

# Dan Tian and Channels

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We know that during our meditation we should concentrate our mind at the Dan Tian, and when we play Tai Chi we have to make sure that each of our movements originates from our waist, or to be more precise, from the Dan Tian. But what is Dan Tian? What is the significance of Dan Tian in our practice?

First, let's get into some fundamentals of Chinese traditional medicine.

## **Chi**

Chi (Qi) is the vital energy inside a person's body. It is generated from our daily food and drink intake as well as through our interaction with the universe. It is the inner energy that supports life.

Chi keeps our internal organs functioning; it converts the energy from our food intake and the air we breathe into energy. Chi keeps our body growing, keeps our body temperature normal, and defends against illness (bad Chi) that invades our body. Chi is also the energy that fuels our activities. When Chi ceases its motion, our life ends.

Having healthy and strong Chi inside our body means we will have a good, healthy and happy life. If our Chi's condition declines, we will have illness, depression and bad health. Our life will be miserable.

Inside the mother's womb, the baby's Chi circulates perfectly. After birth, the path of the original Chi (congenital) is broken. The Chi after birth (postnatal) provides support for the new-born to grow and function. Our meditation or Tai Chi practices are ways of re-opening the original Chi's path in order to achieve the goal of longevity and to reduce our vulnerability to diseases.

## **Channels**

According to Chinese traditional medical theory, there are many Channels, or Meridians in the human body. Our internal Chi circulates via channels as well as collaterals which are the branches from Channels. There are Twelve Channels (regular) and Eight Extra Channels. The difference between these two types of channels is that each one of the Twelve Channels is associated with different internal organs while the Extra Channels do not pertain to any internal organs.

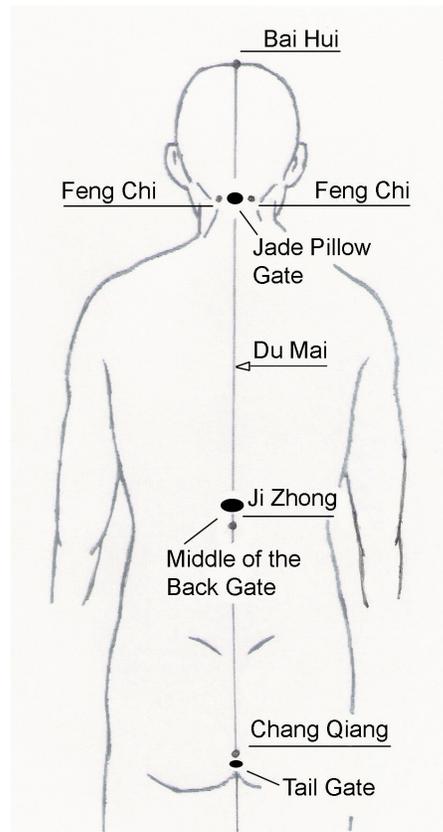
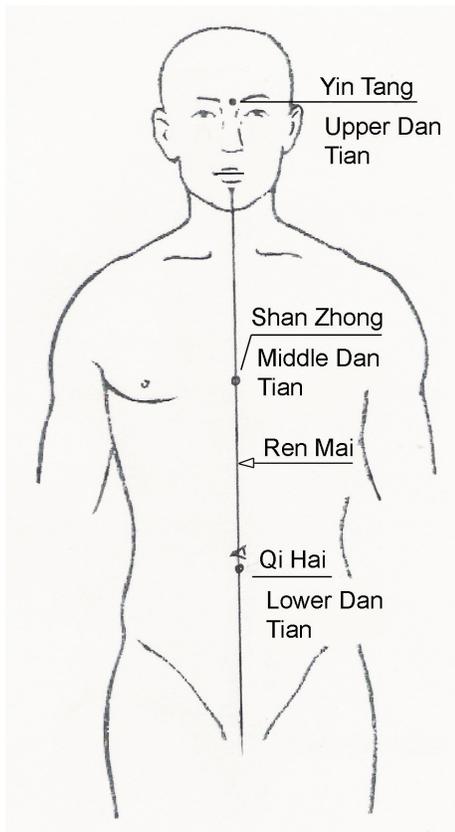
The Twelve Channels and their abbreviations are:

The Lung Channel of Hand-Taiyin	Lu.
The Large Intestine Channel of Hand-Yangming	L.I.
The Stomach Channel of Foot-Yangming	St.
The Spleen Channel of Foot-Taiyin	Sp.
The Heart Channel of Hand-Shaoyin	H.
The Small Intestine Channel of Hand-Taiyang	S.I.
The Urinary Bladder Channel of Foot-Taiyin	U.B.
The Kidney Channel of Foot-Shaoyin	K.
The Pericardium Channel of Hand-Jueyin	P.
The Sanjiao Channel of Hand-Shaoyang	S.J.
The Gall Bladder Channel of Foot-Shaoyang	G.B.
The Liver Channel of Foot-Jueyin	Liv.

