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# Attentiveness to Nature in Learning Qigong in Norway

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## Abstract

This article discusses a style of medical *qigong*, called “Biyun *qigong*” 碧雲氣功 (Azure blue clouds *qigong*), that has become popular in Norway and Scandinavia. The gathering of health-enhancing “life force” (*qi*) from the environment is a notion at the core of Biyun practice. This notion of *qi* is, however, largely unknown to most people in Norway. Against this background, the article seeks to explore certain aspects of the recontextualization of Biyun into a Western cultural context. The examination highlights that the establishment of Biyun *qigong* in Norway takes place in a context where outdoor activities (in Norway commonly referred to as *friluftsliv*, which literally translates as “free-air-life”) are highly valued and very common in everyday life. Drawing on my ethnographic data from fieldwork among participants of Biyun, the article argues that experiences and perceptions of nature derived from *friluftsliv* contribute to the shaping of Biyun practice in Norway.

## Keywords

Chinese health-enhancing practices – *qigong* – Biyun – outdoor living (*friluftsliv*) – Norway – globalization – perceptions of nature

## Introduction

Today, as in the past, Chinese health practices and medicines are not merely practiced within the borders of China but also in many other places in

the world.<sup>1</sup> This article concerns a form of medical *qigong*,<sup>2</sup> “Biyun qigong” 碧雲氣功 (Azure blue clouds *qigong*), that was first established in China, but in recent years has been taken up by many practitioners in Norway and in a number of other countries outside China.<sup>3</sup> The main purpose of the article is to explore certain dimensions of the recontextualization of Biyun *qigong* from China into a Western context.

Initially, I will describe how a central exercise in Biyun, the Gathering, is taught. The originator of the Biyun method, “grandmaster” Fan Xiulan 范秀兰 (1947–), refers to the Gathering as an extraordinarily precious exercise “due to its efficiency in eliminating illnesses.”<sup>4</sup> Its instruction goes as follows:

Stand on both feet, with legs slightly apart and with palms of both hands under the navel, at the *dantian*.<sup>5</sup> ... Then go out with your arms, palms facing upwards and in your concentration focus on gathering life energy from nature and from heaven.... Then turn your palms downwards, imagine how you are bringing in lots of life energy which you have gathered. Imagine how you are bringing the energy of life through the top of your head, letting it flow down inside the middle of your body, down to the *dantian*. Put your hands there, and keep your concentration on the *dantian*. With closed eyes, don’t look outwards, but inwards, concentrating on how you gather and regain all the positive life force for your day and your life.<sup>6</sup>

As the instruction to the Gathering illustrates, the object that the practitioners aim to gather by means of this exercise is “life energy,” “positive life force,” or what Fan Xiulan refers to in Chinese as *qi* 氣. According to Biyun instructors, an abundance of *qi*, and its free flow in the body, is the prime source for healing, health, and longevity. Moreover, the flow of *qi* is not confined to the inside;

1 Barnes 2005; N. N. Chen 2003; Hinrichs and Barnes 2013; Kim et al. 2016; Pritzker 2014; and Zhan 2009.

2 *Qigong* has been differently translated as “endeavors of *qi*,” “*qi* exercises,” “breathing exercises,” and “*qi* skills.” See N. N. Chen 2003, 6; Hsu 1999, 19–25; and Ots 1994, 120.

3 Fan 2008; Jouper, Hassmen, and Johansson 2006; and Sagli 2008.

4 Fan 2008, 61.

5 In Biyun classes *dantian* 丹田 is explained as an energy center located a few centimeters under the navel. In the literature on Daoist practices and Chinese medicine, *dantian* is commonly translated as “elixir field” or “cinnabar field.” See Skar and Pregadio 2000, 465; and Schipper 1993, 142.

6 Fan 2002. This quotation is from the CD (English version) that Biyun students are given to assist in their practicing at home.

health-enhancing *qi* can be gathered from the environment and brought into the body.

From anthropological and historical scholarship we know that in China an array of practices and conceptions of *qi* are common in *qigong* and other contemporary body-mind methods.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, we have learned that these modern forms of *qi* practices are derived from age-old traditions, especially Daoist longevity and immortality techniques, Buddhist meditations, life-cultivation arts (*yangsheng* 养生), and forms of the martial arts.<sup>8</sup> Notions and practices of *qi* are, however, still largely unfamiliar to most people in Western societies; possibly with the exception of the association of *qi* with acupuncture.

Most people in Norway are not acquainted with a perception of *qi* as a life force that can be gathered from the environment in order to enhance health and well-being, as it is taught in Biyun and in several other forms of contemporary *qi* practices. Against this background, this study focuses on the process of learning the Biyun practice of *qi* by students in Norway. Above all, the article pays attention to the practice of gathering of *qi* from the natural environment.

The small but growing number of socio-cultural studies on *qigong* in contexts outside China examines, among other things, the dynamics of the cultural translation involved and the ways in which practices and notions originally from China become transformed as they are recontextualized in new socio-political conditions.<sup>9</sup> By examining the establishment of Biyun in Norway, this study aims at contributing to this line of inquiry, yet with a focus different from existing studies. The article highlights that the learning of Biyun in Norway takes place in a context in which mountains, fjords, forests, and other natural environments are highly valued, and where walking in the woods, skiing, hunting, fishing, and other forms of outdoor living (in Norwegian commonly referred to as *friluftsliv*, which literally means “free-air-life”) are very popular.<sup>10</sup>

Norwegian *friluftsliv* and Chinese Biyun *qigong* are in many ways highly different activities. First of all *qi* is foreign to most *friluftsliv* practitioners. In addition, *friluftsliv* by definition takes place outdoors, while Biyun classes in Norway are mostly conducted indoors. However, when reflecting on fieldwork

7 N. N. Chen 2003; Farquhar and Zhang 2012; Frank 2013; Hsu 1999; Ots 1994; and Palmer 2007.

8 H. Chen, 2008; Despeux 1989; Engelhardt 2000; Harper 1998; Kohn 1989, 2007, 2016; Lo 2001; Robinet 1997; and Wile 1996.

9 Busby 1996; N. N. Chen 2003; Komjathy 2006; Sagli 2008; and Siegler 2006.

10 Henderson and Vikander 2007; Odden 2008; Tordsson 2010; and Statistics Norway 2016.

observations, I have come to see that in spite of the immediate sense of foreignness that practitioners in Norway commonly feel when they begin to practice Biyun, there are also important similarities between the experiences of and the assumptions behind Biyun and *friluftsliv*.

