, for instance, or angry) or too tired it is better not to practise. First restore your inner calm.