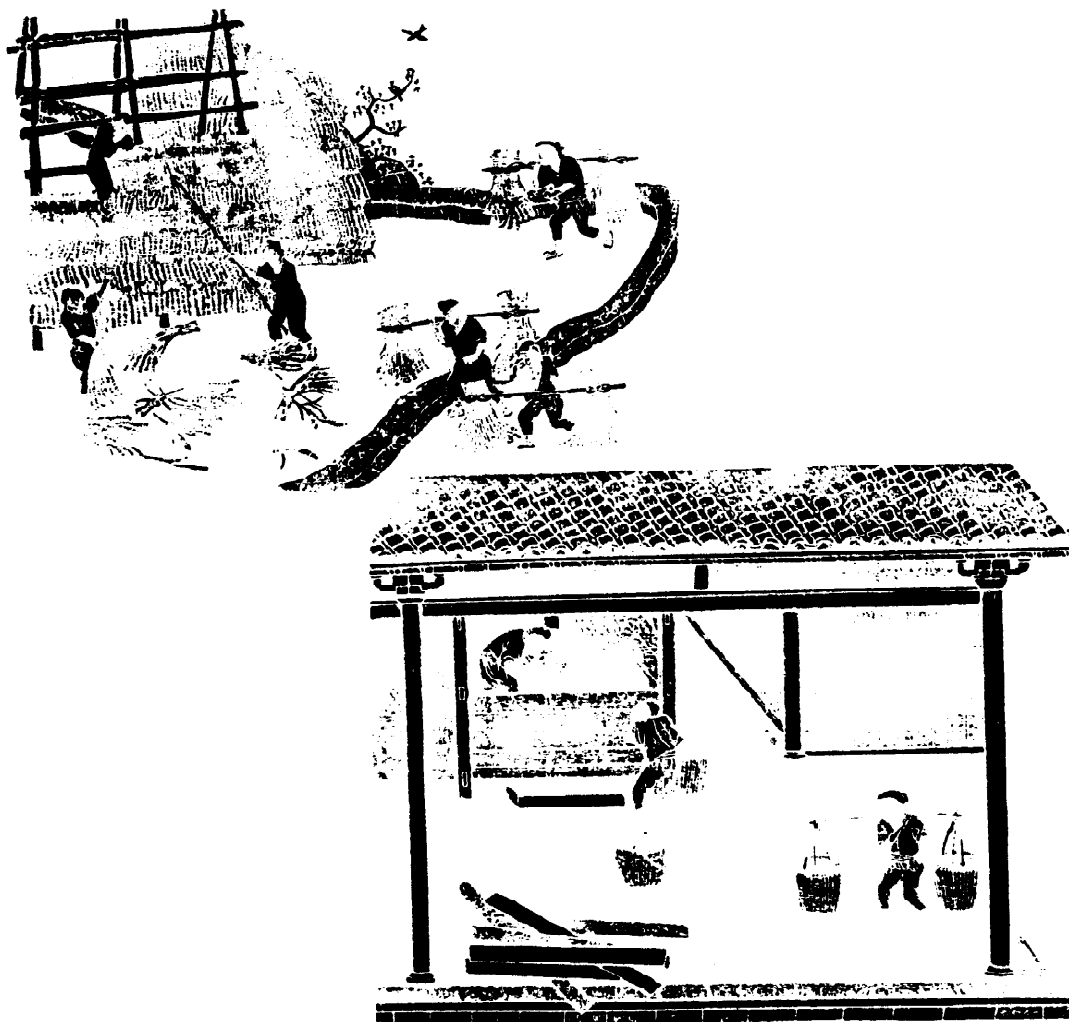


THE EARTH ELEMENT, Chinese Medicine Classics III

An Instructive Discussion (from; Larre & Rochat, 1990: Su Wen, Chapters 8,9, 11)

SU WEN CHAPTER 8

The Spleen and Stomach as storehouses and granaries, *cang lin*



Storehouses and Granaries, *cang lin* (Larre & Rochat, 1990)

*Spleen and Stomach are in charge of storehouses and granaries
The five tastes stem from them.*

Elisabeth Rochat: We find these definitions of Spleen and Stomach for the first time in the Nei Jing in Su Wen Chapter 8. It's a very short quotation, but we have already had a full seminar on Chapter 8 of the Su Wen, in which the entire hierarchy of the twelve viscera was shown, with the Heart coming first, and afterwards Lung, Liver, Gall Bladder, *tan zhong*, and in the sixth position, Spleen and Stomach. And we can see why - because the centre is in the sixth position.

