

# Muscle Building Methods of the Ancient Chinese

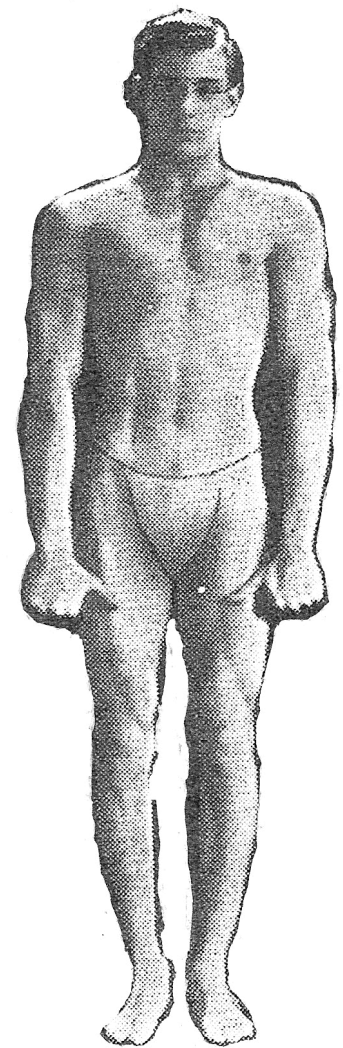
This article was written by ONG KONG GEE originally published in SUPERMAN April 1940. We think it will be of interest to physical culturists, especially aficionados of isometric/ isotonic exercise and of course martial artists. Most martial artists would not be familiar with the author's romanisation, EE CHING KENG as these exercises are usually known as the YI JIN JING 易筋經 [Pinyin] and in some publications as I CHIN CHING 易筋經 [Wade-Giles] The characters are usually rendered as Muscle Change Classic, YI=change, JIN=muscle/tendon, CHING=classic/scripture.

I warned readers in my final article of the Gor-Koon series, to prepare for two more on Chinese exercises. This article, therefore, will embrace Ee-Ching-Keng, which taken literally in the Chinese, means "Methods of changing muscles." "Ee" means "changing," "Ching" means "muscles", and "Keng" means "methods" or "ways". Chinese is an extraordinarily difficult language to translate, for a single word may mean a score of different things, depending on the way it is spoken. A little change of tone inflexion makes the world of difference. Ee-Ching-Keng changes weak muscles into strong ones, and this "Keng" or system is only to be performed by those who have already completed the Gor Koon course. Other advanced athletes, such as weight lifters and wrestlers will also benefit by practising it. The ancients of China designed this system for advanced athletes, to help them maintain their strength and increase it without further heavy exercise. They lay down in their old books that Ee-Ching-Keng is harmful for those without strength or muscular

power, for it requires immense concentration and is liable to sap the nervous energy of the novice. So, until you have built up internal strength by Gor Koons or other exercises, do not approach Ee-Ching-Keng. Otherwise you will be very disappointed with the result. And remember, great concentration is required.

**Exercise 1.** Stand erect with your feet about 10 or 12 inches apart, your arms stiffly down by the sides, with the backs of the hands facing in front of you. Half close your eyes. Now, slowly and powerfully lever your palm and fingers upwards, till the palm is parallel to the ground. Keep the palm and fingers still, and bend only at the wrist. Return to the first position, pressing as if against a strong spring. Continue both movements slowly until your forearms ache.

