



The Elixir Fields

by Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S.

The concept of a dantian was first described in a Taoist text devoted to meditation practices during the 3rd century C.E. The dantians were discovered while the Taoist alchemists of ancient China were searching to achieve longevity through purifying their nature and transforming their spirit.

Through experimentation, they realized the existence of energy fields that were storing and circulating qi, which they called dantians. Within the realm of Taoist alchemy, these energetic centers later became known as “fields of elixir.”

Since this time, dantians have become an integral component of Chinese medicine philosophy and practice, particularly during the practice of tai chi and qigong exercise.

Within this context, they are commonly described as seas of energy and traditionally known as the upper, middle and lower dantians. They are energetic epicenters that redistribute qi to the internal organs, nerves, endocrine glands and blood. And they control, store and emit energy in addition to projecting energy to the surface of the body to strengthen energetic immunity.

These three elixir fields are interconnected and mutually dependent structures. The upper dantian is referred to as the field of light, the middle dantian as the field of vibration and the lower dantian as the field of heat.

The lower dantian is a powerful vortex where life energy (yuan source qi) originates and resides. It is located approximately two inches below the belly button and one-inch interior toward the lower back. The lower dantian exists in the center of a triangle formed by three energy points, which forge a connection to the earth via the legs and feet. The singular and combined energies of these points allow for the gathering and drawing of earth energy upward to nourish the lower dantian.

Known as “the energetic center of physical healing,” the lower dantian provides a vital source of energy for building a strong physical body, increasing sexual vitality and promoting overall health. Moreover, the forging of a strong connection with the lower dantian leads to



increased trust in gut feelings. This is similar to the enteric system, which is called “the brain within the gut” and found to send and receive impulses, record experiences and respond to emotions. In this regard, continued development of lower dantian energetics produces an advanced level of awareness and communication. As such, it is often referred to as “the second brain.” The middle dantian is known as the “sea of tranquility” and located behind the breastbone on the center of the chest, level with the heart. This dantian is associated with the heart and has an influence on blood circulation and blood vessel health. Known as “the center of cognition,” the middle dantian has a direct impact on cognitive health. This stems from the heart being the “house of the mind” that provides an emotional spirit having to do with disposition, feelings, confidence and trust.

It is further related to the lungs, whereby strong energy within the middle dantian builds a form of qi that helps the kidneys “grab qi” during inhalation. And is further connected to the thymus gland, meaning it has an impact on immune function. Moreover, the middle dantian houses the shen, thereby providing a holding place for emotional traits, cognitive components and spiritual vibrations. In addition, the mixing of heaven and earth energies takes place within the middle dantian - leading to the manifestation of a unique form of human emotional energy. Cultivation of this dantian strengthens ability to express feelings, promotes individuality and root sense of self. And it increases capacity for heartfelt, empathetic communication.

The upper dantian represents a person’s spiritual counterpart and connection to the divine. It is located in the center of the brain approximately three inches behind and just above the bridge of the nose and referred to as “the sea of spirit.” This is where heavenly qi is drawn downward and collects within the body. It is a special reservoir of feelings and communication, in addition

to spiritual and intuitive awareness. Its activation develops inner trust and a more peaceful state of being. Strengthening of its energies gradually develops insight and wisdom accompanied by increased mental clarity, psychic awareness and intuitive ability. Without such stimulation, the upper dantian tends to remain dormant and without proper flow.

The practice of tai chi and qigong exercises cultivates an abundance of energy within and maintains proper energetics within these three dantians - ensuring that the vital energy of qi is consolidated and flows in the right direction, rather than becoming scattered. It leads to an even and abundant spread of qi throughout the body and increased production of internal power. And most importantly, it serves to enliven the body with yang energy from the sky above, while stabilizing it with yin nourishment from the earth below.

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