
Seeking the Roots of Classical Qigong

Exploring the Original Meaning of the Pure Yang Mudra

Master Zhongxian Wu

*A symbol is any **thing**, which may function as the vehicle for a conception. Such a thing may be a word, a mathematical notation, an act, a gesture, a ritual, a dream, a work of art, or anything else that can carry a concept. The concept may be a rational-linguistic one, an imagined-intuitive one, or a feeling-evaluative one. It makes no difference as long as the symbol carries it effectively. The concept is the symbol's meaning.*

Susanne Langer¹



1. Introduction

Heaven gives birth to the hundred things – among them, the human being is the most precious.

Bamboo Book from Guodian Tomb in the ancient State of Chu²

Classical Qigong is a practice for cultivating knowledge and the main method for moving into “tian ren he yi” _____ (the state of oneness of the universe and the human being). It continues the legacy of ancient Chinese shamanism and affects not only the physical layer, but

also the mental, emotional, and spiritual planes of being. This method stems from the classical Daoist tradition and is rooted in the principles of Classical Chinese Medicine.

From the perspective of ancient Chinese philosophy, the great Dao is composed of the interaction of one yin and one yang and its expression throughout the universe. Heaven represents the yang component while earth represents the yin component. It is the balance and union of this heavenly yang and earthly yin energy that results in the state of oneness, or “universe,” where peace and harmony can be experienced in a palpable way. Likewise, imbalances in these energies can result in disharmony in the world, which can include natural disasters such as earthquakes, storms, floods and volcanic eruptions.

As a vital part of this dynamic universe, human beings are also subject to the effects of these energies. The ancient Chinese sages thought of human beings as the treasure between heaven and earth. How, then, to protect this precious life? Through study and observation of the universal way, the ancient Chinese sages realized that achieving harmony of the body is possible when a person follows the balancing principles of the universe in everyday living. To achieve this end, the ancient sages created an ancient life science system designed to keep the physical body, the mind, and the spirit healthy. Today, we know this ancient life science system as Qigong.

Qigong means qi cultivation, and qi translates as vital energy in English (more meanings of qi will be explained in section 2). Any movements done in conscious relationship with qi can be called Qigong. Many forms of Qigong are practiced: sitting meditation, movement (including Taijiquan and other internal martial arts), breath work, visualization, regulation of mental focus and emotions, mudra, and mantra. Even the use of proper herbal supplements and food choices can be associated with Qigong. Cultivation of the arts, such as calligraphy and music, can be also considered Qigong when done mindfully. In sum, Qigong facilitates the development of a deeper relationship with qi, which in turn helps the practitioner understand the laws of the universe and how they influence his or her life.

Literally thousands of Qigong styles exist now, and increasingly more people, both Eastern and Western, are interested in Qigong because of the benefits gained from its practice. Unfortunately, the popularity of Qigong is not a measure of the depth of contemporary teaching and practice. A person who has had only a few weeks of practice and then creates her or his own style of Qigong has become a common phenomenon in both China and the West. This kind of fake “grandmaster” usually does not have adequate knowledge or experience in Qigong practice and lacks the requisite classical education. The poor teaching and inaccurate information published in books are misleading; so many people come to misunderstand Qigong. Similarly, Classical Chinese Medicine (CCM) and other classical Chinese traditions, such as Chinese music and martial arts (including Taijiquan), are often misunderstood inside and outside of Mainland China. The significance of this trend is the potential loss of the essential roots of this ancient knowledge. As CCM scholar Heiner Fruehauf explains, “TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) administrators around the world are celebrating major advances in the field, such as increasing numbers of students, practitioners, patients, colleges, universities, and hospitals, which all appear to reflect a booming state of Oriental medicine. But if we truly respect our tradition as a living organism and listen intently to the deeper layers of its pulse, it becomes evident that the original vitality of the system is expiring, although its true condition may be obscured by a steroidal glow on the surface.”³

The problem arises from the so-called “reform” or “creation” impulse so prevalent in modern times. By this, I do not mean to imply that “reform” or “creation” is inherently negative or undesirable. I do feel, however, that it is imperative that we obey the Dao (the way of the universe) as prescribed in the classical traditions and that we respect these traditions as we reform them or create new forms from them. Without following the Dao, attempts to reform classical traditions for temporary, convenient applications are not only naïve but will damage the vital teachings contained within these classical traditions. If a new creation or reform of a classical tradition keeps the original essence while it is being simplified or reformed, then this is a good feature, especially if it facilitates understanding and bestows benefits on practitioners. For example, the art of Taijiquan has gained popularity in the world as a form of healthy exercise through participation in the established modern styles and some of the new simplified styles. It should be remembered, however, that original Taijiquan is not merely a type of healthy exercise, but a powerful internal martial art that helps people understand and connect with the essence of the Dao. In the widely propagated styles of simplified Taijiquan, some of the core light of the art has been discarded. Clearly, improper adaptations can cause more harm than good in the growth and development of classical Chinese traditions.