Claude Larre: Maybe for people who are not familiar with that chapter we should explain. There are eleven lines and the sixth line leaves five above and five below, so graphically speaking this line where Spleen and Stomach are put is really the axis around which all is revolving. In that sense to see the text, and to see that it is well disposed, gives you the impression of what the axis is, where everything goes round in a circle.

Elisabeth Rochat: It's the only time in the presentation of the twelve charges that we have two viscera linked together in order to share the same charge. For all the others we have one viscera for one function. Spleen and Stomach are in charge of storehouses and granaries, *cang lin*. So what is the difference between a storehouse and a granary? It's very difficult. Can we say that the Stomach is more like a storehouse and the Spleen is more like a granary? Or in Chinese the Stomach more *cang* and the Spleen more *lin*? What are the meanings of *cang* and *lin*? It's quite difficult because sometimes the Stomach is called the great *cang*, the great storehouse, and sometimes, for example in *Su Wen Chapter 29*, we have this kind of sentence, "The twelve viscera, *zang* and *fu*, receive Breaths, *qi*, from the Stomach", and the ideogram which is translated in this context as receive is *lin*. That is very important because in Chinese this ideogram *lin* means not only granaries but also to bring into a place or receive from a place.

Claude Larre: If I may interrupt I would say that the Chinese really have the knack of using the passive or the active form with the same character, so you have to know the doctrine before you make the translation, it's not the translation which gives you the doctrine. Sometimes when they say the active form, to bring, it's good for that context, but the same character will be used for the passive form, and nothing will tell you except your own knowledge. That's the trouble with the Chinese text. But usually, if something has been said in one form, the remainder will be complementary to what has already been said just by way of completion, because you know that everything has to go together.

**cang lin,
storehouses and granaries**

Elisabeth Rochat: If you look at the ideogram *lin* with the idea of analysis we can see that it is some kind of shelter, a covered place, a barn, or something more important than a barn. If you remember the ideogram for *fu*, you have the same graphic part, it's like a place where you can bring something and place something.

Claude Larre: One could say that it might be a very small shelter with some grain there, or it might be a city itself, which has been made just to keep enough food or materials to distribute to the provinces. The common meaning is that it is a place to store, and then to distribute.

Elisabeth Rochat: In the character you have the cereals, the stalks of cereal, and a double enclosure with a roof. This is the place where you can bring cereals. But another very common meaning of this ideogram is to make a public distribution of grains, for example during a very hard winter when people are starving the Emperor or the Lord organizes this kind of distribution of the grain. You can see that the important thing is not the Chinese word, or the English word, but all the processes that are implied in that ideogram, i.e. the real use of the granaries as the place which is able to receive and at the same time the place from which the grains are distributed.

In the case of cang, the meaning is of putting together a great quantity of grains in the same place. It's the idea of a meeting, a junction, being together, and that is an appropriate form for the kind of grains we prepare to eat, cooked grains.

The vital thing is to have the idea of this double movement, to receive and then to send to a good place at the right time. Another thing is that this function with a two-fold aspect is linked with the couple or the dual expression, Spleen/Stomach. We can write it Spleen/Stomach in this way in order to call attention to the dialectics of the interplay between Spleen and Stomach, which is really an important aspect of the functioning of the Spleen and Stomach. We will see today and tomorrow that Spleen and Stomach are the best example of the interplay of Heaven and Earth inside the viscera, they are like a turntable - or a revolving platform in the median.

This is a unique function with a two-fold aspect, and of course, inside that unique function of cang lin, storehouse and granaries, we can always think that the Spleen is acting like a zang, is actively storing and working on the Essences and their distribution in the depths of the body to all the viscera. And Stomach, acting like a fu, is transforming and transporting, and ensuring the passage to the other fu.

Spleen and Stomach are working together for the reception, transformation and assimilation of the Essences of alimentation, in order to make the passage into our own vitality and organism. It's another reason for saying that Spleen and Stomach are like a centre, or the go-between, because they are between the exterior (what is exterior to me) and what is mine, my own Essences, or my own organism. They are the intermediary between that which is not me and that which is me. They also act with the help of the other zang, like the Essences of the Kidneys, because there is no function or movement which can work in isolation.

The five Tastes and the jing wei

精
微

jing wei,
subtle Essences

Elisabeth Rochat: What is the effect in the human being of this function of cang fin, storing and granaries, and all the processes and movements linked to these two ideograms? The result is that the five Tastes stem from them. I think that you know perfectly well what the five Tastes are, i.e. acid, bitter, sweet, acrid and salty, and that the Taste is not only the taste on the tongue but also all the vitality contained in alimentation which is able to pass into our own vitality through the mechanism of the Essences, or in the state proper to the Spleen and Stomach, jing wei. (jing for Essences, wei for subtle).

