

CHINESE HEALTH QIGONG

Wu Qin Xi



Five-Animal Qigong Exercises

With
Instructional
DVD



COMPILED BY THE
CHINESE HEALTH
QIGONG ASSOCIATION

G85/27

Chinese Health Qigong

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Preface

Wu Qin Xi or Five-Animal Exercises imitating the movements of animals and birds, is a group of physical and breathing exercises for health care with a uniquely Chinese national flavor. The system was designed by Hua Tuo, a leading physician of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 AD). He developed his system based on existing ancient Chinese traditional physical exercises following theories of the functions of the internal organs and meridians as well as the principles of the circulation of Qi and blood in the human body. His inspiration came from careful observation and study of the characteristic behavior and activities of tigers, deer, bears, monkeys and birds. He came to the conclusion that wild creatures regularly performed certain exercises to build up their constitution and improve their life skills. This book *Wu Qin Xi* in the *Chinese Qigong Exercise Series* was edited by the Chinese Health Qigong Association. In this book, the physical movements and spiritual expressions of those creatures are vividly described, and the principles of traditional Qigong exercises are used as guidance for students. During practice of the exercises, they are asked to coordinate their mind with the movements, and combine internal exercises with external ex-

ercises. Wu Qin Xi is not designed just for superficial imitation of the outer attitudes of those animals, because this may discourage the students, diminish their enthusiasm and reduce the efficiency of practice. The postures and movements of the exercises are elegant, so as to stimulate enthusiasm for learning and practicing the exercises. The movements are comparatively simple, and easy to remember. They are also very safe, as the physical exertion required will not tax even older people. The technical requirements are not very complicated, and so they are not difficult to master, and can be undertaken by people of different age groups and degrees of experience.

Experience has proved that after a certain period of practice, both physical and mental health are improved. Indeed, physical and psychological tests of people who practice Wu Qin Xi give high scores to their overall constitution, the functions of the various organs, mental attitude and power of perception, as well as physical fitness. In addition, the waistline and ratio between waist and buttocks in female practitioners are reduced, the cardiovascular and respiratory functions are markedly improved, and the grip strength is reinforced. Subjective appraisal of the effectiveness of these exercises by practitioners has found enhancement of bodily strength, improvement of flexibility of joints, and enhancement of spiritual vitality and psychological confidence.

Chapter I

Origins and Development



According to the Five-Animal Exercises can be traced back to remote *Lu's Chronicle* (吕氏春秋), Wu Qin Xi or the Five-Animal Exercises can be traced back to remote antiquity, as a treatment for swollen legs. A type of "dance" was devised for this purpose, which can be regarded as the embryo of the physical and breathing exercises developed in later ages in China. In *Zhuang Zi* (庄子), we find, "Exhaling to get rid of waste and inhaling fresh air, imitating the gait of a bear and the way a bird spreads its wings will prolong the life span." This is the earliest reference to the idea of health care by imitating the movements of wild creatures. In 1973, a wall painting titled, *Diagrams of Physical and Breathing Exercises* was excavated from an ancient tomb at Mawangdui in Changsha, Hunan Province. It shows people adopting dragon, snipe, bear, monkey, cat, dog, crane, swallow, and even tiger and leopard postures. This is clear, although some captions are difficult to read.

The formation of Wu Qin Xi is first mentioned in the *Biography of Hua Tuo* in *History of the Three Kingdoms* (三国志•华陀传),