Another example of this trend toward harmful simplification is the movement to simplify the traditional Chinese characters. During the 1950s, the Chinese government introduced Pinyin (an alphabetic transliteration of Chinese characters) along with simplified Chinese characters. Both of these systems were developed to make the Chinese language more accessible by making it easier to learn and to write. Nevertheless, after nearly 50 years of application, we can see that these systems have brought confusion to classical Chinese culture. In Mainland China, for instance, younger generations can barely read ancient Chinese documents, let alone comprehend them. As a result, it may not be long before the ancient knowledge and values contained in myriad ancient texts are lost, the old documents having become “sealed books” for our descendants who will be unable to comprehend the deeper meanings of the traditional Chinese characters.⁴

I draw these examples to underscore an important question: When we study the classical Chinese traditions without attempting to truly comprehend their original meanings, do we convey and protect them, or do we damage them? Of all the classical Chinese traditions, Qigong, in particular, is not the kind of knowledge that can be learned from books or teachers alone. Qigong is a way of cultivating knowledge and a method of practice that can be learned only through correct guidance and personal experience. If one follows an incorrect path and training method, it will not only go against the flow of classical Chinese culture, but may also injure the body and negatively affect one’s life. Therefore, I always suggest that people practice classical styles of Qigong instead of studying or attempting to create new ones.

The classical styles of Qigong, in fact, are very different from the new types of Qigong. The new types are often advertised with catchy phrases such as “ancient knowledge...traditional qigong...world-first...ancient science” without any explanation as to how they are related to the ancient classical traditions. Although these new types of Qigong may be easier for people to learn and to gain temporary benefits from, the essence of Qigong may be missing. The greater concern in practicing these altered forms is that it may produce harmful effects over time. In contrast, the classical styles of Qigong have deep cultural roots and have proven to be authentic over centuries of practice. Authenticity is one of the most important standards for beginning Qigong practitioners to be aware of when choosing a Qigong style.

So many classical styles of Qigong exist that it would be impossible to explore the

cultural roots and verify all the different styles in a single journal article. Perhaps the best way for me to explain the essence of Qigong is to bring forth an idea that originated in ancient Chinese wisdom. The ancient Chinese sages used the image of a drop of water to represent the whole ocean, saying that if one understands the drop of water, then one can understand the entire ocean. In the spirit of this piece of wisdom, I am picking a mudra, a drop of water from the “Qigong ocean,” to represent the hundreds of classical styles of Qigong.

In this paper, I will analyze the symbolic meaning of a simple mudra from the Mt. Emei Sage Style Qigong, the Pure Yang Mudra. By exploring this mudra, I can provide a glimpse into the deeper cultural roots of Qigong and its relationship to the ancient world of Chinese shamanism, the *Book of Changes*, and the principles of Classical Chinese Medicine.

Through this paper, I hope more people will understand this classical style of Qigong as an endeavor to treasure life and to follow the authentic classical traditions. The Qigong I refer to in the rest of this paper is the classical style of Qigong.

2. Pure Yang Mudra and its Cultural Background

If the Zan _ does not lead to the number, then one merely acts as a shaman; if the number does not lead to virtue, then one merely acts as a scribe... I am on the same road as the scribes and shamans but end up differently.

Confucius, Yao _ (*Essentials*), from *Mawangdui Silk Book* ⁵

We cannot explore the symbolic meaning of a mudra without its soil, the cultural background. Understanding classical Chinese culture can help us appreciate the deeper symbolic meanings and see how a mudra is related to the ancient classics. As I mentioned earlier, classical Chinese culture is a qi culture. According to classical Chinese philosophy, qi is the most basic and important material in the universe. Qi is the original energy of the universe and follows the laws of the cosmos as it cycles between its tangible and intangible forms. Its expression in the sky is found in the stars and their movement. In the earth, it is found in the mountains, oceans, air, and in all forms of life. For human beings, qi manifests as the physical body and the processes of the mind. The animating energy connects us with the cosmos. Since the concept of qi pervades the culture, it is related to all aspects of Chinese culture and life sciences, including cosmology, philosophy, medicine, music, calligraphy, painting, martial arts, and Qigong.

