

CIS 160: Introduction to East Asian Studies
Fall 2003 M,W,F 9:30—10:20, Chambers 305

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Lecture Notes, 7 November 2003
Guest Lecturer: Prof. Ping Shao

Qigong (Ch'i kung)

What is Qigong?

Qigong literally means “work on qi.” It refers to various types of modern meditation in general, but it also refers to a nationwide revival of meditation that began in the late 1970s. Qigong has had a tremendous impact on China’s social and political life. It has forced the scientists to take a stand and caused a split within the government and the Communist Party.

A Brief History of Qigong

1. The term was first used in the 3rd century by Xu Xun, a Taoist transcendent.
2. In the 1950s, a doctor by the name of Liu Guizhen used the term to refer to the meditation that he taught to his patients in a hospital.
3. As a movement, however, Qigong did not take off until the late 1970s. It began in 1979 when a five-year old Tang Yu was found with the ability to read through his ears; soon reports of similar cases followed. They sparked a nationwide interest in meditation and the extraordinary powers that meditation might help develop in humans.
4. In the early 1980s, as the number of retired people, in particular retired officials increased, the Communist Party also encouraged interest in meditation as a way to keep people fit and their minds occupied;
5. In the early part of the Qigong craze, the Qigong masters tried to present Qigong as medicine and science, rather than religion and superstition; lots of scientists were involved in researches on meditation and the supernatural powers it might help develop.
6. The popularity of Qigong reached its height in the middle of the 1980s, but soon things took an ugly turn. The students of individual masters had gradually been organized into groups, often with branches in cities and provinces; some of these groups became cults, with a large following, huge amounts of funds, and a belief system of their own.

7. The Communist Party became worried, for both the right and wrong reasons.
- There were masters who claimed to be messiah figures in order to steal money;
 - There were masters who claimed to provide a cure where modern medicine failed; as a result, people died;
 - There were other masters who spread superstition, or took advantage of the trust of their followers and abused them sexually;
 - There were also a few who built a power base this way, and started to test their power against the government.

The government cracked down on Qigong in the middle of 1990s.

- Banned Falungong
- Arrested a few Qigong masters who exploited, raped or caused the deaths of their followers
- Sima Nan and Amazing Randy

Five Categories of Qigong

1. Taoist meditation

- Sitting in forgetfulness
- Heel breathing
- Internal alchemy:
 - ✓ Sexual meditation
 - ✓ Clean practice

2. Buddhist meditation

- Four Dhyanas of Form and Four Dhyanas of Formlessness
- Cessation meditation and insight meditation
- Six superknowledges and other miraculous powers

3. Confucian meditation

- Cultivating the energy of moral integrity

4. Medical meditation

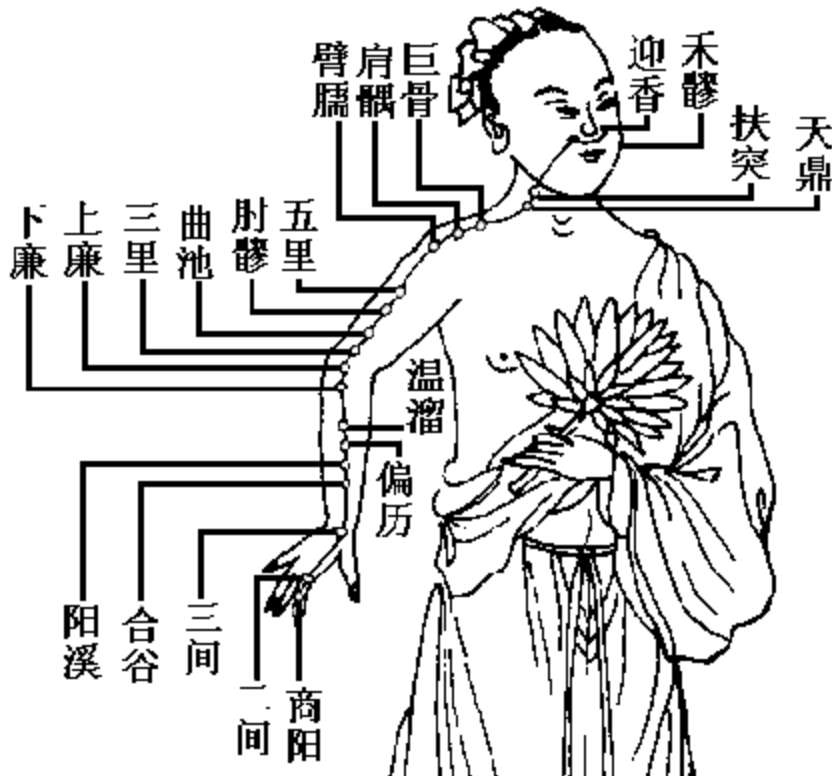
- Discovered points of energy and the meridian system
- Part of a training for a doctor
- Provide cures by itself or together with other means (herbs, acupuncture, etc.)

5. Martial arts meditation

- Baby energy
- Iron armor, iron palm, and so on
- Eagle Claws, and so on

Visions of the Body

1. Qi
2. Yin and yang
3. Body as a microcosm, with qi, yin and yang



4. The meridian system and points of energy

Social and political Aspects of Qigong

1. As a way to keep fit.
 - Most types of Qigong belong here.
2. As a supplement to medical treatment
 - Guo Lin and her Guo Lin New Qigong
 - Shen Chang, a super-doctor
3. As medicine and science
 - Yan Xin
 - Zhang Baosheng, a monk in his previous life?
 - Chen Zhu
 - Ke Yunlu (a hairless girl and a journalist with tumors in her uterus)

4. As a substitute for religion. Some Qigong masters presented themselves as messiahs, such as Buddhas and Taoist divine beings, with both a mission and vast supernatural powers necessary to accomplish the mission. But the messages they taught were often a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism and folk beliefs, or pure superstition.
 - Zhang Xiangyu, a modern shaman
 - Zhang Xiaoping, a self-proclaimed “son of the Buddha”

5. As a political force. Now that they were believed to be messiah figures, some Qigong masters tried to make their presence felt in Chinese political life.
 - Li Hongzhi, who first claimed to be the Buddha’s disciple, but later claimed to be the Buddha’s teacher. He also claimed to have prevented the earth from exploding three times. He tested his power against the government, but he lost as the government retaliated.

6. As a way to make rich quick
 - Zhang Hongbao turned Qigong into a huge business. He talked extensively about supernatural powers, and claimed to be able to provide a cure where modern medicine failed. He even founded a so-called “unicorn culture” to replace Chinese culture. He ran his Qigong organization half like a cult and half like a business. His profit was guaranteed.