

Origin, Development and Characteristics of Health Qigong · Mawangdui Daoyin Shu Exercise

Task Team for Health Qigong · Mawangdui Daoyin Exercise

Health Qigong · Mawangdui Daoyin Shu is one of the new exercises created and compiled by Health Qigong Administration Center of General Administration of Sports of China. Shanghai University of Sport (SUS) undertook the research task thereof. The newly-compiled exercise is based on the *Daoyin Tu* (Daoyin Chart) unearthed from a Han dynasty tomb at the Mawangdui site, Changsha, Hunan Province, China, and is mainly characterized by guidance along meridian channels and synchronicity of mind and body. The design for its exercise movements focuses on the opening and closing, ascending and descending, rotating and revolving, bending and stretching of the body, its tendons, and bones. It is a set of exercise method with primitive simplicity and elegant postures designed to cultivate one's internal and external wellness. It integrates cultivating moral character, nourishing inner nature, entertainment and appreciation. It features elegant movements, smooth link-up, simplicity for easy learning, safety and reliability, so it is applicable for learning and practice by different groups of people, and it has the functions of curing diseases, strengthening body, prolonging life for promising longevity.

I. Origin and Development of Mawangdui Daoyin Shu

According to the existing literature available, the earliest appearance of the word "Daoyin" can be traced back to *Zhuangzi·Ingrained Ideas*, one of the ancient books and records before the Qin dynasty, saying that "Blowing and breathing with open mouth; inhaling and exhaling the breath; expelling the old breath and taking in new; passing their time like the (dormant) bear, and stretching and twisting (the neck) like a bird - all this simply shows the desire for longevity. This is what the scholars who do Daoyin (guiding and stretching) exercise, and the men who nourish the body and wish to live as long as Peng Zu are fond of." It not only indicates that the main contents of Daoyin is "guiding qi to make it tranquil, and stretching the body to make it flexible", but also shows that scholars

specialized in Daoyin and practitioners dedicated to nourishing the body have already emerged in the periods before the Qin dynasty.

After the appearance of the word “Daoyin”, ancients categorized many body building and life nurturing methods into Daoyin. *Baopuzi · Biezhishi* records: “Daoyin cannot be interpreted and understood only through the established names, imitated objects, watercolour paintings, presented postures, drawn charts; it cannot be described in simple words; such movements as stretching or bending, bending forward or backward, walking or lying, leaning or standing, pacing up and down, strolling, chanting or respiration, are all the movements of Daoyin”. In *Yiqie Jing Yinyi* (Pronunciation and Meaning in the Tripitaka), Shi Huilin in the Tang dynasty also included self-massage into Daoyin: “Daoyin refers to such movements done by any person as self-massage, self-pinching, stretching or contracting hands or feet in order to removing fatigue and relieving worries”. The body building methods included in Daoyin were considerably extensive in ancient times; although different methods contain different contents, all of them can be taken as a kind of life nurturing method for self-regulating qi-blood running of the body, curing diseases and building body.

In 1973, formal excavation started for the Han dynasty tomb No.3 at Mawangdui site. After the coffin was opened, it was found that at the east side of the outer coffin case, there is a rectangular lacquered wooden box with a cover in a shape of flat roof bordered around with ridge, in which many ancient medical books and literatures were stored, from which over 23000 Chinese characters can be identified. In the course of restoring these ancient literatures, experts found some broken figure paintings; through careful pasting, clouting and piecing, it can be identified that it is a color silk painting describing ancients exercising their body, and in its beginning part, it transcribed in succession *Quegu Shiqi* (Abstaining from Grains and Eating Qi) and *Yinyang Shiyi Mai Jiu Jing* (Moxibustion Classic on the Eleven Yin and Yang Channels) (Version B). It was affirmed that this silk painting is approximately 140 cm long and 50 cm wide, wherein, the part painted with

figure images is approximately 100 cm long, and contains 4 layers; it is affirmed by the Mawangdui Silk Texts Sorting Team that, each layer should be painted with 11 small pictures, and each picture has an average height of 9 – 12 cm. Each picture paints a figure in an exercise posture; figures include both male and female ones, some wearing clothes, and some naked in the upper body; all the pictures are color paintings in elaborate style, which were outlined with black lines and filled with vermilion or slate gray with blue colors. Except individual images doing apparatus exercise, all the remaining ones are doing free-hand exercises, without backdrop; beside each picture, there is simple instruction text; due to incompleteness, such text can be identified beside only 31 pictures.