What are the areas of common ground between Biyun and *friluftsliv*? Do *friluftsliv*-Biyun interactions influence the ways in which Biyun practice is established in Norway? The main purpose of the discussion is to explore the observation that experiences and perceptions derived from Norwegian practices of *friluftsliv* become integrated with the learning and practicing of this style of Chinese *qigong* in Norwegian contexts. To be more precise, I will explore ways in which interactions between Biyun and *friluftsliv* have influenced Biyun as a transformative process, in which the acquisition of a capacity to affect *qi* and to be affected by *qi* are the most central dimensions.<sup>11</sup> I will discuss these questions inspired by concepts related to attentiveness, in particular, the “education of attention” and “habits of attention.”<sup>12</sup>

Insights achieved through this approach to *qigong* in Norway obviously hold potential to contribute to several associated debates. Notably, they will be of interest to studies of the globalization of Chinese health practices and the cultural translation implied in the processes of recontextualization,<sup>13</sup> to discussions of holistic health in alternative and complementary medicine,<sup>14</sup> as well as to the anthropology of the body.<sup>15</sup> However, this study focuses on a dimension that is usually not discussed in these debates, as it focuses on attentiveness, and more specifically, attentiveness to nature.

### Fieldwork among Biyun Practitioners in Norway

The history of Biyun in Scandinavia stems from a contact established in the early 1990s between Scandinavians and the originator of the Biyun method, Fan Xiulan (1947–). Fan has since then visited Scandinavia and taught *qigong* courses at least twice a year, resulting in the establishment of Biyun

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11 This claim is inspired by Despret's (2004) and Latour's (2004) discussions of the body as “learning to be affected” and “learning to affect.” See also Sagli 2008.

12 See Ingold 2000 and James 1918, respectively.

13 Barnes 2005; N. N. Chen 2003; Furth 2011; Hsu 2008; Komjathy 2006; Scheid and MacPherson 2012; Siegler 2006; and Zhan 2009.

14 Baer et al. 2012; Nissen 2011; and Power 1991.

15 Csordas 2002 and Lock 1993.

associations and Biyun teaching organizations.<sup>16</sup> Biyun has become especially popular in Sweden,<sup>17</sup> but is also well established in the other Scandinavian countries, Denmark and Norway. Biyun courses with Scandinavian instructors have been arranged in Norway since 1997, and the Biyun Association in Norway was founded in 2003. Today Biyun courses are offered not only in Scandinavia, but also in many other places outside China, including Germany, the United States, and Brazil.

Fan Xiulan is introduced to her students as a *qigong* master and a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine with a well-established practice in China.<sup>18</sup> The base for Biyun activities in China is a rehabilitation center that Fan set up in the Fragrant Hills (*xiangshan* 香山) just outside Beijing in 1985. The name Biyun 碧雲 (“Azure blue clouds”) comes from the name of a Buddhist temple (*Biyun si* 碧雲寺) located in the neighborhood of this center.

Biyun instructors present medical *qigong* as one of the four main branches of Chinese medicine, together with acupuncture, herbs, and massage.<sup>19</sup> A large proportion of Biyun participants are motivated to attend courses and training sessions by their own health problems. The participants, of whom the majority are female, white, and middle aged, are typically recruited through networks of family, friends, and colleagues.

Biyun was certainly not the first *qigong* style founded in Norway. As in other Western societies, a variety of complementary and alternative health practices, including different forms of *qigong*, have been established in Norway since the beginning of the 1980s. To date, no survey of participants in *qigong* has been conducted in Norway, so the exact number of practitioners in Norway is not known. But, the number of Norwegian Biyun instructors and students is steadily increasing. As of 2017, there were more than sixty Biyun

16 Fan 2008 and Nygren 2008.

17 In Sweden, the Biyun association, Swedish Green Dragon Association for Traditional Chinese Medicine, was established in 1992, and the Biyun School in 1995. According to Biyun leaders, more than 90,000 persons—almost one percent of the population in Sweden—have attended Biyun *qigong* courses in Sweden, and more than 600 Biyun instructors have been trained (Jouper et al. 2006).

18 While scholarship maintains that Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM is the officially approved abbreviation) is a modern term used since 1955 to label the revised, modernized forms of indigenous Chinese medicine promoted by the Chinese Communist Party (Hsu 1999; Scheid 2007; Sivin 1987; and Taylor 2005), Biyun teachers and students do not distinguish between modern TCM and medicines from earlier periods.

19 Fan 2008. For accounts concerning the rise and fall of *qigong* as part of institutional Traditional Chinese Medicine in the context of the People's Republic of China, see, for example, Ownby 2008; Palmer 2007; and Hsu 1999.

instructors authorized by the Biyun Association in Norway.<sup>20</sup> The leader of the Association estimates that 6,000 to 7,000 persons have attended her courses alone. In addition, there are all those students who have attended courses by other instructors.<sup>21</sup>

As part of my ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the period 2006–09, I attended most of the Biyun courses in Norway taught by Fan. I also participated in weekly training sessions, weekend courses, and monthly come-together sessions organized by Norwegian Biyun instructors. These courses and training sessions were held in a variety of locations outside public healthcare settings: community centers, after-school activity rooms, a church communion center, and a private holistic healthcare center.

In addition to participant-observation, the research material was generated from interviews with individual Biyun participants.<sup>22</sup> The focus of the research was on *qigong* students with medical problems. Lisa, Paul, and the other interviewees cited below have all taken up Biyun for health reasons.<sup>23</sup> Among the interviewees, some are Biyun novices (Lisa, Janne, and Nina), while others (Paul, Elsa, and Mona) have practiced for many years and have advanced to become instructors with their own students. They are all middle aged or seniors. Except Nina, who has retired, they hold jobs in spite of their health problems. In the interviews, they refer to their experiences of being in nature as ordinary activities in their everyday life. Only Paul specifically talks about himself as a *friluftsliv* enthusiast; the others are average practitioners of outdoor living.

The interplay between Biyun and *friluftsliv* was not originally an issue that I sought to explore in my research. It was only after I had become aware of areas of common ground that I noticed that being in nature and *friluftsliv* often came up in the interviews. As a result, this study combines research from my fieldwork among Biyun participants with literature about outdoor life in Norway, as well as with my own experiences participating in *friluftsliv*.

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20 Biyunforeningen i Norge 2017.