What are jing wei, subtle Essences? It's the reduction of Essences contained in alimentation, for example from vegetables, cereals or water and their transformation into such a subtle state that these Essences no longer belong to a specific being, to this or that thing that I have eaten, but are able to be composed into the pattern of my own vitality and to become my own Essences. That is jing wei - this passage. It's not only in the Spleen and Stomach that we have this kind of passage, but it's above all in the interplay of Spleen and Stomach that we speak of jing wei. This, of course, is the same thing as the function of Spleen and Stomach to transform, to assimilate and so on. In the occidental way of speaking it's digestion, assimilation and metabolisation: jing wei is the classical Chinese expression.

Claude Larre: I have the feeling that we could benefit from coming back to the question of the five Tastes, and clarifying it a little more. When we see vegetables or any sort of food we have the visible sensation of them. Then we prepare them and they are no longer the same as they were, they are closer to assimilation, yet they have the same colour, and we know that they are really leeks or whatever. But as they come closer into our own self, by eating, then the shape, the colour and everything which is really useful to distinguish them is mixed together. But we are not yet at the point of assimilation, and the assimilation when it is done, is done very secretly. The secret is that it is not only the mouth, or the teeth or the Stomach or the organic fluids in the Stomach which are preparing for that, there is something more: there is a function that is so close to oneself, that it is essential. As long as the wu wei (five Tastes) of nature are made in the proper, essential manner it is possible that those external things can become oneself. So, if you are looking at all the process, we understand it is at that point, in that place where nothing can be seen, that the operation of life is taking place.



wu wei,
five Tastes

So coming back to the question of the five Tastes, in the West we call the five Tastes everything that is edible, but the Chinese would call the five Tastes everything which is already assimilated and which might be ranked under those five classes - acid, bitter, sweet, acrid, salty. The jing wei is that particular state of wu wei when they are something, but something which is personal to me. So then for that reason the expression is made up of jing, Essences, and wei, subtle, because the activity of the Essences cannot be detected by my own means. I am sure by the fact that I am a living person that the activity is very subtle, and that the activity is the activity of life in myself. So the combination of jing and wei is a sort of abstraction - it's something which is not visible, but which is totally real, which is not a function, but which is some sort of intermediary state of the external five Tastes and the activity I will now be able to display because I have eaten some food.

I am sure that the difficulty in grasping what is said is because it is true! When you think you understand what the point really is, it's certain that you are wrong! Because life is not to be understood. Life is to be an experiment. As long as you are a living person you may see the edible food and you may see the result of your own activity from the fact that you have been nourishing yourself. But in between there is the process of life, and that is what is contained in the meaning of the five Tastes.

Numerology and the number five

Elisabeth Rochat: Five is always whole. It's the entire movement of life in each particular aspect. The doctrine of the ancient Chinese was that we can divide this one unit or unity, this united movement of life, into five main aspects or movements, and on this equal basis we can quite fruitfully observe the entire phenomena of life. That is the foundation and the explanation of what we call the five Phases, or Elements. When we have five, five zang or five Tastes, we have the decomposition of a unity into five aspects. For this reason the five Tastes decompose in five different ways the Essences of being. Between Heaven and Earth in this median on Earth, all living beings are in the same pattern so it's for this reason that we have five zang and six fu and we can breathe the air and eat the fruit of the earth and so on.

Claude Larre: But maybe people will ask since this number five is so good for the zang why aren't there five fu?

Elisabeth Rochat: It's the same reason as why these five Tastes, with Spleen and Stomach in the hierarchy of twelve viscera, in Su Wen Chapter 8, are not in the fifth position, but in the sixth position. In the fifth position we have tan zhong, the middle of the chest. Zhong is the centre or middle, and tan is like an altar from which all the influx of the virtue of the Emperor can radiate to his subjects, his people. This is the altar where the Emperor went each year to call forth the good influence of the Spirits and Heaven, and to be able to make this radiance from the good influx spread to the people. You can see in the fifth position, tan zhong, which is also the Sea of Breaths in the middle of the chest, the concentration or the summing up, the gathering of the knot of life in the shape of Breaths. All Breaths are distributed by meridians from the middle of the chest, through the impulse of the Lung and the Earth and the Heart and so on. This is the reason why tan zhong is in the fifth position, because these are the Breaths of life, the unity of life, which are used afterwards for rhythmical distribution.