How can we realize qi and how can we gain a deeper understanding of qi culture? The best way is through Qigong practice. Qigong is much more than a technique for cultivation; it is the essence of ancient Chinese culture. Most people are unaware of the qi flowing through and around their bodies. Fortunately, this consciousness can be cultivated through specific Qigong practices. We can better understand what qi is and how it is connected with Chinese culture if we experience it through correct classical Qigong practice. Even in modern society, the majority of Qigong practitioners understand that practicing classical methods enhances personal abilities and benefits overall health.

One of the essential practices of classical Chinese Qigong is the mudra. A mudra is a specific ritual common to ancient shamanism. In the Mt. Emei Sage Style Qigong (Emei Zhengong), we still preserve and utilize many special mudras as specific techniques of cultivation and healing/self-healing. The classical mudras, as representative of ancient symbols,

carry and transmit ancient knowledge to us. The mudra has a deep relationship to one of the oldest records of ancient Chinese civilization, the *Book of Changes (Yijing)*. In this context, it is more accurately translated as the *Classic of Symbols*.⁶ Since the *Book of Changes* is considered the root of classical Chinese knowledge, science, and civilization, it can also be used to gain deeper insights into the foundation of Qigong theory⁷.

The symbolic meaning of a mudra may be understood by applying the symbolic knowledge first presented in the *Book of Changes*. As an ancient life science, Classical Chinese Medicine (CCM) is affiliated with both *Yijing* science and Qigong. Thus, mudras can also be understood through CCM theory.

Now let us start on our journey to explore the symbolic meanings of the Pure Yang Mudra. The Chinese name of Pure Yang Mudra is also a special symbol. In classical Chinese traditions, the function of a name is to carry and convey meaning in the same way a symbol carries and conveys complex levels of meaning. Therefore, the name of an object should carry all the information contained in that object.

The Chinese name of Pure Yang Mudra is “Chunyangyin” ____, and this name carries multiple layers of meaning and contains its intentions. The original meaning of “Chun” __ is *silk* according to the second century dictionary, *Analyzing Simple Lines and Explaining Complex Graphs (Shuowen Jiezi* ____). The symbolic meaning of “silk” is *white, pure, and linking/connecting*. Therefore, the character “Chun” __ exemplifies *pure, purity, or purifying*. “Yang” __ contains many layers of meaning, including *sun, heaven, brightness, and south of a hill or north of a river*. “Yin” __ carries the meaning of *official seal*. In the terminology of the Daoist tradition, “yin” means *mudra*. Put together, these three terms make “Chunyangyin” ____, which tells us that the function of this mudra is to help the practitioner connect with universal qi. This practice purifies the body and transforms the practitioner’s energy into pure yang energy. Practicing the Pure Yang Mudra can enlighten the heart and the mind. Understanding the background of the mudra through Mt. Emei Sage Style Qigong helps us grasp the deeper symbolic meanings of the Pure Yang Mudra.

The Mt. Emei Sage Style Qigong combines the traditions of ancient shamanism, Confucianism, Daoism, Classical Chinese Medicine, and the martial arts. The elements of this style are rooted in the ancient world of Chinese shamanism, which is the source of all the classical Chinese traditions. The theoretical foundation of the Mt. Emei Sage Style Qigong is rooted in *Yijing* science and the principles of Classical Chinese Medicine. Generally, we classify this style as a type of Confucian Qigong since all of the forms contain the rational and moral meanings of the Confucian perspective. This style can be categorized as belonging to the “Fulu” __ school because it holds to some rituals and methods that are similar to those in the Daoist “Fulu” tradition. The Chinese character “Fu” __ means *symbol, omen, in alignment with, or in accord with*. “Lu” __ refers to *the book of prophecy, incantation, or a Daoist amulet* (a charm to ward off evil). Because of its ancient shamanic ritual practices, the “Fulu” __ school has been described as a shamanic school.