21 Sagli 2008.

22 The data presented in this article are part of a post-doctoral research project, “New Strategies of Coping: A Qualitative Study of Strategies of Coping and Patients’ Experiences of Alternative Medicine,” at the University of Oslo. Participant-observation among Biyun participants was only part of a more comprehensive fieldwork. In the project, a total of more than forty patients and practitioners of Chinese health practices were interviewed, among them twelve Biyun practitioners.

23 These names are pseudonyms.

### *Friluftsliv* (Outdoor Living) in Norway

[E]ducation should promote appreciation of physical activities and of the greatness of nature; of living in a beautiful country; and of the lines of the landscape and the changes of the seasons. It should evoke a feeling of humility in the encounter with the inexplicable and the enjoyment of *friluftsliv*. *Friluftsliv* touches the body, the mind and thoughts.<sup>24</sup>

This poetic praise of life in nature is a quote from the Norwegian state educational plan for primary and secondary schools. The passage indicates the richness of positive dimensions associated with nature and *friluftsliv* in Norway. That the text is taken from a public program also points to the fact that *friluftsliv* is perceived as a public concern, and not merely as a personal activity. The promotion of *friluftsliv* is, for example, an important policy measure in numerous public plans aiming at the improvement of the population's health.<sup>25</sup> Socialization into the appreciation of *friluftsliv* starts early. It takes place in families, but also in schools and preschools where children encounter *friluftsliv* and being out in nature as an integrated part of their education.

One reason for the popularity of *friluftsliv* in Norway is easy access. Norway's population is relatively small compared with its land area, and access to free nature is officially secured by law.<sup>26</sup> Yet, the appreciation of nature goes beyond convenience and availability. In the nineteenth century, at the time of the foundation of Norway as a nation state, there were hardly any elite cultural expressions to draw on as national symbols, except for plenty of majestic nature and a peasantry heralded as natural and strong.<sup>27</sup> Being in nature became a cultural value, and Norwegian nature a symbol of national identity.<sup>28</sup>

The literature on Norwegian outdoor living presents *friluftsliv* as having developed from two major strands.<sup>29</sup> One is an adventurous and aesthetic strand, inspired by mountaineers and explorers from England and other European

24 Kunnskapsdepartementet [Ministry of Education and Research] 2006. This quotation was originally in Norwegian. Throughout this article, translations into English from Norwegian are the author's, if not otherwise specified.

25 Bischoff, Marcussen, and Reiten 2007 and Regjeringen.no [Government.no] 2016.

26 Lov om friluftslivet 1957 [Outdoor Recreation Act of 1957].

27 Odden 2008 and Vaagbø 1993.

28 Goksøy 1997 and Gurholt 2008.

29 Breivik 1978; Gelter 2000; Gurholt 2008; and Vaagbø 1993. *Friluftsliv* as a term came into use in the late nineteenth century. The acclaimed Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) used *friluftsliv* in the poem *Paa Vidderne* (On the Heights) in 1859. "Paa vidderne" was written after Ibsen himself had gone on long mountain excursions and had

countries, and taken up by people belonging to the Norwegian urban upper class at the end of the nineteenth century. The other strand is practices of everyday life in rural regions.<sup>30</sup> In some forms of contemporary *friluftsliv*, people seek—in the spirit of the Norwegian polar explorers and *friluftsliv* pioneers Fritjof Nansen (1861–1930) and Roald Amundsen (1872–1928)—hardship and adventurous experiences. Other forms of *friluftsliv* popular today are rooted in age-old practices such as hunting, fishing, berry-picking, and other activities deeply embedded in traditional rural life.<sup>31</sup>

Statistics on the current status of *friluftsliv* in Norway show that it is popular in all sectors of the population, not only the elite. Seventy to ninety-five percent of the population practices one or another form of *friluftsliv*.<sup>32</sup> People with permanent employment and higher education are the most active in practicing *friluftsliv*. People who are unemployed, people with disabilities, and pensioners are less active, and immigrants tend to be underrepresented.<sup>33</sup> *Friluftsliv* pioneers, like Fritjof Nansen, associated *friluftsliv* with manhood and masculinity.<sup>34</sup> Today, participation in *friluftsliv* is high among women and men alike, although there is still a slightly higher portion of men who are active. Both men and women participate in all forms of *friluftsliv*, but there are some differences in preferences related to gender. Mushroom- and berry-picking, horseback riding, and shorter walks are more prevalent among women than men. Men are more active than women with regard to skiing, longer walks, alpine skiing, fishing, and hunting.<sup>35</sup>

Norwegians consider *friluftsliv* in general and hiking in particular to be typically Norwegian.<sup>36</sup> The importance of *friluftsliv* to Norwegians has also been noticed by newcomers to the country.<sup>37</sup> Hiking, skiing, and other forms of *friluftsliv* are commonly organized for refugees and immigrants with

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been inspired by the national Romantic interest in exploration, the beauty of nature and the ordinariness of village life” (Gurholt 2008, 59–60).

30 Moreover, in recent years, *friluftsliv* has been influenced by the “deep ecology” movement, with its affection for nature elaborated upon and developed in philosophical terms by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss (1912–2009) and others. See Næss and Rothenberg 1989.

31 Henderson and Vikander 2007.

32 Bischoff et al. 2007; Odden 2008; and Statistics Norway 2016.

33 Statistics Norway 2014.

34 Gurholt 2008.

35 Statistics Norway 2014.

36 Eriksen 1993 and Vaagbø 1993.

37 See, for example, the anthropological study by Long 1993.



non-European cultural backgrounds in order to familiarize them with life in Norway and facilitate their integration into Norwegian society.<sup>38</sup>

The ideas, values, and repertoire of *friluftsliv* activities change over time. In Norway today, being in nature is usually talked about as beneficial for one's health,<sup>39</sup> but nature has not always been understood as health-enhancing. In the beginning of the nineteenth century it was quite normal, especially by the urban upper class, to perceive natural elements—wind, damp air, and strong sunrays—as potentially harmful.<sup>40</sup> This view of nature changed later in that century. As it became common elsewhere in Europe to approach natural elements as health-enhancing, and as new forms of body practices and natural therapies began appearing in great variety and number, this movement had an impact on the development of health practices and ideas in Norway.<sup>41</sup> In addition to inspiration from outside Norway, contemporary *friluftsliv* perceptions of nature as health-enhancing have been shaped by a complexity of influences, such as age-old indigenous practices, like the use of plants and natural elements in folk medicine.<sup>42</sup>

To conclude this section, I will draw attention to some important aspects commonly associated with *friluftsliv* today. For this purpose, I will first present a quotation by Queen Sonja of Norway, who is herself a great lover of *friluftsliv*. The quotation, which is from a speech she presented on the occasion of the “Year of *Friluftsliv*” in 1993,<sup>43</sup> describes aspects of *friluftsliv* important to many of its enthusiasts:

*Friluftsliv* is in other words as much a state of mind as it is physical activities. It is not necessary to climb our highest mountains or walk far in order to enjoy our nature.... Everybody in our country can develop their relation to nature, but such experiences do not come to one just like that. Such experiences have to be acquired through one's own effort. I suggest that you all go out for a walk, to find new tracks.<sup>44</sup>

First, Queen Sonja makes it clear that *friluftsliv* is perceived by some participants as a state of mind rather than merely exercise for the body. In addition,

38 Miljødirektoratet [Norwegian Environment Agency] 2013.

39 Bischoff et al. 2007 and Dervo 2014.

40 Tordsson 2010, 131.

41 Tordsson 2010, 130–56.

42 Alver 1995 and Tordsson 2010.

43 The “Year of *Friluftsliv*” has since been celebrated in 2005 and 2015 as well.

44 Queen Sonja of Norway, as cited in Vaagbø 1993, 25.

the quotation expresses that *friluftsliv* requires the development of one's own relation to nature. Many *friluftsliv* authors describe harmony and connectedness to nature as intrinsic parts of *friluftsliv*.<sup>45</sup>

*Friluftsliv* involves engaging actively with natural elements. Take hiking as an example. Hiking is technically easy to do; one does not need to concentrate much on the actual walking. Most of the time, one can let one's thoughts wander freely. At the same time, since trekking paths in the mountains and woods normally are uneven, with stones and roots as hindrances, one can easily stumble or fall if one is not paying attention to the ground and constantly adjusting one's posture and body movements to the ever-changing environment. Gradually, one gets into a rhythm and a particular state of awareness: walking, attuning to the natural elements, walking, letting one's thoughts wander, feeling a sense of flow, appreciating the landscape, walking, feeling one's heart beat and perhaps being sweaty, smelling trees and plants, walking, feeling the weather, the wet rain or the cold snow, the fresh wind or the warm sun, walking. Thus, participants in *friluftsliv* perceive natural elements as a constitutive part of their experience, rather than seeing nature as a playground or framework for activities.

Finally, the quotation elucidates that the enjoyment of *friluftsliv* is not immediately accessible to everybody. As Queen Sonja stated, one cannot expect an experience of connectedness with nature to "come to one just like that." Similar to learning to appreciate Biyun *qigong*, appreciation of *friluftsliv* is acquired through a learning process.<sup>46</sup>

### "Attentiveness" in the Learning of Biyun *Qigong*

The Biyun system as taught in Scandinavia today consists of several programs at three different levels, from the basic to the more advanced (a series of exercises make up each Biyun program).<sup>47</sup> In the introductory stages of Biyun,

45 Gelter 2000 and Vaagbø 1993.

46 Henderson and Vikander 2007.

47 The general Biyun programs (presented by the names used by the Biyun Association in Norway) are as follows: "Basic Qigong" (*Jichu gong*) at level one, "Moving Qi Exercises" (*Dong gong*) at level two, and "Five Elements Qigong" at level three. At the third level, there are two more programs and teaching methods of "External Qi" (*Waiqi*). In addition, there are several programs for special groups: the elderly, children, young people, and women. There are also courses for people who want to be instructors. In addition to the *qigong* courses, there are courses covering other Chinese methods, such as massage (*tuina*); acupressure; ear, hand, and tongue diagnosis; and food as medicine, as well as a

attention is oriented towards learning and practicing technical details of body postures and movements. Gradually, more attention is paid to the creation of inner mental images. In all the programs, Biyun students are told to always conduct the exercises at a slow pace, with closed eyes and in a relaxed, but attentive, state of body-mind.

Notably, attentiveness in various forms is of central importance in the learning and practicing of Biyun. First of all, learning Biyun *qigong* is a practice that at its core involves learning to be aware of *qi*. As Biyun learning progresses, *qi*—in a variety of forms—gradually becomes a more prominent dimension of the practice. The Gathering, the exercise presented in the introduction of this article, is normally one of first exercises offering new Biyun students an opportunity to experience *qi* from the environment. Feeling *qi* can be understood as invoked by external forces derived from the environment, but Biyun participants learn to feel *qi* as bodily sensations. Students describe a variety of sensations perceived as *qi*: feelings of warmth or coldness, pricking, a kind of resistance, electrical impulse, and swollenness, to mention a few.

Thus, learning Biyun incorporates what Csordas suggests calling “somatic modes of attention.”<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, in Csordas’ account, the sensory experiences are described by healers in the religious movement Catholic Charismatic Renewal as “tingling, heat, or an outflow of ‘power’ similar to an electrical current, often in the hands, but at times in other parts of the body,”<sup>49</sup> which are strikingly similar to those reported by Biyun participants. Notably, while Biyun participants learn to perceive these feelings as experiences of *qi*, Catholic healers perceive them as ways to learn about the problems and emotional states of their clients.

The analysis in this article goes further than the identification of these somatic modes of attention. Its main concern is to shed light on the dynamics that guide Biyun participants to perceive these feelings as health-enhancing *qi*. The process of “enskilment,” as elaborated upon by Ingold, contributes a better understanding of the Biyun learning process.<sup>50</sup> Skill, according to Ingold, “cannot be regarded simply as a technique of the body.”<sup>51</sup> Skill is “a property not of the individual human body as biophysical entity, a thing-in-itself, but of the total field of relations constituted by the presence of the organism-person,

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course on Chinese medical theories. For details of the progression of Biyun programs, see Sagli 2008.

48 Csordas 1993.

49 Csordas 1993, 141.

50 Ingold 2000.

51 Ingold 2000, 352.

indissolubly body and mind, in a richly structured environment.”<sup>52</sup> The distinction made by Ingold between “skill” and “technique” has implications also for the understanding of the ways in which skills are acquired. Skills are learned not “through transmission of formula,” but rather through processes involving what Ingold, drawing on Gibson, calls “education of attention.”<sup>53</sup> These processes involve “introducing novices into contexts which afford selected opportunities for perception and action, and by providing the scaffolding that enables them to make use of these affordances.”<sup>54</sup> Gieser, following Ingold, explains, “Enskilment is thus a gradual process of fine-tuning one’s perceptions and actions.”<sup>55</sup> In light of this understanding, Biyun participants, by educating their attention, progressively acquire the skill of affecting *qi* and being affected by *qi*.