In the sixth position we have Spleen and Stomach with storehouses and granaries. The meaning of six is the maintenance of life. Maintenance is the way of all circulation, alimentation and nutrition in a delineated space. That is quite clearly the function of Spleen and Stomach, to ensure this kind of maintenance. For this reason there are six fu, and for this reason Spleen and Stomach are like storehouses and granaries. This vocabulary of storehouses and granaries is very close to the meaning of fu.

Spleen and Stomach are in the sixth position in Chapter 8 of Su Wen, and in accord with this the Spleen is very close to the function of the six fu. The six fu transform and transport in order to present Essences to the viscera, to the body and to the zang, so that they can thesaurize (store actively) and release Breaths.

Claude Larre: I feel this is very clear, but in order to make it clearer I would say that my own personal presentation of four, is that the Breaths go Eastward and Westward, Northward and Southward without any organization at all. Then when those expansive Breaths recollect themselves, they come together in order to make a unit, an organized something, five. But when this organized something is done, they go again for expansion, so then it is six. Four and six are understood if we go through number five. Number five is the number of organization. Before five it is four and there is no organization, and after five it is six, and six is just four when four has been organized by passing through five.

This is not just a question of numbers. We are using numbers. We are using numbers because it is a way for our intellect to understand its own movement. When we are thinking of things we see, or the life we have, we need some sort of presentation of our ideas which are the utmost form of images. Numbers are just images, intellectual images, of our own way of dealing with everything, or the ten thousand beings. When we look at things in themselves, that's objective, and when we are thinking from our own personal self, then we call that our intellectual mode. So numbers are seen in objects or they are seen in our mind. Numbers make our logic, but this logic is not a dream. This logic is encompassing what really exists, and gives a true account of the living beings around ourselves. So the only way for me to understand something is to be intelligent, but to be intelligent I have to make

some moves in my mind and those moves are made essentially from numbers. Numbers exist because they are doing something, they are organizing. They exist because they are in myself and I find them again in the external world, so it is impossible to dispense with numbers, we have to accept them and use them. Apart from using these numbers, it is not possible to give an account of the solidity, the firmness, or the validity of the Chinese exposure of life. That's my own personal feeling. Elisabeth was bringing that closer to the subject because she was saying that number six brings Spleen and Stomach towards the other fu, so we are more or less leaving the pure activity, and are entering the receptacles, the external vessels through which all life is put.

Elisabeth Rochat: We spoke of six linked with Spleen and Stomach, but the number which is proper to the Spleen is five, of course. We can see that in Su Wen Chapter 4 for example, because in the construction by five through the Spleen is this centre by which the knot, the permutation of Breaths, can take place. Afterwards, it's also the centre from which all yin and yang, zang and fu, six yin, end six yang, can get maintenance, nutrition, sweet warmth of life and so on. It's always this kind of interplay which is the important point of Chinese spirit, Chinese mind and Chinese physiology.

Gu qi and jing wei

穀
氣

gu qi,
Breaths of Cereals

精
微

jing wei,
subtle Essences

Question: I would like to have the relationship between gu qi and jing wei clarified.

Elisabeth Rochat: Gu qi are the Breaths of cereals. Jing wei is, I think, broader than gu qi. Gu qi are Breaths coming from alimentation and rising to the Upper Heater in order to compose, with the Breaths coming from respiration, the totality of Breaths of Posterior Heaven circulating in the meridians and so on. The two expressions do not appear at the same time in the history of Chinese medicine.

Gu qi doesn't appear in any ancient texts. We speak of zong qi, ancestral Breaths, ying qi, Breaths with a constructive, nutritional, building function, wei qi, defensive Breaths, and so on, but not gu qi. Jing wei is broader because it's a basis, not only for Breaths, but also for liquids. For example, jin ye, body liquids, are based on jing wei, and these kind of Essences develop a very great subtlety. Jing wei, we saw, is acting between Spleen and Stomach, and sometimes at the level of the

Intestines, particularly the Small Intestine, because some kind of assimilation takes place there. But gu qi acts at the level of the Sea of Breaths in the middle of the chest, and the circulation and distribution of Breaths through the meridians and the whole network of animation.

SU WEN CHAPTER 9

Elisabeth Rochat: Now we arrive at Su Wen Chapter 9. In this chapter there is a special place for the Stomach and Intestines.

The five Tastes penetrate by the mouth and are thesaurized in and by the Intestines and Stomach, and this thesaurization of the five Tastes is for the maintenance and nourishment of the five Breaths.