The most prominent feature of the Mt. Emei Sage Style Qigong is union. This feature belongs to the ancient Chinese civilization. In his book, *Peasant Society and Culture*, sociologist Robert Redfield explains that in a civilization both great tradition and little tradition exist. “The great tradition is cultivated in schools or temples; the little tradition works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities.”⁸ And, the two traditions

are interdependent; indeed, the Mt. Emei Sage style of Qigong, along with other classical styles, can be considered a little tradition while Daoism and Confucianism can be considered great traditions. The great tradition and the little tradition have long affected each other in China. The great tradition was formed from the little tradition and then became the main momentum in the development of Chinese civilization. Great or little, the core feature of all Chinese traditions is union rather than separation.

Many aspects of Chinese culture (music, art, medicine, science, etc) are attributed to a single great tradition when in truth other traditions contributed to their development as well. For instance, the *Book of Changes* is regarded as the most revered classic of Confucianism. It would be incorrect, however, to think that the *Yijing* is based solely on Confucianism, when in fact Daoism contains most of the pragmatic methods of *Yijing* science, such as Chinese five elements astrology, “Fengshui,” and various divination methods.

Confucianism and Daoism, the two main pillars of classical Chinese tradition, both originated in the ancient world of shamanism. As the way of humanity, Confucianism inherited and rationalized the knowledge of courtesy, ceremonial rites and regulations, and aspects of personal emotion from the ancient shamanic rituals. As the way of nature, Daoism rationalized and expanded the wisdom of the universal way and applied pragmatic knowledge from the ancient shamanic rituals.⁹

Another important classical Chinese tradition is Classical Chinese Medicine. It represents the joining of Daoism and Confucianism and is thoroughly based on *Yijing* science. The Tang Dynasty sage Sun Simiao ____, who is respected as the “Medical King” by the Chinese, stated that “nobody qualifies to be a master physician without knowledge of the science of change.”¹⁰ Indeed, CCM and Chinese shamanism are widely considered to have originated from the same source. In Chinese, the term is “____ (wu yi tong yuan).” “Wu yi tong yuan” translates literally as *shaman doctor same source*. In fact, many of the ancient documents verify that ancient Chinese doctors were ancient shamans.¹¹ From this we can conclude that shamanism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Classical Chinese Medicine connect to each other to form a union – and union is the prominent feature of classical Chinese traditions. Through the mudra, we come to see this feature more clearly.

Let us now move to the construction of Pure Yang Mudra and expose its cultural roots.

3. Pure Yang Mudra and its Cultural Roots

Intuiting the Zan_ to reach the number, and understanding the number to reach virtue.
Confucius, *Yao_ (Essentials)*, from *Mawangdui Silk Book*¹²

The Pure Yang Mudra is one of the special mudras from the Mt. Emei Sage Style Qigong. This mudra is made by using both hands to form a ball with the little fingers, middle fingers, and thumbs softly touching, while the ring and index fingers remain open (Fig.1).



Figure 1. Pure Yang Mudra

By carefully examining the formation of the Pure Yang Mudra, we can see that it has deep roots in the *Book of Changes*. The *Book of Changes* contains 64 hexagrams. A hexagram is constructed of six lines, three on the top and three on the bottom. Each set of three lines is called a trigram. To make a mudra the fingers come together to form the two trigrams that make up the hexagram.

Let us look more closely at the Pure Yang Mudra to see how the fingers form the two trigrams and resulting hexagram. Three fingers form the lower trigram: the little fingers connect, forming a yang line, the initial line; the ring fingers are open, forming a yin line, the second line; and the middle fingers connect, forming a yang line, the third line. This trigram is called “Li” ☲. The remaining fingers form the upper trigram: the index fingers are open, forming a yin line, the fourth line; the thumbs connect, forming a yang line, the fifth line; and the sixth fingers, which form the sixth line, are nonexistent. Where is this elevated sixth line? This elevated line of the hexagram is hidden and cannot be seen.

In the principles of *Yijing*, “hidden” means *yin* and “exposed” means *yang*, so this hidden line is a yin line. We can prove the elevated line is a yin line by exploring the yin-yang principle in *Yijing* science. The six lines in a hexagram are formed with yin and yang lines transforming or changing each other. We can say that the elevated yin line gives birth to the initial yang line. In the terminology of *Yijing* science, “yin ji yang sheng” translates as “*yin gives birth to yang*.”

Now that the sixth line, a yin line, has been revealed, the upper trigram is formed. This trigram is called “Kan” ☵. The two trigrams, “Kan” above and “Li” below, form hexagram 63 in the *Book of Changes*. Hexagram 63 is named “Jiji” ☵☲.