From the examples Ingold describes, it is clear that some skills imply learning to perceive dimensions that are generally easily accessible. Ingold’s own childhood experience of discovering plants and fungi as his botanist father pointed them out on walks in the countryside illustrates this form of education of attention.<sup>56</sup> Simply pointing to the existence of *qi* is also part of the education of the Biyun students’ attention. However, *qi* in *qigong* is not something that normally can be discovered merely by being shown or pointed to. Rather, *qi* in *qigong* is something that is cultivated into being in a complex multidimensional process evoked through exercises in a series of programs.<sup>57</sup>

In order to explore Biyun and *friluftsliv* interactions with a focus on attentiveness, I find it useful to introduce yet another concept in addition to “education of attention.” I will call this other concept “habits of attention.” The term has been used by many writers on psychology. William James, for example, maintains that “habits of attention” to a large extent determine what people experience: “A thing may be present to him a thousand times, but if he persistently fails to notice it, it cannot be said to enter into his experience.”<sup>58</sup>

For the purpose of this article, it is particularly useful to distinguish between the “education of attention” that is part of learning Biyun as a new skill and “habits of attention” that people have already established before they start

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52 Ingold 2000, 353.

53 Gibson 1979, 254; as cited in Ingold 2000, 354.

54 Ingold 2000, 354.

55 Gieser 2008, 300.

56 Ingold 2000, 21–22.

57 Sagli 2008.

58 James 1918, 286.

learning Biyun. I suggest using the term “habit of attention” in a broad sense to mean the state of attentiveness or focus of attention that people habitually enter into in certain contexts. As I will discuss below, when being in nature, many people in Norway habitually enter into a state of attentiveness in which nature is felt to be health-enhancing. Such attentiveness is an example of what I suggest calling “habits of attention.” Thus, “habits of attention” as used here is related to the well-known concept of *habitus*, used by Marcel Mauss (1936) and later further developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1977). *Habitus*, defined as a system of dispositions, denotes, among many meanings, the “habitual state (especially of the body),”<sup>59</sup> which is close to how the term, “habits of attention,” is used in this article. As I aim to show by presenting examples of the common ground between Biyun *qigong* and *friluftsliv*, the analytical distinction between education of attention and habits of attention is particularly useful in order to discuss some ways in which well-established habits of body-mind states known from *friluftsliv* interact in different ways in the dynamics of learning to feel *qi* in the context of Biyun *qigong*.

### Biyun-*Friluftsliv* Dynamics: Empirical Examples

#### *Being in Nature as Health-Enhancing*

To begin the discussion of this common ground, I will point to a striking similarity between Biyun and *friluftsliv*, which is that participants in both activities experience and talk about nature as possessing a health-enhancing capacity. I will suggest that this facilitates the Biyun education of attention and Biyun students’ potential to experience *qi* as beneficial for health. Biyun practitioners perceive *qi* from the natural elements—the sun, moon, and stars, as well as the mountains, lakes, and trees—to have very distinct effects. Interestingly, many people in Norway similarly perceive being in nature to have a health-enhancing effect that can be experienced in a very direct manner.

People in Norway usually mention health benefits when they give reasons for their participation in *friluftsliv*.<sup>60</sup> They see being physically active as an important part of *friluftsliv*, but they also often take for granted that the health-enhancing effects of being in nature go beyond the effects of physical training and other measurable dimensions. For many Norwegians, natural environments are in themselves health-enhancing. Illustratively, the authors of a research review on health effects of participating in *friluftsliv* state that they did

59 Bourdieu 1977, 214, n. 1.

60 Bischoff et al. 2007; Calogiuri and Elliott 2017; and Dervo 2014.

not find any research on important aspects of *friluftsliv* such as “the silence, the greatness, the tranquility, the forces of nature, a beautiful sunset, the whispering of the wind,” although, as these researchers claim, such dimensions are something “we intuitively feel affect us.”<sup>61</sup> In concordance with this claim, in a study of lay perceptions of health in Norway, Fugelli and Ingstad found that people in Norway feel that being in nature is itself an important source of health.<sup>62</sup> As one of their interviewees, a thirty-year-old woman athlete, says,

So there is a force of one kind or another out there ... it is a force out in nature, I believe in that. You can encounter a force out there. And then I receive a force from nature. I do that. It is great! Mountains!<sup>63</sup>

Fugelli and Ingstad state that it is common to experience nature as possessing a healing force, as this woman does. To experience nature as healing is not an explicit aim or skill cultivated in *friluftsliv*, but a general awareness that people habitually and unintentionally acquire through engagement in it. This awareness is developed as part of *friluftsliv*, but does not develop from one specific learning tradition; rather, it grows out of a long-term, many-faceted process starting in early childhood. These habits of attention are, of course, acquired regardless of later participation or non-participation in Biyun.

Biyun in Norway is obviously different from *friluftsliv* in that Biyun is mostly practiced indoors there. However, Biyun instructors explain to their students that it is more beneficial to practice outdoors all year round, as people do in China.<sup>64</sup> In the summer season, many Biyun practitioners in Norway also practice outdoors. The experience of Paul, one of the Biyun participants and interviewees, encompasses aspects of outdoor practice also reported by several other Biyun students. Normally, Paul practices Biyun at home, but he likes *friluftsliv* and when he is out hiking in the forest or in the mountains, he often conducts one of the Biyun programs. Paul has had some very strong experiences with powerful feelings of *qi* when practicing outdoors. He says that the feeling of *qi* is “much stronger than indoors” and “there are movements of *qi* all over in my chest.”<sup>65</sup>

The education of attention that is part of Biyun has in many cases enabled Biyun participants to feel *qi*. Interestingly, like Paul, the Biyun participants

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61 Bischoff et al. 2007, 14.

62 Fugelli and Ingstad 2009.

63 As cited in Fugelli and Ingstad 2009, 122.

64 Hsu 1999; Ots 1994; and Palmer 2008.

65 Interview with the author, August 2006.

commonly report that the sensations of *qi*, however the sensations present themselves, are stronger when they practice outdoors than indoors. Notably, I have never heard any of the practitioners in the *qigong* classes in Norway question the assumption that it would be more powerful to practice outdoors. That notion seems to be taken for granted. In light of the pre-Biyun habits of attention common in Norway, which suggest that people are oriented towards perceiving being in nature as health-enhancing in very direct ways, I suggest seeing these habits as facilitating Biyun enskilment and shaping what Biyun novices experience.