This expression 'the five Breaths' has the meaning of the Breaths of the five zang. They are the Breaths of life in the five aspects which support life. When the Breaths are in an harmonious composition you have life, the body liquids are perfectly balanced and the Spirits spontaneously make this man alive and are life itself.

Spleen, Stomach, Large Intestine, Small Intestine, Triple Heater, Bladder: these are the root of the storehouses and granaries, the dwelling place of nutrition. Its name is utensil.

There is possibility for transformation giving residues and dregs, for the transmission of the Tastes as well as the entries and exits.

Its flourishing aspect is in the four whites of the lips, the power of its fullness is in the flesh; its taste is sweet, its colour yellow. Its category is extreme yin, and it is in free communication with the Breaths of the Earth.

You know that we call the Stomach the Sea of the five zang and six fu, the Sea of Liquids and Cereals, the Sea of Breaths and so on. In Su Wen Chapter 9 we have this formation and enumeration of each of the five zang with a definition of what is fundamental and what kind of root for life each is able to be. Each zang is presented alone, with the Heart first, then Lung, Kidneys and Liver, and in the fifth position, Spleen. With the Spleen the fu are presented - not the six fu, but five of the six, the five which are the fu for transportation and transformation, the chuan hua zhi fu. They are the Stomach, Large Intestine, Small Intestine, Triple Heater and Bladder. The Gall Bladder is not a fu for transportation and transformation but a special fu, a qi heng zhi fu, an Extraordinary fu for actively storing Essences.

The two ideograms which account for the function of the Spleen are very close to chuan hua. The function of the Spleen is yun hua. Hua has the meaning of transformation, and yun, a kind of transportation. Chuan is something like the transmission from one to another, or the following on from one to another, whereas yun is more a kind of distribution, a sending out into every place.

Claude Larre: I would like to make a subtle differentiation between the character yun and the character chuan, since it seems that yun is the natural way that things transport themselves to where they are needed, and chuan is on a lower level because it's the coarse operation of transmitting from this place to that indefinitely. In yun there is a higher treatment of life, it's more Heavenly influx, which means everything is revolving in the best order because that is the will of Heaven. And transmitting, chuan, is more from hand to hand, from one place to another at a lesser level.

Elisabeth Rochat: Of course, the Spleen is a zang and here we have the distribution of the group of five fu, but something is analogous and through that we can understand why the Spleen is presented with the retinue of fu. They all share this ability to transform, to give movement, to distribute and transport, but the Spleen does so in the way of a zang and the others in the way of the fu. Of course the Spleen has the ability to distribute influx in the body up to the extremities of the limbs, through the flesh and so on, and to distribute all nutritive Elements and Essences in the shape of bodily liquids. The fu are for transmission, transportation and transformation of the half digested bolus of food, and the transmission is from one fu to another. The Spleen is for the elevation of the clear and pure, the fu are for the descending of the unclear. In this context the Spleen is the 'root of the storehouses and granaries', cang lin - with the double aspect of being able to receive and to give. We find the same expression in Su Wen Chapter 8 as the common charge of Spleen and Stomach. Here in Su Wen 9, cang lin are the 'dwelling place of nutrition', ying. Ying is a special ideogram for that which we call nutritional Breaths.

Question: Or nutritive Breaths?

Elisabeth Rochat: Nutritive is maybe not enough because ying also has the meaning of building and rebuilding: renewing the constitution and structure: maintaining the shape of the body and nourishing all the elements.

Claude Larre: The problem is that ying qi is ready to use right now, everything is prepared and everything is ready for assimilation. Whereas nutritive Breaths are not prepared but can be used later for nourishment and nutrition. So it is a question of choosing between those two words. There is no activity if there is no nutrition, but it is only when all the nutritive processes have been completed that you may use whatever energy is then contained in your body after the transformation, and that's ying qi.

Elisabeth Rochat: These five fu, Stomach, Large intestine, Small Intestine, Triple Heater and Bladder are like storehouses and granaries for the body, receiving food, and through transformation participating in the task of nourishing the Essences and the jing wei. In another way they are also used for the elimination of waste, with the downward movement mastered by the Stomach. In this case Stomach is always at the beginning of the enumeration of the five fu of transmission and transformation because it is the first to receive food and it masters this movement of going down.

The Spleen is also like a storehouse and granary for the body, especially for the other zang and for the nutritive ying aspect of vitality. In this case the Spleen can distribute the nutritive influx and

benefit the other zang and itself, by way of the five Tastes. With this movement of rising up of these very pure clear Breaths of nourishment and nutrition we have the idea of the double movement of Stomach and Spleen, ascending and descending. We can also see that the Spleen is the only zang which receives Essences of nutrition not yet completely divided up into five aspects, in the shape of the five Tastes for example, and the Spleen has the task of finishing this assimilation of Essences and distributing to each zang the taste of the quality of Essences which can be stored by that zang, and which renew that particular aspect of vitality. In this sense Spleen and Stomach are both storehouses and granaries, but each in its proper way, as zang or fu. Thus it is "the dwelling place of nutrition".

