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The Taoist approach of the Three Dantians (Elixir fields): Quite often, when the phrase Dan (elixir) tian (field) is circulated amongst the TCM community, one thinks of the lower Dantian only, an area about three inches below the naval and one inch inside, which also includes the hui yin cavity in the perineum area and the mingmen (gate of life) cavity in the lower back. These three areas/cavities connected together makes-up what is generally referred to as the lower dantian. It is where the Yuan qi resides, where life begins and the physical area that was formerly connected to the heavenly energy.

In Taoist energy arts, there is the concept of the three Dantians; the upper dantian, the middle dantian and the lower dantian. These elixir fields function on a more subtle level than the body's more physical manifestations such as blood, lymph, muscle, tendons and bone. The dantians are not hard tangible zones but rather places where the mind can feel a clearer sense of empty space, especially during and after the practice of meditation, so efforts to delineate them into more solid structures and or locations would only be mere approximations.

The UPPER Dantian / House of the Spirit Realm is located in the head (between the eyes and back towards the center of the brain). This is where the wisdom mind can perceive lighter energies associated with the heaven sphere, especially if one is emotionally calm and peaceful. It is an impersonal space where the psychic abilities of the mind can better perceive the more subtle vibrations and frequencies being emitted by the earth, planets and stars; from where one is more capable of tapping into a higher a consciousness and knowledge. However, because great amounts of energy can gather, intensify and or stagnate in this region, usually because of too much thinking, it is highly recommended to focus on proper abdominal breathing methods that naturally lead the breath and qi back down to the lower dantian, resulting in a smoother flow of energy.

The ability of the mind's intention to produce thoughts and control the body movements is extremely beneficial for survival. The mind has the incredible ability to initiate an idea or use intention to either make a physical movement or an internal rumination. This is useful but all the thoughts behind these actions take an incredible amount of energy output without preserving energy or energy input. This is why one is often exhausted after worrying about a situation. The more we immerse ourselves in thoughts the less energy is given to the rest of the body. This is extremely common in a culture that respects the minds intellect as a high level of accomplishment.

If the mind is overactive, it consumes the body's qi. As the qi is directed to feed the mind and upper dantian, the middle and lower dantians will suffer. The internal organs and bowels will not have enough qi to function properly and smoothly. In order to improve the health of an individual, one has to learn to unlearn the ideas of the mind. By doing this one will be giving his/her mind a rest. While it is beneficial that one is able to use his/her mind in a constructive way, one must learn to quiet the mind daily with such practices as meditation. When the mind is quiet, the qi that would normally be used to feed the upper dantian will be used throughout the body more evenly.

The Middle Dantian / House of the Human Realm Located in the solar plexus/center of the

chest area, its field of energy also naturally extends into both palms. It is considered by the ancient Taoist, Tibetan Buddhist and other spiritual traditions to be the seat of one's soul and the root of the ego's sense of self and individuality. It's a place where raw earthly powers from below mix together with the detached sublime heavenly forces from above, creating a distinct kind of emotional energy usually only associated with human beings — it is the heart's energetic capacity to express feelings and show compassion.

Since the middle dantian is considered the house of the human realm, the heart is thought to be the main organ occupying this elixir field. The heart has the nature of fire on a physical as well as an emotional level. It is encased by the lungs, a cooling system for the heart when she gets stirred up or too emotional. Due to the intimate physical and energetic ties of the heart and lungs, the two will often affect each other. When the heart is roused it often affects the breathing and when one has trouble breathing, it automatically affects the heart. This explains why anxiety and agitation often will cause one to become upset and sad.

The Lower Dantian / House of the Earthly Realm is located in the navel area (three inches below the navel and one inch inside) physically connecting to its source the earth, via the feet and legs. This zone is primarily responsible for one's physical strength, sexual vitality and over-all health. It is directly nourished by the quality of one's daily intake of clean air, water and food and more subtly by Nature's trees, mountains, rivers, oceans and sky. On an esoteric level, this area deals with comparatively slower vibrations of energy and denser forms of matter, which result in physical manifestation of objects and worldly accomplishments. On a practical level, the strength and health of the lower dantian is extremely important for both women and men. For women, it is the house of the creative force of the uterus/ovaries and the beginning of the Chong, Ren and Du. For men, it is house of the creative force of the semen/testes. The lower dantian is responsible for the health of the Jing-essence of the body, which produces the qi-breath/energy that further transforms and refines itself into shen-spirit. It is primarily the strength of the lower dantian that is responsible for the maintenance of the middle and upper dantian. Anatomically, the lower dantian is the physical center of the body. The naval being the connection of life to the mother, it is where the Yuan qi originates and resides because it is the area that is dominated by the water energy. Without water, there is no life since the origination of life started with none other than that of water.

Taoists teach that the real dantian is at the center of the abdominal area, which also happens to be the physical center of gravity in the body. It is the strength of this center point that provides the foundation for the rest of the body. Physically, this space is mostly occupied by the intestines. This emphasizes the importance of the digestive system in the generation of qi. The expansion of the belly while breathing creates room for the zang viscera and most importantly the fu bowels to function and eliminate. In Western medicine, the majority of nutrition absorption takes place in the intestines and in Chinese medicine, an effective and clean digestive system is able to transform and generate substance into clean qi.