Jiji, Hexagram 63

Figure 2

The original meaning of “Ji” 己 is *to eat up*, according to *Analyzing Simple Lines*. It also means *already, complete, end, established, and soon*. The translation of the second “Ji” 己 (a different Chinese character) is the name of an ancient river in China, the *Ji River*. Its meanings include *numerous, neat and orderly, cross a river, help, assist, relieve, achieve, increase, and all right*. The most precise translation for the term “Jiji” is *already completed*.

As I explained in an earlier paper, “Most, if not all, the principles inherent in classical Qigong forms may be clarified by using the symbolic knowledge first presented in the *Book of Changes*.”¹³ Analyzing the symbolic meaning of hexagram 63 will help us understand the theory of the Pure Yang Mudra. Again, this hexagram is made up of the trigrams Kan and Li. “Kan” 坎, translates into English as *entrapment*. The *Mawangdui Yijing* manuscript records this name as “gan” 干, which means *to bestow*¹⁴. It is the symbol for water and represents kidney “jing” (essence). Additional meanings include *cold, softness, moist, surrender, flowing, intelligence, darkness, mystery, benefit, moon, and virtue*. “Li” 离 means *to fasten* in English. In the *Mawangdui Yijing* manuscript, Li is written as “Luo” 罗 and means *net*. The trigram Li is the symbol for fire, and symbolizes *heart, shen (spirit), mind, emperor, wisdom, eyes, hot, advance, light, sun, and brightness*.

The image of Kan is constructed of one yang line between two yin lines. Kan is yin or water, but there is true yang or fire hiding within the water. Kan is also called “*middle son*.” The image of Li is constructed with one yin line between two yang lines. Li is yang or fire, but there is true yin or water hiding within the fire. Therefore, Li is named “*middle daughter*.” These two trigrams reveal an important idea: yin and yang, or water and fire are rooting into each other. This idea is easy to understand from a CCM and internal alchemy perspective.

The “Jiji” hexagram (No. 63) is constructed with the trigram for water (Kan) appearing above the trigram for fire (Li). One of the ancient commentaries, *Xiang* 象, which focuses on the symbolic meaning of the hexagrams in the *Book of Changes*, explains that in hexagram 63, “There is water over fire. This is the picture of Jiji. This is like a person anticipating a disaster and preventing it,” which means that a person should think about the possibility of disaster or disease and what to do to prevent it. This holds true even if the person is currently very successful or healthy. The famous Tang Dynasty *Yijing* scholar Kong Yingda 孔颖达 clarified this idea in his commentary, “There is water over fire. It is the picture of cooking. Drink and food are completed by it.”¹⁵ His meaning is closely related to internal alchemy and suggests that Qigong serves the body in the same way that food does. It is this idea that motivates us to practice the Pure Yang Mudra.

At this point, I want to emphasize one critical fact. The commentary shows us we are able to generate a balanced qi field to prevent disease, nourish life, and maintain well-being if we

practice the mudra regularly. Information contained in Werner Zimmermann's report on a phenomenon in nature may help us understand this idea. Zimmermann explains that "rolling pebbles can emit sparks under water, that water grows, and that the stones at the bottom of a riverbed are the river's bread." Like the Daoist principle of yin-yang, Zimmermann senses two polar forces at work in everything. Both are of equal value, and in their interplay, these forces create new combinations and forms. As Zimmermann explains, "If an oxide can actually be created in water by a ray of flame, similar to a marriage between stone (mother-substance) and oxygen (father-substance), then we could also conceive that in such a manner, perhaps in a less forceful process, the oxide-water can also be created."¹⁶

Similarly, in the Pure Yang Mudra (fire under water), water represents "Jing" (*essence*), the mother-substance. Fire represents qi, the father-substance. The "marriage" is managed by the "flame" (mind). The result is that the life force and vital energy grow, and the mudra is the bread of the "Shen" *(spirit)*. The function of the Pure Yang Mudra is also explained by another classical commentary, "Tuan" *(spirit)*, on the meaning of the hexagrams. "Jiji" means *small prosperity or offering to the shen of the body*. When everything is in the correct position and the energy is flowing freely, there is harmony.

This finishes our exploration of the relationship between the picture of Pure Yang Mudra and hexagram 63 (Jiji) in the *Book of Changes*. This trip is one part of the journey to explore the original meaning of the Pure Yang Mudra. Now let us explore another deeper layer of meaning of the Pure Yang Mudra in *Yijing* science.