### *Experiencing Holistic Healing*

Experiencing holistic healing is another aspect shared by participants of Biyun and *friluftsliv* practices. One Scandinavian head instructor of Biyun explains, “Chinese medicine views human beings holistically; a patient is treated from an overall body and soul perspective.”<sup>66</sup> By highlighting a holistic body-soul (or mind) point of view, the instructor indicates that Chinese medicine, including Biyun, represents a preferable alternative to biomedicine and other institutions in Western societies in which body, mind, and soul are seen as dimensions of the human that can be treated separately.

The holistic healing of the body-mind is an aspect of Biyun appreciated by many Biyun participants. In a typical comment, Elsa, an experienced Biyun practitioner, explains that Biyun’s emphasis on the interplay of the physical and the mental is one of the dimensions she likes. By practicing Biyun, she has experienced relief from many sorts of problems. She says,

But in the beginning, I thought it was very strange that by doing the *jichugong* (the introductory program) which primarily focuses on the physical body, that this should make me so much happier and easier at mind.... I used to suffer from depression.... I had a depression, until I began to practice.<sup>67</sup>

The body-mind understanding associated with Biyun is different from the Cartesian dualistic assumptions influential in biomedicine and public health-care in Norway, but the holistic healing associated with Biyun apparently has much in common with experiences from *friluftsliv*. Among the people Fugelli and Ingstad interviewed, it was common to talk about “experiencing silence and tranquility,” “a feeling of cohesion with nature,” of “just being in nature,”

66 Nygren 2008, 1.

67 Interview with the author, December 2006.

feeling “one’s identity created by nature,” “feeling vitalised and drawing energy from nature,” and “feeling the freshness of nature” as constituting their conception of health.<sup>68</sup> These notions do not demonstrate an understanding of body and mind as belonging to distinct worlds, but rather to holistic experiences.

Moreover, healing in *friluftsliv* and in Biyun has more in common than the focus on body-mind interplay. People who love outdoor life and Biyun participants alike associate health-enhancing experiences with a feeling of cohesion and interconnectedness with nature. *Friluftsliv* enthusiasts sometimes talk about this feeling as the “symbiotic dimension” of “living in harmony with the laws of nature.”<sup>69</sup> In the words of a *friluftsliv* enthusiast and retired bishop,

I am merely a small particle in a vast universe, and this part is enclosed by a wholeness,... something that is greater than me and greater to what I can grasp, observe and put into place by ways of philosophising.... I am not only in nature, but part of nature.<sup>70</sup>

A similar feeling of unity between oneself and nature is also very explicit in Biyun. As grandmaster Fan explains to her students,

Heaven and earth, mountains and oceans—everything is connected. It is important to keep this in mind and to feel grateful for being an integral part of the universe. The connectedness with nature is something we all have in common.<sup>71</sup>

Despite these similarities between *friluftsliv* and Biyun experiences, there are also differences. Biyun students frequently express their feelings of interconnectedness with nature as a form of energy they have not previously experienced. They say they have felt a new form of energy, or *qi*, from the environment. Lisa, a very eager Biyun student, says,

Well, it is a kind of new experience for me this thing with energy; an energy that is external to me. I don’t have words for it. I have simply felt it. I feel that it is there. And that makes me feel confident. I used to think that I could trust nobody but myself, because this is all I have. So for me—and this is nothing religious—but it is a feeling of confidence; you become

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68 Fugelli and Ingstad 2009.

69 Vaagbø 1993, 25.

70 Lønning; as cited in Vaagbø 1993, 26.

71 Fan, Biyun session, 2008.



capable of receiving power from something that is greater and more comprehensive than yourself.<sup>72</sup>

The idea that by doing Biyun one can connect oneself to the environment and to an unlimited amount of *qi*, perceived as a form of energy or power, is talked about as comforting and reassuring by several other Biyun participants as well.

To conclude, although, as Lisa's statement makes clear, participants of Biyun speak about their experience of *qi* as new, all the interviewees' statements above illustrate striking similarities between the forms of holistic healing experienced in Biyun and *friluftsliv*. Biyun and *friluftsliv* similarly evoke holistic experiences of healing—involving body, mind and nature. In other words, pre-Biyun habits of perceiving nature as holistic resonate with, and might be said to prepare the ground for, what Biyun novices learn as part of Biyun enskilment.

### *Creating "Concentrations": Experiences from Friluftsliv Evoked in Biyun Practice*

Notions and experiences from *friluftsliv* interplay in Biyun enskilment in even more explicit ways than what has been discussed above. Perhaps the most illustrative instance concerns the creation of what Biyun practitioners call "concentrations." "Concentrations" as used in Biyun contexts have broader meanings than in standard Norwegian (or English), encompassing "focused awareness," "imagination," "visualization," and "multisensory engagement."<sup>73</sup> In Biyun classes, students learn that while performing the movements and positions specific to each exercise, they should at the same time focus their concentration on specific mental images or memories. These Biyun concentrations are largely from nature. The students are, for example, taught to focus their concentration on being "a tree swaying in the wind" or "waves of the ocean."

Interestingly, some Biyun participants have spontaneous memories of specific experiences of being in nature when conducting a Biyun exercise. Elsa, for example, explains that she remembers very well one place with "a fantastic tree" and another place with an "incredibly beautiful sun."<sup>74</sup> When she

72 Interview with the author, August 2006.

73 "Concentration" is often used as a translation when Fan Xiulan uses the Chinese concept *yinian* 意念 ("thought," "idea"). It is, however, not uncommon to use "concentration" in English translations of descriptions of meditation practices. See, for example, Kohn 1989, 137.

74 Interview with the author, December 2006.

practices the Gathering exercise, she immediately feels she is back at those places. She re-experiences the state of body-mind she experienced when visiting these places in reality. She explains,

These are images which immediately come to me—images that come to me every time. It is immediately all very real; all of a sudden I am there, with all the smells and all the things I experienced when I was at the place. And I get the same feeling in my body. All of a sudden I feel relieved from my state of stress and pressure.<sup>75</sup>

Many Biyun beginners, however, have difficulty solidifying their concentrations. Some instructors, therefore, have found ways to assist their students. One instructor, Mona, said,

In order to make the instruction more concrete, I say, “Feel that you are out in nature. At a place in nature where you really love to be, at a place where you, for example, like to take a rest when you are out hiking, a place where you really feel good. Feel what it’s like to be at this place.”<sup>76</sup>

This instructor explains that she frequently uses the example of finding a place to rest while hiking or otherwise being in nature, as she considers these to be experiences shared by most Norwegians. In other words, the Biyun instructors use their knowledge of habits of attention that are commonplace in Norway. Thus, experiences of being in nature are actively evoked as resources in the process of creating the concentrations that are an important part of the Biyun education of attention.