Its name is utensil, qi.

Claude Larre: This qi is a sort of vessel. It can be used for cooking, or when the food has been prepared it can be used to preserve the food. The ideogram shows four sections of bamboo - they are similar to the representation of mouths, but they are not mouths, they make the four feet of a sort of vessel which is used in order to make the cooking quicker - because it is able to come closer to the Fire. These four square figures, with this construction in the middle, are a very good representation of a vessel.

Elisabeth Rochat: This notion of a utensil goes well with what has been said about the meaning of Spleen, being like a servant, something able to help doing something. It's also the idea of cooking food in order to make it more assimilable. I think the meaning of utensil is also applicable to each of the five fu for transmission and transformation because they really are like utensils to the alimentation, and there is this interplay between the ascending and descending movement because when you cook you have evaporation and steam, and you also have something to throw away and something to keep which is good for the body. These kinds of ideas are all behind this ideogram.

There is possibility for transformation, hua, giving the residues and dregs, zao po, for the transmission of the Tastes as well as the entries and exits, ru chu.

The first result of transformation is jing wei, the transformation into Essences which are so subtle that they can become my Essences. But we have another part, at the end of the process there are the residues and dregs, the waste. The specific characteristics of residues and dregs are that they have no more Essences to be assimilated by the body, so they must go out of the body, and you know that when the Spleen is too weak you have the kind of diarrhoea in which residues and dregs are still full of Essences. It's a diarrhoea full of cereals, still with the pure and clear material of undigested food. We can see the link of Spleen with these evacuations and transformations, and the phenomenon of diarrhoea by the connection of the five fu with transmission and transformation.

The transmission of the Tastes is transmission of the five Essences, in the shape of the Tastes, to each zang, and the entries and exits are the two extremities of the process, the upper and lower orifices. All that is between these two openings is rooted in the Spleen and Stomach, with the Stomach mastering the Large Intestines, the Small Intestines, Triple Heater and Bladder.

In Ling Shu Chapter 8, entries and exits are linked with the po, and the po are linked with the Essences. The po are connected with the Lung, so it is another way to see the power of tai yin to give substantial form through transformation and entries and exits.

Its flourishing aspect, hua, is at the four whites of the lips.

The four whites of the lips are the four corners of the lips - it's quite interesting because it refers to the white flesh at the corners of the lips and in French or English I think we only mention two corners. But in Chinese we have four corners in order to see how, by the power of the Spleen, the flesh is well maintained and nourished in four directions. You also know that these two ideograms, si bai, are the name of a very important point [Stomach-2]. The name of Spleen-3 is tai bai which is the great white of great whites. Some Chinese commentaries make a connection between these two expressions. The lips are a mark of the prosperity of the Spleen because the lips are a more manifest, more external form of flesh, and flesh is just the movement of the Spleen in the body at the level of the structure of the body.

Claude Larre: One point might be to understand why they talk of white, because white has two opposite meanings. One is the lack of life associated with a deceased person or the colour for funerals, and the other is the sparkling sunny quality of light. Sunny light is understood because the character is made by the radical for sun with a stroke on top. Since there are two lips and four bai it's necessary that the brightness should be seen on the face and on the body itself. What is important is that the Fire of life can really be seen. The brightness is the effect of the Essences. While the Essences are hidden, they are thesaurized and they are zang. But because we have Essences we maintain them and therefore the Spirits have a good place to be, and that is actually what we can see through the body. Everything which is well organized and full of strength in the internal structure, has to be shown outside, and it has to be shown in the bodily place where function appears. The function of Spleen has to do with the renewal of the body, and life to renew the body through alimentation comes at the mouth. So it's in the four corners there that we can see whether everything is in order in the relation between Spleen and Stomach. We can see the same thing with the Heart; the place to see whether the Heart is really peaceful and void is on the face. We know that the Liver is the power of life in the ascent, like Spring and the vital impulse, and we know that for the Chinese the eyes are the way to accept images and send messages, so the message of life of the Liver is seen in the clarity and brightness of the eye.