Ancient *Yijing* science combines symbolism and numerology: "One yin and one yang are called the Dao."¹⁷ Ancient Chinese sages discussed the Dao in terms of yin and yang, determining that the union of yin and yang results in the state of the Dao. As we have seen, in the symbolism of *Yijing* the trigrams and hexagrams are composed of yin lines and yang lines that represent the Dao. Interestingly, archaeological studies have determined that the symbols for the yin and yang lines originated from numbers¹⁸ and some scholars believe that the yin-yang and the five elements theories originated in ancient numerology.¹⁹ "Xici" *(the Appended Statements)* of the *Book of Changes* states, "The Dao of the *Changes* proceeds by threes and fives, weaving its numbers, and connecting its changes; consequently, the sage completes the culture of all under heaven, taking numbers to their limit; consequently, the sage settles the images of all under heaven."²⁰

According to numerology theory in the *Yijing*, numbers are also categorized into yin and yang. Odd numbers are regarded as yang numbers; even numbers are regarded as yin numbers. Therefore, the great Dao can also be represented with numbers. Laozi discussed the Dao in terms of numbers, writing "The Dao gives birth to the One, the One gives birth to the Two, the Two gives birth to the Three, and the Three gives birth to the Ten Thousand Things."²¹ The "One" means heaven, and the "Two" means earth. Through the interaction of heavenly qi and earthly qi, the "Ten Thousand Things" are created and completed. From a Daoist perspective, "Three" is the number of creation and accomplishment. An ancient Chinese text on astronomy and mathematics *Zhoubi Suanjing* *(reputed to have been written during the Western Zhou Dynasty, 1027-771 CE)* states, "The methods for obtaining these numbers come from the circle and the square." Renowned astronomer Zhao Shuang *(reputed to have been written during the Western Zhou Dynasty, 1027-771 CE)* explained this in the third century, "The circle and square are the shapes of heaven and earth, and embody the numbers of yin and yang."²² And in the words of Liu Wansu *(reputed to have been written during the Western Zhou Dynasty, 1027-771 CE)*, a famous Jin Dynasty Chinese Medicine doctor, "If one gains

the numbers of heaven and earth, one gains the great Dao.”²³ As we can see, ample evidence supports the assertion that the ancient Chinese sages represented the Dao with numbers.

Returning to the Pure Yang Mudra, we can explore how the five fingers on each hand relate to the five numbers. In the Mt. Emei Sage Style Qigong, the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are represented by the little fingers (1), ring fingers (2), middle fingers (3), index fingers (4), and thumb (5). In the numerology of the *Yijing*, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are the creation or foundation numbers; all of the other numbers emerge from these five numbers.

These five numbers also contain the theory of yin and yang and the principle of the five elements. Heaven belongs to yang, and earth belongs to yin. The yang numbers (1, 3, and 5) are heavenly numbers, and the yin numbers (2 and 4) are earthly numbers. The *Shuoguzhuan* _____ commentary discusses the “heavenly three and earthly two.” The *Yizhiyi* _____ commentary (*The Properties of the Changes*) in the *Mawangdui Yijing* manuscript describes, “Joining with the Three of heaven and the Two of earth and so giving birth to all of the numbers.”²⁴

In the *Book of Changes*, the yang line in hexagrams is represented with the number 9 while the yin line is represented with the number 6. Why do the lines use 9 and 6 to replace the characters yin and yang to express the Dao? The answer is hidden in “the Three of heaven and the Two of earth.” $1 + 3 + 5 = 9$. Nine is the highest yang number produced directly from the three heavenly creation numbers. As the purest yang number, nine manifests heaven. $2 + 4 = 6$. Six is the highest yin number created from the two earthly foundation numbers. As the purest yin number, six manifests earth.

The Pure Yang Mudra is formed by connecting fingers 1, 3, and 5 and leaving 2 and 4 open. By connecting these fingers, we can adjust and improve the body’s yang energy. This serves to refine the body qi into pure yang. By opening the index fingers and ring fingers, we can connect with the pure yin energy in the universe to nourish the yang energy and balance the body energy. This is what Laozi meant when he wrote, “The ten thousand things rely on the yin and embrace the yang, blending both yin and yang qi to achieve harmony.”²⁵ The idea that the number nine is yang and the number six is yin is also used in CCM as a guide for the classical acupuncture technique. The number nine means tonify, and the number six means disperse.

