Since the beginning of our lives we as human beings have been acutely aware of the presence of gravity and since our early development as children learning to crawl, to stand and then finally to walk, gravity has exerted a constant influence on our bodies.

As a result we have each learned naturally to move to a great or lesser degree with gravity and to balance ourselves against it’s influence, in doing so over the years we also develop an inherent accumulation of body tension. This tension is the result of our bodies constant attempt at structural self-correction against gravity and an individuals fluctuating weight over time. At some time you yourself may have noticed while out in public the wide variety of ways in which human beings walk, stand and move in their daily lives and depending on their body height, stature and weight, all cope differently with gravity’s pull. Having said this it is of utmost importance to be aware of gravity’s influence on our bodies, especially when we consider the subjects of health and the martial arts.

Now many who read this will think, “That’s obvious, any idiot can see that gravity is a constant drag” (no humour intended), but what few consider and more often over look is how to correct or reestablish a position of perfect or near perfect balance with gravity and reduce if not eliminate the accumulated body tension we cling to in life.

There have been countless occasions throughout my own martial training were I observed practitioners of various martial systems diligently drilling their forms, basic fighting tools and two-man reaction drills with a unconscious disregard for gravity’s affect on their structure, myself included. As a result many of them experienced joint pain to inflamed or torn muscles, back and neck pain the list goes on and on.

For myself prior to being taught standing post exercises I was gradually reaching a point where practicing the martial arts brought me more frustration than fun and more pain than progress. After years of constant training, I had accumulated a stack of injuries ranging from hip and back pain through Aikido, ankle and knee pain from Karate and severe shoulder pain from my Wing Chun.

However through my practice of Jongs or standing post exercises I have experienced not only a marvelous transformation in my health but I have also been able to augment my bodies structural strength and generate a fantastic release of relaxed power in my martial techniques, it is my hope that the methods outlined in this volume can be of great benefit to those who wish to learn Jong postures first for the enhancement health and second for the development of your martial training. Zhan Zhuang in Mandarin and “Jong or Jom Jong in Cantonese” is a Chinese term referring to a post or wooden stake planted in the earth, it is both a type of training device as well as a structural term for a method of Chi Gung (energy practice).
Throughout the course of this article Standing post practice will refer to the stationary position or postures used by the masters of the past to maintain optimum structural alignment with gravity for the purpose of maintaining optimal health as well as the generation of abundant martial Jing.

The human body manifests bi-lateral cemetery, if equally divided in half from the top of your head to your groin you have two identical halves, as a result you also have a central axis or “center line” running through the body from top to bottom. This center line also represents the line of resistance that the body poses against gravity’s pull, the body is further divided into three primary kinetic springs, a kinetic spring is much like a Bow, (Figure A) two of the three act as natural shock absorbers against gravity, the three springs of the body are the Legs, the Spine and the Arms. Relaxation is the most important factor in the reaping the benefits of Standing Post exercises, relaxation allows the following process to occur.

(1) While standing relaxed in a jong posture you begin to recalibrate the skeletal frame and the antagonistic tension in the body which is accomplished ironically by non-action “Wu Wei”. This recalibration occurs between two different groups of muscles, these muscles are generally know by two different designations (A) Mobilizer muscles and (B) Stabilizer muscles. Mobilizer muscles represent your major muscle groups which generally contour the length of the bone, these muscles fatigue very easily, and have a heighten state of antagonistic tension throughout an individuals life one reason for this is that they are being over worked through the act of stabilizing the body against gravity. This has a number of detrimental effects on the body, two of the worst being the production of lactic acid in the blood and the consumption of oxygen and nutrients that the internal organs need for health.

**Martial Manifestations**

Now over the years I have read articles that discuss the health benefits of Standing meditation Chi Gung and as a result the focus in this article is directly on the Structural benefits that apply to the Martial Arts that one can acquire and refine through this practise.

**First — Whole Body unity through relaxation**, this entails the unified application of the bodies mass behind every movement that is made regardless of is martial application, wether for offense or defense the limbs of the body which on average weight 15 pounds will now have the support of the rest of the bodies mass.
Second — *Whole Body unity supporting the arm Sphere curcumferense*, When the first kinetic spring of the body (*the Stance*) and the Second kinetic spring (*the Spine*) are integrated through the forward rolling, upward lift of the pelvis (to minimize the lordotic curvature of the lumbar spine) the Third kinetic spring of (*the Arm Sphere*) may begin being cultivated.

Third — *The Structure of the Arm Sphere curcumferense*, raise the arms up in front of the chest palms facing slightly upwards, elbows relaxing downward and form the shape of a circle with the arms. When doing so make sure to adhere to the following guides, Arms are not to go higher than the eyebrows, Arms should not descend below the navel, Right arm stays on right side, Left arm stays on left side.