Originally this silk painting has no name. The Mawangdui Silk Texts Sorting Team named it according to the following reasons: Firstly, the original picture 32 “*Xin (Shen)* (stretching)” and the original picture 41 “Xiong Jing (bear-hanging)” are in conformity with *Zhuangzi-Ingrained Ideas* saying that “Blowing and breathing with open mouth; inhaling and exhaling the breath; expelling the old breath and taking in new; passing their time like the (dormant) bear, and stretching and twisting (the neck) like a bird - all this simply shows the desire for longevity. This is what the scholars who do Daoyin (guiding and stretching) exercise, and the men who nourish the body and wish to live as long as Peng Zu are fond of.” Secondly, *Suishu · Jingjizhi* (Book of the Sui Dynasty · The Treatise on the Classics and Compilations) records that there were ever one volume of *Xing Qi Tu* (Running Qi Chart) and one volume of *Daoyin Tu* (Daoyin Chart), but the original charts have been lost. Thirdly, *Quegu Shiqi* (Abstaining from Grains and Eating Qi) and *Yinyang Shiyi Mai Jiu Jing* (Moxibustion Classic on the Eleven Yin and Yang Channels) (Version B) written on the same silk manuscript determine that this chart is a life nurturing chart, since in most cases ancients call life nurturing as “Daoyin”. For these reasons, the Mawangdui Silk Texts Sorting Team unanimously concluded that this chart is a Daoyin chart for life nurturing, and finally determined its name as “Daoyin Tu(Daoyin Chart, or Conduction

Exercise Chart”).

The movements painted in the Daoyin Tu can be roughly classified into the following categories:

Category I: Biomimetic Daoyin (guiding and stretching) movements in the Daoyin Tu include: Monkey Bawl for Curing Heat Disease, Merlin Back, Crane Call, Dragon Rise, Rabbit Jump, Ape Call, Mantis, Bear Hanging, Turtle Swallowing, Bird Stretching and Sparrow Hawk, etc.

Category II: In ancient China, “Yin” also has a meaning of “curing” disease. Many names of the movements in the Daoyin Tu begin with the character “Yin”, indicating its purpose of curing disease. Such movements include: Curing Waistache, Curing Kneeache, Curing Eyeache, Curing Inconvenience with Lower Limbs, Curing Backache, Curing Warm Disease, Curing Headache, Curing Paralysis Ache, Curing Abdominal Ailments, Curing Neck Troubles, Curing Deafness and Curing Worries, etc.

Category III: Qi-running movements that can be obviously identified in the Daoyin Tu include: Look up and Shout, Monkey Bawl for Curing Heat Disease, Dragon Respiration, Foetal Respiration and Swallow Respiration, etc.

Category IV: In the Daoyin Tu, the movements related to enhancing strength include: Kicking, Drawing a Bow, Zhe Yin(literally Folding Yin), Rabbit Jump, Mantis, Dredging Yin and Yang Meridians with a Wood Stick, Turtle Swallowing and Twisting Shoulders, etc.

Category V: Movements in the Daoyin Tu which can be classified into massage skills include: Beating Back, Curing Inconvenience with Lower Limbs, Kneeling to Stretching the Body in Eight Dimensions and Curing Paralysis Ache, etc.

From “dancing for publicity and guidance” in the times of Taotangshi (i.e. Emperor Yao) and Yinkangshi, to what Zhuangzi described for the persons who do Daoyin exercise and nourish the body as “Blowing and breathing with open mouth, inhaling and exhaling the breath” and “bear hanging and bird stretching”, as well as the silk paintings unearthed from the Han dynasty tomb No.3 at Mawangdui site, we can see the development

trajectory of Chinese life nurturing methods. In the Qin and Han dynasties, there were already relatively complete Daoyin exercise methods, which include not only body-stretching skills such as stretching, flexing, bending forward or backward, but also qi-guiding skills such as chanting or respiration, as well as running qi for meditation and massage to limbs and trunk. Such methods as Yi Jin Jing, Wu Qin Xi, Liu Zi Jue and Ba Duan Jin emerging thereafter can all be traced back to the Daoyin Tu, and in a certain sense they can be deemed as the typical methods for inheritance and development of the Daoyin Tu, therefore, there is a certain source relation between the Daoyin Tu and these methods.