Individual Biyun practitioners interpret the concentrations in their own ways. In this creative process, memories of specific body-mind states experienced as part of *friluftsliv* are used as resources to create Biyun concentrations. Thus, memories from *friluftsliv* become integrated aspects of the concentrations as they contribute to the creation and shaping of them. Moreover, as the practicing of Biyun gives repeated opportunities to evoke and re-evolve pleasant body sensations from *friluftsliv* in the past, Biyun *qigong* may even be seen as a practice that keeps such memories from *friluftsliv* alive.

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75 Interview with the author, December 2006.

76 Interview with the author, December 2006.

### *Talking about Experiences of Qi in Biyun and Friluftsliv*

When Biyun participants talk about experiences of being in nature, they primarily draw attention to moments of *friluftsliv* that are associated with silence and tranquility, a feeling of flow, and connectedness with nature. These states of attentiveness are more dominant in some forms of *friluftsliv*—hiking, berry-picking, mushroom gathering, and fishing—than in others. Although many forms of *friluftsliv*—skiing, hiking, kayaking, and biking—involve activities that are conducted at high speeds and involve great muscular strength, these forms of *friluftsliv* also incorporate phases where one slows down the pace or pauses at a lovely spot to rest, eat, and drink, or enjoy a beautiful view or the nice warmth of the evening sun. In addition, almost all forms of *friluftsliv* can be accomplished at very different speeds—fast or slow. Thus, both *friluftsliv* and *qigong* include phases characterized by movement and activity, as well as phases characterized by calmness and tranquility.<sup>77</sup>

Generally, there are similarities in how participants in Biyun and *friluftsliv* talk about their experiences. They speak about “tranquility,” “harmony,” and “vitalizing” alike. Yet, beyond these general similarities, there are great differences between the language used in the two domains. The most obvious difference, of course, is that participants in Biyun speak of their experiences in terms of *qi*, whereas participants in *friluftsliv* do not. In Biyun classes, after practicing specific exercises or a sequence of exercises, master Fan and the other instructors usually ask each of the students to tell what she or he felt while doing the exercises. It is striking that the Biyun participants, in particular the advanced students, are able to give very detailed accounts of what they feel. They describe a variety of sensations perceived as forms of *qi*. They also describe a variety of nuances in the quality, location, and movements of sensations of *qi*.

In contrast, *friluftsliv* experiences are often talked about in terms of external references, such as a beautiful sunset, a spectacular view, or good skiing conditions. When one, for example, is appreciating good skiing conditions, this implies that the snow is of such a quality that it allows a good glide combined with good fixation for the skis. One receives a good response from one’s applied muscular strength and one’s technique. One gets into a good rhythm.

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77 Biyun participants refer to being in nature as a pleasant experience. But *friluftsliv* is not always pleasant. One may also experience feeling cold and wet from rain or snow, or feeling exhausted and drained. *Friluftsliv* enthusiasts talk about these phases as intrinsic parts of the activity. These phases are, however, not considered the aim or gain of *friluftsliv*, but rather as interfaces, or contrasts, that make the desirable *friluftsliv* experiences stronger and more enjoyable. See Vaagbø 1993.

One feels at ease and connected with nature. Thus, “good skiing conditions,” like Biyun experiences, are embodied experiences. However, in contrast with Biyun participants, *friluftsliv* participants less frequently talk about such experiences in terms of detailed bodily sensations.

Interestingly, some of the *qigong* participants say that, after beginning to practice *qigong*, they also have become more aware of a broader repertoire of body sensations when they participate in *friluftsliv*. Some of these new feelings in *friluftsliv* contexts were recognized by *qigong* students as experiences of *qi* as they had come to know them as part of their Biyun practice. Janne, for instance, a Biyun practitioner and lover of *friluftsliv*, says she was surprised when one day out in the forest, enjoying sunbathing and swimming in a lake, she suddenly felt an electric-like sensation between the wet skin on her leg and the palm of her hand. The sensory experience was very similar to what she had learned to recognize as *qi* when practicing *qigong*, but she had never before experienced a sensation like this in a non-*qigong* context.<sup>78</sup>

Nina’s account is also illustrative. An elderly woman and Biyun practitioner, Nina says that at the bus stop near her home is a huge tree. When she waits for the bus, she normally stands under the branches of that tree. After having practiced Biyun for some months, both at home and with a Biyun group at a community center, she unexpectedly became aware of a radiating energy from the tree. This radiating feeling evoked sensory experiences (a pleasant, electric, pricking feeling) similar to what she experienced when she practices Biyun exercises.<sup>79</sup>

Nina’s experience demonstrates that the concept of educating attention can shed light on not yet discussed aspects of the Biyun learning process. Through training their attention, Biyun participants gradually acquire the capacity to be affected by *qi* and to affect *qi*. However, the training of this attention in Biyun may also direct Biyun practitioners’ attention in contexts external to Biyun practice. Nina, Janne, and other Biyun practitioners’ experiences indicate that when one has acquired a capacity to affect *qi* and to be affected by *qi*, the skill is not necessarily limited to the defined context of Biyun practice, but extends into other realms of their lives.

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78 Conversation with the author, autumn 2007.

79 Conversation with the author, autumn 2007.

### Discussion: Attentiveness to Nature in Learning a Practice of *Qi*

In the introduction to the Norwegian translation of a book on Biyun, master Fan Xiulan comments on nature in Norway: “Norway; a beautiful country, with harmonious nature and a high standard of living—one of the best countries to live. At this place you have all the best opportunities to practice according to the Biyun method.”<sup>80</sup> I have, as master Fan has in the quotation above, underlined the role of nature in learning Biyun in Norway, although, unquestionably, many other aspects are also involved in learning Biyun there.

With all the examples of interplay between Biyun and *friluftsliv* I have presented here, I have aimed to demonstrate that the process of learning Biyun in Norway is influenced by experiences and perceptions from *friluftsliv*. Moreover, *friluftsliv*, I argue, has changed since some people have added outdoor *qigong* exercises to the broad repertoire of activities, such as hiking, skiing, and swimming that constitute *friluftsliv*.

