

## 小周天 *Xiao Zhou Tian* 'Microcosmic Orbit'

The name *Xiaozhoutian* means 'Small Heavenly Circuit' but is better known as the 'Microcosmic Orbit'. The technique circulates energy through the internal universe, similar to path of *Kundalini* in yoga, and establishes the water (descent)/fire (rising) axis in the body. It is the most popular form of static *Qigong* in China's long history of meditation arts.

The *Xiaozhoutian* promotes longevity by building and refining energy, essence and spirit. These are channelled down the *Renmai* 'Conception vessel' (*yin*) at the front and up the *Dumai* 'Governing vessel' (*yang*) at the back. The sinking and sprouting of *qi* is completed when the meridians join at the tip of the tongue touching the palate.

The exercise is stationary, sitting on a chair, cross legged or in lotus position. It involves co-ordinating breathing and sometimes swallowing saliva, with visualisation of key points on the circuit. The most vital being the *Dantian*, the centre of gravity and basis of our core strength. Amongst others are included three locations where the *qi* is said to 'bottle-neck' and cause physical congestion - the lower back, mid back and neck. It is important the practitioner not concentrate too hard on leading the *qi* by pushing or pulling, instead only a natural awareness of these areas is required. The nine common points of focus are -