Now these are guides for a beginner or someone unfamiliar with this method, so that the following points may be experienced.

(1) the Circular posture of the arms allows the one posing in to feel the center point at the heart of the Arm circle. Initially this is done with the focus being on a single circle for ease of learning, However each arm is an individual arm circle or more appropriately Arm Sphere.

(2) the Circular posture of the arms also allows the one posing in to feel the upper chest and truck as the counter weight at the outer rear portion of the Arm circle curcumference. This allows the user to apply the truck as the counter weight to force applied to any contact point on the Arm circle curcumference.

It should be noted that when the arms are posed in a circle the center point of that circle is actually the Centeral Pivot Axis, and will extend farther from the body the farther the arms are extended. This Centeral Pivot Axis (which in the beginning stages of training was referenced inside the body, extending between the Ba Hui point at the top of the head and the Doo Mai point at the genitals) now extends beyond the body as a virtual Axis around which the bodies trunk mass orbits as a counter weight. This is only made possible through the forward rolling, upward lift of the pelvis, to minimize the lordotic curvature of the lumbar spine in conjunction with pivoting on the bubbling well point in the foot.
When I was about Fifteen I had the good fortune of meeting an Instructor named Sifu Roy Harris who began training me in Shanxi five element 12 animal style of Hsing-I Chuan boxing. At the time the only other internal method of gung fu I had been exposed to was Chen and Yang style Tai Chi Chuan, and even though I enjoyed the Tai Chi instruction I received Hsing-I looked and felt very direct, simple and easy to apply.

Life was good and full new gung fu obsession and Hsing-I became one of my favorite martial arts, I was able to practice with a vigor and all out martial blood lust that I had not previously known, so within a few months I began to show progress and as It would happen one afternoon before one of my lessons I observed my teacher practising the very standing meditation I would come to dread.

I began wondering just what he was up too because he stood there for at least 3 minutes or more before noticing me, and when I asked him what he was doing he responded “I’m practicing the Standing stake meditation that we will be working on this afternoon” which made me feel less than thrilled, I’d been working so hard on what he called the fantastic five (Five element fists) and loving Hsing-I up until this point, but now we were just going to stand like a couple of statues in the park, I thougth for sure we’d get heckled by someone sooner or later. Within just a few seconds of standing I began to panic, my legs were start-ing to kill me my back was hurting and worse I needed a bathroom. When I stood in the San Ti posture, that coupled with the heat, several bees buzzing near us and my growing concern over some rough looking guys at a picnic table, I began to feel like a guy trapped in a burning building and wanted nothing more than to escape, especially after my legs started to shake violently which as luck would have it drew the attention of the rough char-acters at the picnic table.

Needless to say I did not look forward to Standing practice at all and thought that my teacher was simply trying to testing my comitment to his instruction. Throughout my train-ing with my sifu he would ask if I was still practicing the standing method and sadly I would lie and say yes which I regret very much, but despite my dishonesty he explained many times the theory and principles behind the standing post training to me and it was just my own stupidity for not taking it more seriously and over time I only delayed the benefits of this great practice.
Types of Jongs
Wooden posts are used by almost every system of Chinese gung fu as a training tool representing a human being, this allows a martial artist to train Footwork (Ma Gung), Hand techniques (Sao Fot) and depending on the style of mount, power discharge techniques or (Jing Fot). A smooth finished or rough outdoor jong (wooden post) is the most common type of training jong used, systems such as Bagua Chang, Law Horn Kuen, Chang Chuan, Ba Pan Chang, Tom Bei, Moi Fa Kuen, use such a jong as well as many other systems.

The “Moi Fa Jong” or Five Plum Blossoms Jong is so named because smaller jongs planted in the ground at an average of knee level height are grouped in a pattern of five resembling a plum blossom petal, this jong method is used most often for training footwork and balance in systems such as Northern Praying Mantis and styles of Chang Chuan. The “Sam Sing Gerk Jong” or Three star kicking jong is most often used in the system of Wing Chun as a method of refining footwork, kicking, speed and timing.

Wing Chun is also famous for it’s use of the “Mook Yan Jong” or wooden man dummy which is a jong configured to more closely resemble the structure of a combatant. The Mook Yan Jong allows the Wing Chun practitioner to train and refine a multitude of gung fu skills, from “Gan Geep Jing” or sticking & clinging power to “Bik Jing” pressing power to “Gak Jing” shock power. Almost every southern system of Chinese gung fu from Choy Lee Fut, White Eyebrow, Lung Ying Kuen, Mo Gar, Hung Gar, to Chow Gar Mantis utilizes a variation on the wooden man dummy jong.
To Be Continued...

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