The Eight Extra Channels are:

Du, Ren, Chong, Dai, Yinwei, Yangwei, Yinchiao, and Yangchiao.

To put it more simply for our meditation or Tai Chi practice, we need to know first that there are two major channels: the Ren Mai and the Du Mai. Both belong to the Eight Extra Channels.



In the drawing above:  
 Yin Tang (Extra1), Shan Zhong (Ren 17), Qi Hai (Ren 6), Bai Hui (Du 20), Feng Chi (G.B. 20), Ji Zhong (Du 6), Chang Qiang (Du 1)

Ren Mai is the Front Midline Channel. The word “Ren” can be translated as “responsibility,” and “Mai” is the word for “channel” or “meridian.” Ren Mai is responsible for all the Yin channels.

Du Mai is the Back Midline Channel. The word “Du” can be translated as “to govern.” It governs all the Yang channels.

For practitioners of the Chinese Traditional Meditation, we refer to the Ren Mai as running from the Bai Hui (Du 20) point on top of your head all the way down along the front of your body to your anus area, and then connecting with the Du Mai all the way back up along the backside of your body to the Bai Hui point again.

### **Acupuncture Points**

The acupuncture points are throughout the human body; most of them are on the paths of different channels while others are not. There are over 360 Regular Points and 36 Extraordinary Points that are commonly used. Each of the acupuncture points has its own name in Chinese, as well as a location name in English. Take “Bai Hui” (Du 20) for example. Bai Hui is the Chinese name of the point and Du 20 is the English point number 20 on the Du Channel.

Acupuncture needles, heat, massage and other methods are used to stimulate the acupuncture point(s) externally to treat illness or for other health reasons. Acupuncture points can be used as striking points for martial arts purposes. That is, if you strike a certain vital point you can disable or neutralize the subject.

### **Dan Tian**

“Dan” can be translated as “the medicine for longevity” or as “the Elixir.” “Tian” is the word for “Field.” It is believed that a person’s inner life energy, or Chi, originates from and is controlled by Dan Tian. There are three Dan Tians in a person’s body: Upper, Middle and Lower. Different meditations and martial arts styles may place them in different locations.

In our practice, the Upper Dan Tian is in the area of the Yin Tang point (Extra 1). This location is between the two eyebrows (See the above drawing). In meditation terms, this is also called Mei Jian (Between Eyebrows), or Xuan Guan (the Gate of Mysteriousness).

The Middle Dan Tian is at the area of the Shan Zhong (Ren 17) point. This location is midway between the two nipples (See the above drawing). The easiest place to focus on is the Xiphoid process area.

The Lower Dan Tian is at the area of the Qi Hai (Ren 6) point. This location is about one and a half inches below the navel (See above drawing). It is also called Shen Lu (the Sacred Furnace).

A very interesting fact is that all three Dan Tian mentioned here are located on the Golden Ratio sections of our body. Multiply 0.618 by the distance between your chin and the top of your head to find your Upper Dan Tian area. Multiply 0.618 by your torso length to find your Middle Dan Tian area and multiply 0.618 by your body height to find your Lower Dan Tian area.

You should concentrate and focus on the Dan Tian while meditating. Try to re-build your original (Congenital) Chi that you received from your mother, as well as re-open the passage of the Chi. If you can build up your Chi and make your channels flow unimpeded, better health can be achieved.

Each Tai Chi movement you play should start from your Dan Tian which physically usually refers to the waist. At the very beginning of your play, you should sink your mind (Chi) down to the Lower Dan Tian, then begin your move while keeping focus on your movement. Your meditative mind and correct routine postures will stimulate your Chi's movement to achieve better health.

### **The Gates**

Our body has three "Guan" (Gates) which are the cut-off places on the Du channel and were formed after our birth. The Gates prevent the original Chi's flow and need to be re-opened through our meditation.

The first gate is called Wei Lu Guan (the Tail Gate). It is at the area of the Chang Qiang point (Du 1). The location is between the coccyx and the anus (See the above drawing).

The second gate is called Jia Ji Guan (the Middle of the Back Gate). It is at the area of Ji Zhong point area (Du 6). The location is below the 11<sup>th</sup> Thoracic Vertebra (See above drawing). The easiest way to locate it is when you stand up and let your arms hang down naturally; draw a line between your two elbows. The center area above the line is the Jia Ji Gate.

The last gate is called Yu Zhen Guan (the Jade Pillow Gate). It is between the left and right Feng Chi points (G.B. 20). If you draw a line connecting your two ear lobes at the back of your head, the center area is the gate (See the above drawing).

*For more details see the book "Chinese Traditional Meditation, Calm and Moving". ISBN: 1434301516*

*Visit [hsvtaichi.com](http://hsvtaichi.com) for more information about the author and his Tai Chi class.*