Painting of the Daoyin Tu can be dated back over 2000 years ago, and its intension and extension develop along with the history, and so far it is being enriched and enlarged unceasingly. Today, excavating and studying this age-old yet vitality-exuberant method for body building, not only can enrich the contents of the history of life nurturing and the history of sports, but also has an important realistic significance for today's theories and practices of life nurturing.

The movements of Health Qigong · Mawangdui Daoyi Shu are adopted mainly from the Daoyin Tu. We selected 17 movements from the Daoyin Tu. The starting-position movement is designed by selecting a qi-running diagram in the Daoyin Tu, which aims for making preparation for starting exercise; in the closing position, exerciser does the movement of embracing qi in a circular manner for three times, which plays the roles of returning qi to the origin, quieting and nourishing the heart spirit. The creation and design of the entire set of method is guided by a holistic view, and aims to attain the goal of building and strengthening the body through dredging meridians and collaterals, harmonizing qi and blood, and balancing yin and yang. Its functional principle conforms to the traditional theories of Health Qigong; the design for its movements focuses on the opening and closing, ascending and descending, rotating and revolving, bending and stretching of the body, its tendons, and bones, which is in conformity with the law of sports;

the breathing is required to be natural, qi is guided by postures, and qi running is led by ideation (guiding qi with ideation); the requirements for movement drill include: alternation of relaxation and contraction; comfortable, slow, smooth and flexible manner; coordination of movement and ideation; and unity of mind and body. If calculation is made as per symmetrical and repetitive practice of each movement twice, the drill time for the complete set of method is approximately 17 minutes, so it is suitable for practice by the masses, and more suitable for practice by middle- and old-age people.

II. Characteristics of Mawangdui Daoyin Shu

(I) Conduction along meridians, and coordination of mind and body.

“Conduction along meridians”, means following the trend of meridians of human body, coordinating breathing, and carrying out certain regular exercise of limbs and trunk. The movement arrangement for Health Qigong · Mawangdui Daoyin Shu is combined with the theory of meridians and collaterals, therefore, during the course of movement practice, exercisers need to the basic running routes of meridians, so as to master the key points of each movement. For instance, in the first movement “Drawing a bow”, through opening and closing of chest, the lung qi in chest is regulated; in the course of twisting the trunk and stretching arms, ideation guides lung qi to run the direction of the hand greater yin lung meridian. “Coordination of movement and ideation”, means that, during the course of method practice, ideation activities and body movements coordinate each other, which is the critical factor for “conduction along meridians”.

(II) Rotating, bending and stretching, and comfortable, slow, smooth and flexible manner)

Many movements of Health Qigong · Mawangdui Daoyin Shu function to pull and stimulate zang-fu organs through rotating, bending and stretching the four limbs and the trunk, which not only acts on internal organs, but also is good for all the joints of human body. The entire set of method features gentle and slow manner, generous stretching and changeful movements, more rotating and flexing practices, which can build an agreeable

artistic conception for exercisers.

(III) Stretching the bones and tendons, and alternation of relaxation and contraction

Stretching the bones and tendons can, in a larger scope, pull the connective tissues of relevant parts of human body such as tendons and ligaments, which, in coordination with the exercise form featuring alternation of relaxation and contraction, aims to “stretch the body and make it flexible”. For instance of the fourth movement “Dragon Rise”, upon raising the arms up, the palms should be pressed and the heels should be lifted, which has better pulling and stretching effects to the sinews and bones of human body.

(IV) Exhaling the old and inhaling the new, and unity of mind and body

The difference between Health Qigong and other sports lies in that the former emphasizes breathing and lays stress on unity of mind and body. The entire set of movements of Health Qigong · Mawangdui Daoyin Shu is required to be done in a manner of breathing naturally and smoothly, keeping essence-spirit within the body, coordinating ideation with movements of the limbs and the trunk, so as to attain the state of unity of mind and body.