**Exercise 2.** Same ready position as before. Eyes half-closed, arms stretched stiffly down and fists clenched. Move arms away from sides and place them in front of thighs with the thumb sticking out at right angles to the fist. Now clench the fingers as hard as you can and try



by physical and mental concentration to raise each thumb as high as it will go. Relax and try again, and continue to do so until tired. In some hands there will be no movement of the thumbs, but the concentration and

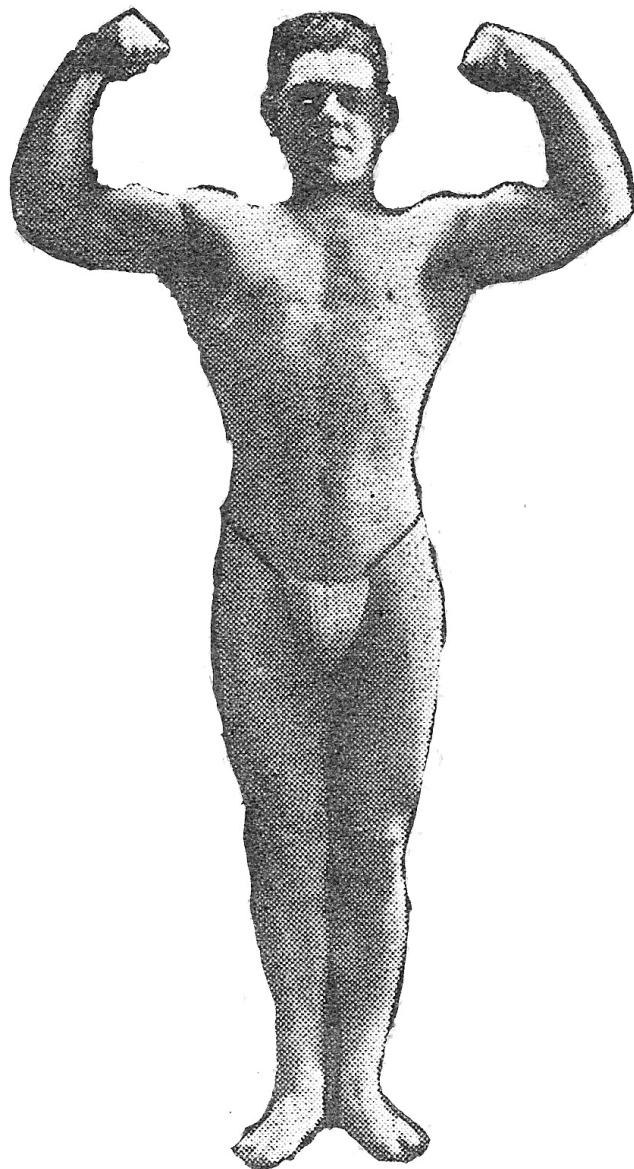
effort will have the required effect.

**Exercise 3.** Exactly the same position as in Exercise 1, except that the fists should be clenched. Keeping the arms stiff, press down as hard as ever you can go. In a little while you should feel the effort telling upon you: trapezius deltoids, latissimus, all will tire. Neck, too. So relax, and then again press. Repeat four or five times, each time trying to press harder than ever. It is a very tiring exercise.

**Exercise 4.** Feet in the same position as before, and clenched hands stiffly by the sides. Keeping arms stiff, raise them slowly to the front, up to shoulder height. Throughout the raising movement imagine you are lifting a great weight. Lower and relax. Repeat till well tired.

**Exercise 5.** Same ready position as before. But this time raise your clenched arms out to the side, and then slowly overhead, till they are shoulder width apart. Now clench your fists hard and imagine you are hanging on to a bar, and about to "chin" yourself. Now, keeping your arms stiff, imagine you are pulling your body up a few inches, and raise yourself on your toes. Relax and return to the ready position. Perform this exercise very slowly, until tired. Do not hurry through it, as you are liable to strain your heart. But if done slowly, no possible injury can result.