Let us continue our journey through *Yijing* science and seek the original relationship between the principles of the five elements and the five numbers. The text that gives birth to the concept of the five elements and clarifies how the five numbers are related to the five elements is *Hongfan* _____. It is one of the oldest of the ancient Chinese Classics and is thought to have been written early in the Western Zhou Dynasty. This text specifies, “One is water, Two is fire, Three is wood, Four is metal, and the Five is earth.”²⁶ The relationship of the yin-yang, the five elements, and the five numbers is illustrated in Figure 3.

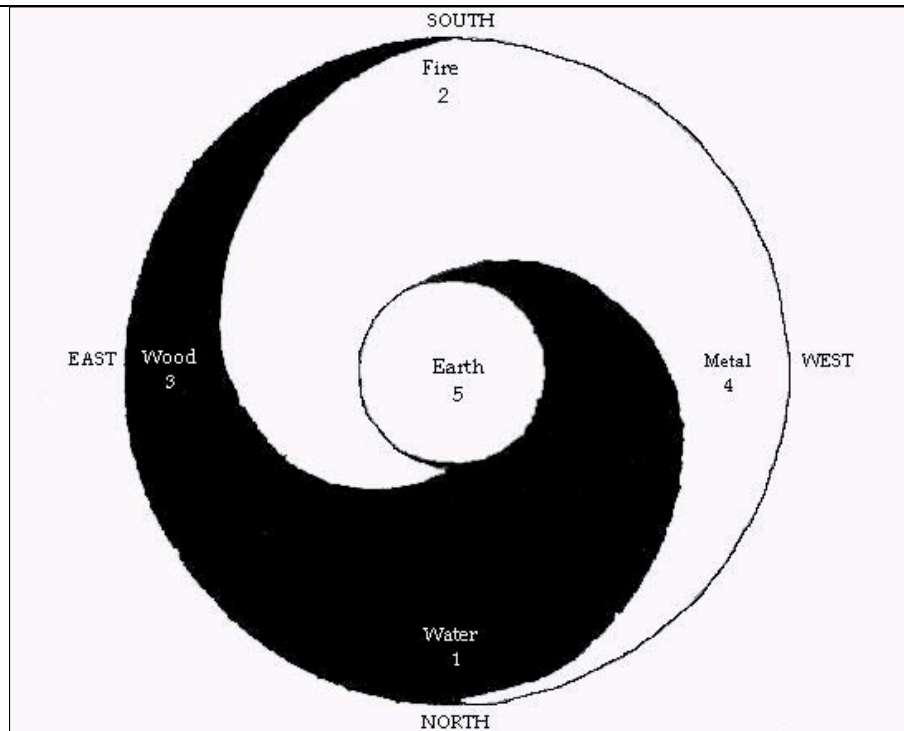


Figure 3

As can be seen in the above diagram, water (1) is related to the north, fire (2) is related to the south, wood (3) is related to the east, metal (4) is related to the west, and earth (5) is located in the center. This picture illustrates that universal energy can be held in a dynamic state of balance on its own. The water energy rises up through the wood energy. The fire energy descends with the metal energy, and the earth energy stays in the center to harmonize all the energies. Therefore, the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are called the five elements numbers.

Guided by the principle of the five elements numbers, we can see that the five fingers correspond to the five elements. The little finger is number 1 and connects with water. The ring finger is number 2 and connects with fire. The middle finger is number 3 and connects with wood. The index finger is number 4 and connects with metal. The thumb is number 5 and connects with earth.

The Hongfan text also discusses the idea that the universe is composed of five elements, and that the universal way (the great Dao) can be expressed by the five elements. The five elements create a bridge of relationship between human beings and the universe. Through this relationship, we are able to understand how human beings communicate with the universe. This is echoed in the concept of “tian ren he yi” _____ (*the state of oneness of the universe and the human being*).

4. Conclusion and Warning

Writing does not fully express words, and words do not fully express ideas.
Confucius, *Xici* ___ (*Appended Statements*)²⁷

This completes the current journey of exploration into some of the original meanings of the Pure Yang Mudra. On this journey, we have learned how to make the mudra and to understand the importance of its cultural roots. We have discussed the cultural background of the

the Pure Yang Mudra and its relationship to *Yijing* science, internal alchemy, and Classical Chinese Medicine -- and yet we realize that we cannot truly know the deepest layer of the mudra because words and sentences cannot fully express the ideas embedded in this mudra. Toward this end, I am continuing this exploration of the deeper meanings of the Pure Yang Mudra and its relationship to its cultural roots in independent paper.