The character for appearance and for body is the same, xing. When we write xing we translate it body, shape or external shape. We are now sure that in the embryo there is no shape, but there is full life. And at death there is no more life, but only shape. So it's absolutely vital to understand that biao li or yin yang are internal qualities manifesting externally. Life is always inside, in the middle and in the obscurity, but it will always be showing itself. That is the deepest consideration of what life might be, it's the way for Earth to receive Heaven and to produce a being in which Heaven and Earth will be showing their relationship. And this has to be seen for the Heart, for Liver, for Spleen and all the rest.

So the teaching is always current and is always analogous, and what we have to do one year to another is to simplify all the problems that we get from teaching acupuncture in the Western way, or even of the teaching of the Chinese books themselves. Because if they are repetitious it's just the passing of time which obliges people to write something about something which is already so clear and simple in itself! It's something to live with, it's not something to explain.

Elisabeth Rochat:

The power of its fullness is in the flesh; its taste is sweet; its colour yellow. Its category is extreme yin and it is in free communication with the Breaths of the Earth.

Some commentators say that the Spleen is zhi yin, extreme yin, because all things return to the Earth, and return to the soil, so the Spleen is the greatest yin because it can receive all kinds of things. This is the end and beginning of the process of nourishment, maintenance and distribution of life.

..it is in free communication with the Breaths of the Earth.

The Spleen is in free communication with the Breaths of the Earth unlike the other zang which are in free communication with the Breaths of one of the four seasons. There is no representation of a fifth season. But we'll see in Su Wen Chapter 29 what the meaning of that is and what time or moment is ruled by the Spleen.

SU WEN CHAPTER 11

Fullness and emptiness in the zang fu

In Su Wen Chapter 11 there is a very clear differentiation between zang and fu, and I will spend some minutes explaining that, because there was a question about it this morning. The question was that if we see in certain books that yin is void or empty and yang is fullness, how can you explain that yin can be either full or empty? The answer is in Su Wen Chapter 11. It's very simple in Chinese, but a little bit complicated in English.

The five zang actively thesaurize jing qi

You know these two ideograms jing qi, Essences and Breaths. Remember, it's important not to say Essential Breaths - but something like Essences/ Breaths or Essences and Breaths, as jing qi are Essences stored actively by each zang in order to allow the releasing of qi. The zang don't allow the Essences to seep away because jing qi, Essences/ Breaths, are the foundation of vitality, and there is no reason why these very choice, pure Breaths realized from Essences should have to go outside . If they did it would mean loss of life. For this reason we see the zang are full of man, fullness, and they cannot be full with shi fullness. The meaning of these two ideograms, man, and shi, is fullness, but in two different ways. Man is like an impregnation - very subtle. At this level zang can be man

because they are completely impregnated with Essences and Breaths, all very clear and pure and with the support of the Spirits and so on.

Conversely, the six fu are for transmission and transformation, chuan hua, and for this reason they are unable to keep and store. So they are shi and they can't be man because they receive something and then they act by transforming and afterwards transmitting. They are shi when they contain food or when food is engaged in the process of digestion. For example, when the Stomach receives food and transforms and ferments it, the Stomach is said to be full, shi. Afterwards, when the Stomach transmits the remainder of the food to the Small Intestine, the Stomach is empty. It's just waiting for the next meal. But zang always have to be in a man state of fullness, it's not possible for a zang to be empty. This is the way that the yin zang are full in the body, and the way in which the yang fu are full in the body and it's not the same way. It's impossible to say yin is void or yang is in fullness. The way of being empty or full is not the same for yin and yang, or zang and fu, but because nothing on Earth is purely yin or yang, everything is composed of Elements and the important point is to have a good balance of yin and yang according to the special nature of each species.

Question: You spoke before of nutriments which had not yet assumed the identity of the person, would you require zang to store man substances which had acquired that identity?

Elisabeth Rochat: I think the guarantee for this identity are the Kidneys and the Essences of the Kidneys and Anterior Heaven. The Essences of Anterior Heaven are not merely Essences which are present at the moment of conception. They are the inborn mechanism and structure for the rebuilding and reconstitution of the body on the model of the first composition of the two Essences of the father and mother, a proper meeting or joining of Fire and Water, yin and yang and so on. The Kidneys are the guarantee for this, and this function is the meaning of the Essences of the Kidneys. If the Essences of the Kidneys are deficient or weak then there is a lack of these Essences and linked to such a weakness of the Kidneys we have all the deformities of childhood. The Breaths of the Spleen are said to be the Trunk of Posterior Heaven, and the Breaths of the Kidneys to be the Trunk of Anterior Heaven. Both are necessary for the maintenance and nourishment of an individual life, along with respiration. So we have the three feminine zang, Lung, Spleen and Kidneys working on the Essences. We can also see this in Su Wen Chapter 21.