**Exercise 6.** Stand erect with the arms stretched out on

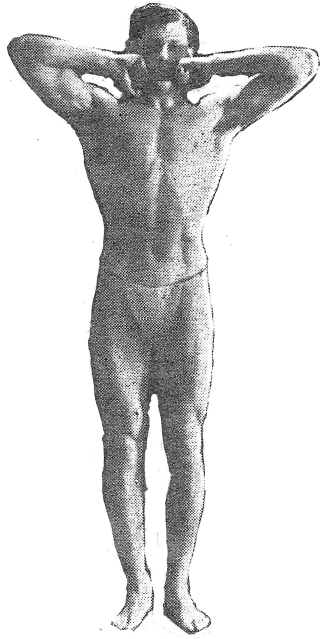


each side, at shoulder height, with palms uppermost. Clench fists, and bend at the elbows, bringing fists towards the shoulders. Contract the biceps muscles as hard as you can, and at the same time turn the fingers of your clenched hands to the rear. Relax and repeat. Continue till aching is felt.

**Exercise 7.** Stand erect, feet

together, arms straight out to the sides, in line with shoulders. Clench the fists, and standing only on the heels, raise the toes up in front. Relax and repeat until tired. In this you will have difficulty in keeping your balance at first, so do it with your back near a wall. Later you will have no difficulty.

**Exercise 8.** Feet together,



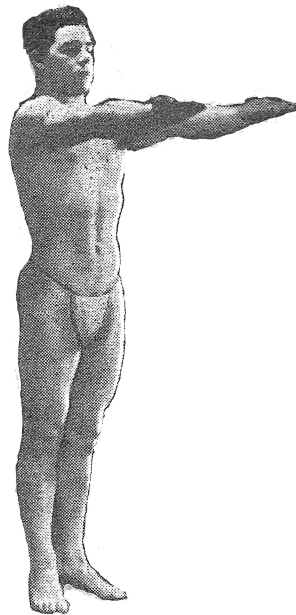
elbows level with the shoulders, imagine you are shoving aloft a very heavy dumbbell. Make strenuous efforts, and then relax. Try again and again until tired.

**Exercise 11.** Stand erect with feet together. Hang your arms in front of your body, with the elbows slightly bent. Clench your fists tightly and imagine you are lifting a very heavy weight. Without any physical movement, imagine you are raising it. Your muscles will flex with the effort, and you will tire. Repeat half

arms at the sides. Raise your stiff arms out in front, till at shoulder height. Bring the palms together till about an inch apart. Now clench the fists, and while so doing, rise gradually on your toes. Lower and relax. Repeat till tired.

**Exercise 9.** Stand erect with your arms stiffly at the sides. Clench the fists, and at the same time bend your arms at the elbows, bringing the clenched fists up under your chin, and raise the elbows till they are in line with the shoulders. The upward movement of the fists must be the same as that required to clean a barbell. Now bend your elbows backwards, so that the chest is expanded and pushed forward. Read this carefully and make sure you get the movement right. Relax and repeat, till tired.

**Exercise 10.** Stand erect with feet together. Clench your fists and keeping your



a dozen times.

**Exercise 12.** Stand erect with arms at sides and feet together. Raise your arms forwards and upwards till they are in line with the shoulders, palms facing the sky.

Rise at the same time on your toes. Lower arms and repeat, this time standing on the heels and raising the

toes. Repeat, alternately raising heels and toes.

Whenever instructed to clench the fists, do so as hard as ever you can. After each exercise, breathe deeply half a dozen times, but do not sit down. Walk about the room or if you are exercising outside, stride briskly about the lawn. While performing exercises 5, 10 and 11, try to concentrate even more powerfully than during the others. These exercises depend for effect more on will power and determination than anything else. Because of this, make sure that all the instructions are obeyed, to the minutest detail. Strongmen in China have gained strength through their performance for centuries, so why not you? But, remember, you must first have a foundation of health, and a fair amount of strength to benefit. These are advanced exercises, and not for beginners. In my final article describing "Putt Tuan Meun", I shall give exercises, which will keep anyone fit: strong or weak. Meanwhile may I reiterate that queries from readers appertaining to these exercises of the Ancient Chinese are welcomed and will be answered to the best of my ability, for I can assure you that any difficulty in practising these Eastern movements can be readily overcome.