As I have emphasized, Qigong cannot be learned through books or teachers alone. The intent of this paper is not to guide the reader on how to practice the Pure Yang Mudra as it should be practiced only with the guidance of an authentic teacher. This knowledge and method of practice can only be gained through correct guidance and personal experience. My purpose in writing this paper has been to discuss and explore the original meanings of the Pure Yang Mudra through acknowledging the roots of classical Qigong. I hope the reader has gained an understanding of one of the standards of classical Qigong, and will seek out a true teacher, following the authentic traditional way of practicing classical style Qigong in order to move into “*ten ren he yi*” (*the state of oneness of the universe and the human being*).

Acknowledgments

This paper came to fruition through the editing assistance of Pamela Causgrove, Benjamin Luna, Heiner Fruehauf, Brenda Harris, and Vandoren Wheeler.

¹ This theory of symbolism is from Susanne Langer’s *Philosophy in a New Key* (1942). Additional analysis comes from Donald Sander in *Navaho Symbols of Healing* (1991).

² This Chu State bamboo book was discovered in the Chu State tomb (340-320 BCE) at Guodian, in Jingmen, Hubei, China in 1993. It was reprinted in 1998. *Guodian Chumu Zhujian*. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1998. 194.

³ Fruehauf, Heiner. “The Crisis of Chinese Medicine: Science, Politics, and the Making of ‘TCM’.” *Journal of Chinese Medicine*, 61, 1999. 6-14.

⁴ Li Mingzhong. *Zhongguo Qinxue*. Xian: Shaanxi shehui kexueyuan zazhishe, 2000. 144.

⁵ It was discovered in the tomb of Li Cang (approximately 168 BCE) at Mawangdui, in Changsha, Hunan, China. Edward L. Shaughnessy translated it into English. *I Ching (The Classic of Changes)*. New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1997. 241. In it he translated *wu* as magician. In C.G. Zhang’s opinion, the best translation for *wu* is shaman. Shaughnessy translated *zan* as commendation. I think that commendation does not convey the precise meaning. I choose to translate *zan* as ancient shamanic ritual.

⁶ Fruehauf, Heiner. “The Science of Symbols – Exploring a Forgotten Gateway to Chinese Medicine.” *Journal of Chinese Medicine*, 68, 2002. 33.

⁷ Zhongxian Wu. “Ding (The Cauldron): On the Classical Origins of the Qigong Horse Stance.” *The National Qigong Association Newsletter*, Spring, 2002. 3-5.

⁸ Redfield, Robert. *Peasant Society and Culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960. 41-45.

⁹ Li Zehou. *Jimao Wushuo*. Beijing: Zhongguo Dianying Chubanshe, 1999. 65-66.

¹⁰ Zhang Jiebing. “*Yi yi yi*.” *Leijing Fuyi*. Xian: Shaanxi Kexue Jishu Chubanshe, 1996. 350.

¹¹ Chen Lai. *Gudai Zongjiao yu Lunli - Lujia Shixiang de Geyuan*. Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 1996. 35.

¹² Id. Shaughnessy. 240.

¹³ Id. Wu. 3.

¹⁴ Id. Shaughnessy.

¹⁵ Hu Puan. *Zhouyi Gushi Guan*. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1986. 270.

¹⁶ Zimmermann, Werner. “Fire Under Water.” *The Water Wizard: The Extraordinary Properties of Natural Water*. Bath: Gateway Books, 1998. 38-41. The text was translated and edited by Callum Coats.

¹⁷ This is from *Xici (The Appended Statements) of the Book of Change*.

¹⁸ Zhou Shan. *Zhouyi Wenham Lon*. Shanghai: Shanghai Shehui Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 1994. 4-10.

¹⁹ Li Ling. *Zhongguo Fangshu Xukao*. Beijing: Dongfang Chubanshe, 2000. 96.

²⁰ Id. Shaughnessy. 196

²¹ See chapter 42 of the *Daodejing*.

²² Cullen, Christopher. *Astronomy and Mathematics in Ancient China (zhou bi suan jing)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 83.

²³ Wu Jing, Wang Yongshen, *Zhouyi Baiti Wengda - Zhouyi yu Zhongyi Qigong*. Taiyuan: Shanxi Renming Chubanshe, 1989. 38.

²⁴ Id. Shaughnessy. 218.

²⁵ See chapter 42 of the *Daodejing*.

²⁶ *Baihua Shangshu*. Xian: Sanqin Chubanshe, 1998. 98.

²⁷ Id. Shaughnessy.