The Stomach as Sea of Liquids and Cereals

In Su Wen Chapter 11 we see that:

The Stomach is the Sea of liquids and cereals

This is the first important mention of the Stomach set apart from the other fu. In general the Stomach appears a lot more than the other fu because it has a more important function. Chapter 11 is a good example because here the Stomach has a special presentation with this definition of being a 'Sea of liquids and cereals' - and we remember that the Stomach is one of the four seas of the body along with tan zhong (Sea of Breaths), the brain (Sea of Marrow), and chong mai (Sea of Blood).

The Stomach is the great gushing source from which springs out all that is necessary for the maintenance of the six fu.

The five Tastes enter the mouth and are stored in the Stomach to maintain the Breaths of the five zang.

We can see that in Su Wen Chapter 11 there is a contradiction because at the beginning of the chapter it says that the six fu are unable to thesaurize or store, but now we read that the five Tastes are stored in the Stomach. It's difficult to understand, but it's because the Chinese language is very strict and very flexible at the same time. The meaning is that if you see the Stomach as the source of the maintenance of the five zang, which are active places for the realizing of Breaths, you are speaking of Essences and Breaths, and if you are speaking of Essences and Breaths you are speaking of what must be necessarily kept inside the body for its vitality. So for this reason you use the ideogram to store. The Stomach is not only one of the six fu for transmission and transforming, but it is also the main place for the extraction of Essences and for the realizing of Breaths through the five zang. For this reason, in other chapters of the Su Wen and Ling Shu we have the Stomach described as the Sea of the five zang and six fu. For example in Su Wen Chapter 34 and Ling Shu Chapter 29 you can see this double aspect of the Stomach. This is a good quotation from which to grasp the particular importance and place of the Stomach in old Chinese texts and in Chinese medicine. A very famous treatise on the Spleen and Stomach, Pi Wei Lun, was written in the 12th century AD. It deals with most diseases in relation to the Spleen and Stomach and it's a very interesting book.

Su Wen Chapter 11 continues by saying:

The mouth of Breaths is tai yin, therefore Breaths and Tastes of the five zang and six fu all come from the Stomach and their alterations are visible at the mouth of the Breaths.

Mouth of Breaths is the name for the pulses, it means a mouth like an opening or passage, a way by which you can reach the Breaths. Most of the time it designates the radial pulse. You can see here the connection end compenetration of yin and yang through zang and fu and through the Breaths and Tastes, and everything is said to come from the power of the Stomach as the main place for this reconstitution of life. We also have this idea that the Stomach and Spleen have a very close connection. They share the same function, granaries and storehouses and so on, and they act together to produce and transport bodily liquids and jing wei. You also know that the Breaths of tai yin of the foot, Spleen, rise up to the Sea of Breaths in the Upper Heater to join with the quintessence of respiration in order to form the Ancestral Breaths, the zong qi.

Another point made in this text is that Spleen is very close to Stomach, and we see that it's by Stomach, and Spleen acting as a helper to the Stomach, that the five zang and six fu can remain alive and in activity and can fulfill their tasks. In this case it's because of the Stomach and the Breaths of the Stomach that the zang and fu are in good or bad form and you can see that through the meridian of Tai Yin of the hand at the Mouth of Breaths.

This same idea is given in Su Wen Chapter 18:

The normal Breaths of the well-balanced man are received, lin, from the Stomach. The Stomach is the normal Breaths of the well balanced man. When a man no longer has the Breaths of the Stomach then it is called "counter-current", and this counter-current is death.

This lin is very close to the lin which has the meaning of granaries. The meaning is very simple. Each zang and fu and each meridian needs the Breaths of the Stomach to remain in activity. And as it is said here, if you don't eat for one or two days your pulse first appears disturbed and you grow weaker and weaker, and then after some time you die. It's a counter-current of the norm of life which is to eat two or three times a day. For us it's not a normal problem, but it was at that time, and still is now for a lot of people.

It's very simple: if you want to remain alive you have to breathe and eat, and you have to have good transformation, assimilation and elimination. Of course, you have to have all these functions at different levels of your life, for food and for respiration, and if they are well regulated and your brain and your Spirit are very clear then you can eliminate all the bad waste and dregs, and also bad ideas and thoughts. It's the same movement. You can see that if you have patients with Spleen and Stomach pathology, they are very often bloated or have some problem with diarrhoea or constipation. At the same time they often have a problem with mental elimination.

Later in Su Wen Chapter 18 there is a presentation of the pulse of each zang in relationship to the power of the Breaths of the Stomach.