As demonstrated in the cases of Janne and Nina as well as in other examples of interplay between Biyun and *friluftsliv*, in the course of learning Biyun, students no longer perceive trees, mountains, lakes, and other natural elements as constituting nature “out there.” A close connection is created between aspects of the outer world and sensory experiences felt by individual practitioners. They often articulate the feeling of interconnectedness and coherence with the environment in terms of *qi*. For them, the meaning of *qi* transcends the conventional boundary between the inner body and the outer world. Trees, mountains, and lakes become transformed into elements from which they can gather health-enhancing energy. In short, Biyun participants’ environment becomes perceived as nature enlivened by *qi*.

This merging of inner and outer suggests that not only are Biyun participants experiencing body-mind states that are being transformed, but also that their environment is coming into being in new ways that are integral to the Biyun enskilment process. This elaboration of Biyun enskilment thus adds to studies of body and embodiment, which aim to “overcome the distribution between bodies and minds, worlds and bodies, world and consciousness,”<sup>81</sup> and may be considered a contribution to the anthropology of the body.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, the experiences of Biyun participants discussed here contribute to our knowledge of notions of holistic health and healing. Whereas it is commonplace in alternative and complementary medicines to advocate

80 Fan 2008, 7.

81 Despret 2004, 127.

82 Csordas 1993 and Lock 1993.

holistic health, their ideologies of holism are shown to vary.<sup>83</sup> Biyun exemplifies a form of holism that goes beyond the dimensions of body, mind, and soul to integrate aspects of the environment. However, the holistic health cultivated in Biyun does not include social and political dimensions, in contrast to the holism promoted by, for example, Baer and co-authors.<sup>84</sup>

As the interviewees' statements show, inner concentrations are very important in the creation and cultivation of *qi* in Biyun, as they are in many other forms of *qigong* and Chinese meditation practices.<sup>85</sup> Importantly, this focus distinguishes Biyun and similar forms of *qigong* from the skills discussed by Ingold (2000). *Qi* in Biyun resembles music played by musicians, baskets produced by weaving, and other objects described in Ingold's examples, in that *qi* is cultivated into being "in the course of novices' practical involvement with the constituents of their environment."<sup>86</sup> It is, however, significant that in the process of learning Biyun, participants' attention is increasingly directed to the creation of powerful inner concentrations and less on the arms' and legs' "practical involvement with the constituents of their environment." Arguably, movements of the arms and legs in the initial phases of the enskilment process may be considered resources in the educating of attention, helping participants to shift from focusing on their limbs' movements in the outer world to focusing on inner concentrations. Notably, in the case of *qigong*, a participant's environment changes into an environment enlivened by *qi* as the practitioner transforms into a unity with the capacity to perceive, gather, and otherwise engage with *qi*. In sum, education of attention as an analytical focus helps to elucidate this important feature of Biyun, which it has in common with many other forms of *qigong* but which is far less noted, if at all, in many other skilled practices. This study of Biyun indicates that a focus on education of attention has relevance also when studying skills in which the "practical involvement with the constituents of their [participants'] environment" is not obvious at first glance since the environment is not visible or immediately accessible to our senses.

According to Fan Xiulan, the strength of Biyun participants' capability to concentrate constitutes their potential for gathering *qi* and thus for obtaining health-enhancing benefits. This emphasis on the dimension of concentration, in contrast to physical performance, is a particularly striking aspect of Biyun when one considers that many people start to practice Biyun due to health

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83 Baer et al. 2012; Nissen 2011; and Power 1991.

84 Baer et al. 2012.

85 N. N. Chen 2003 and Palmer 2007.

86 Ingold 2000, 37.

problems. This feature of Biyun is appreciated by the many participants who are incapable of participating in forms of gymnastics that require physical mobility and muscular strength. People with pain and disabilities manage nonetheless to practice Biyun.

### Concluding Remarks

The growth of Biyun *qigong* in Norway is part of a broader development of *qi-gong* throughout the world. In the same period as *qigong* has been established in many places outside China, the political climate in China has turned against *qigong*, thus making it more attractive for *qigong* masters to move their activities abroad.<sup>87</sup>

In the process of establishing practices in new socio-cultural contexts, techniques and rationales will necessarily undergo alterations and adapt to local circumstances.<sup>88</sup> Global flows of people and intercultural mixing of health practices and medicines have sometimes been discussed in terms such as “hybridization,” “syncretism,” “creolization,” and “appropriation.”<sup>89</sup> These concepts offer opportunities to explain processes of medical transfer and cultural interactions in a general way, but they do not help us to understand in any detail the dynamics of such processes.

In this article, “attentiveness” is proposed as yet another focus in order to study ways in which a Chinese health practice unfolds in a process of recontextualization. As the testimonies presented here show, a focus on attentiveness creates an opportunity to demonstrate ways in which new and foreign understandings and body practices have been introduced and accepted, and how already well-established notions and practices facilitate this process of assimilation.

My starting point was enskilment as elaborated by Ingold (2000). However, in order to make enskilment a more suitable concept to study the establishing of a practice with origins in a faraway place into a new and different socio-cultural context, I have found it useful to complement the notion of “education of attention” with the term “habits of attention.” This examination of the

87 In the People’s Republic of China, the *qigong* movement developed into a boom in the post-Mao reform years of the 1980s but collapsed in the late 1990s with the political suppression of the followers of some forms of *qigong*, most notably Falungong. See Palmer 2007.

88 Appadurai 1996 and Robertson 1992.

89 See, for example, Frank and Stollberg 2004 and Hsu and Høg 2002.

learning of Biyun in Norway has emphasized the involvement of already established perceptual skills in that learning. I have emphasized the influence of perceptual skills acquired prior to the outset of the learning of the new skill and proposed referring to these already established perceptual skills as “habits of attention.” This approach, I suggest, has relevance for the learning of many forms of skills.

In the learning of a new skill, already established habits of attention may in some cases facilitate the educating of attention that is intrinsic to learning the new skill, as in the case of Biyun in Norway as analyzed in this article, while other habits of attention may hinder the learning of a new skill. Loving nature is, of course, not limited to people who participate in *friluftsliv*, and experiencing nature as a healing force is also known in many cultures in addition to that of China.<sup>90</sup> However, there are places where people, in contrast to participants in *friluftsliv*, perceive nature primarily as dangerous and potentially harmful to health.<sup>91</sup> The analysis presented in this article is based on research material limited to Norway. In recent years, Biyun has been established in several other places outside China. Biyun in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Hawaii, Brazil, and other non-Norwegian settings has not yet been explored from the perspective of attentiveness and habits of attention. Differences and similarities between Biyun as experienced in Norway and Biyun as practiced other places remain to be examined.

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90 Milton 2002 and Curtis 1993.

91 Fugelli and Ingstad 2009, 151.



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