

THE STOMACH, WEI YANG ORGAN OF THE EARTH ELEMENT

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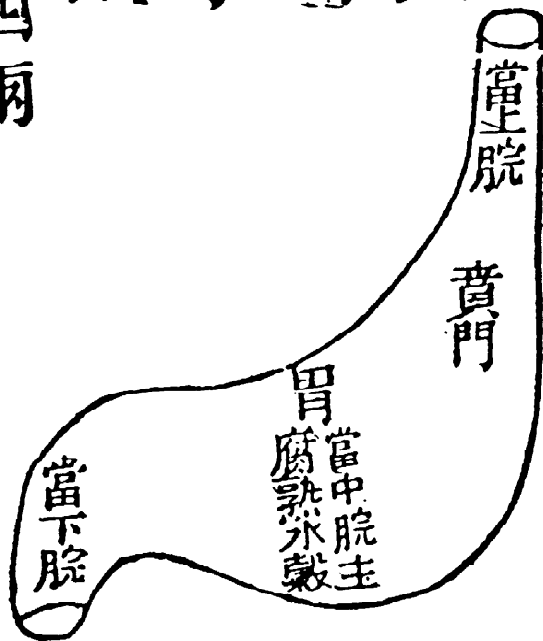
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The Stomach, from the Ling Shu Su Wen Jie Yao
(Larre & Rochat, 1990)

THE IDEOGRAM FOR THE STOMACH, WEI (from Larre & Rochat, 1990)

Elisabeth Rochat: The second ideogram is Stomach. You can see that we have the same radical, a part of the body, but it is not on the left side but on the lower part.



Wei, Stomach

Etymologically the top part is not the idea of the field, as you might imagine because although there is a similar Chinese ideogram with the meaning of a very well cultivated field it's not that. The etymological Chinese explanation is that this is some space, an area in which food is enclosed, and if you reverse this inner part of the upper character which is grain (Radical 119) you have the same graphic element as in the ideogram for Essences, jing. But that is just an additional remark. This is the Stomach, the part of the body, and the function in the body which encloses food in the shape of grains. It is said that in ancient times - it may be true or not - that this ideogram alone without the lower part, flesh, had the meaning of Stomach. It's like a sack, a pocket full of grains. It is very difficult to say anything else because the meaning is obvious. It's a receptacle for food, for grains, and it is also a typical example of a fu, a fu which is a receptacle, receiving food at its own level, in order to do something. We can remember these etymological explanations when we find that Spleen and Stomach have charge of granaries and storehouses.

COMMENTARY FROM THE CLASSICS (from: Larre & Rochat, 1990)

Ling Shu Chapter 30

The six Breaths of the human body are Essences, Breaths, jin, ye, Blood and mai.

Elisabeth Rochat: Breaths can be seen as part of the 'six Breaths' because Breaths can be understood at many levels. At the most general level they are a way by which life takes place and remains, but you can also take Breaths, qi, at another level, and at this general level, qi is the general sign of animation. In this case, besides animation, you have Essences, nutrition, the liquid aspect, the circulating aspect, and so on. So for this reason we can call Breaths all that makes life, and we can divide these breaths into several aspects of which Breaths, qi, represents only one aspect of animation.

The six Breaths are Essences, Breaths, jin, ye, Blood and mai. Each of these six Breaths has its particular region of mastery, and they all have their relative positions which have different roles in the good or bad state of the organism.

So it is that the five cereals and the Stomach are the big Sea for all of this.

This is a way of saying that all that makes life in a person has its seed, its origin, its reserve in the Stomach and through the Stomach, not only the meridians, zang fu, and so on, but also these six Breaths.

Ling Shu Chapter 33

This expression to be a Sea is very clear in Ling Shu Chapter 33:

The Stomach is the Sea of liquids and cereals. Its point of action at a distance is above at the road of Breaths (qi jie, Stomach-30) and below at san li (Stomach-36).

The important point is that it is one of the four Seas, Brain (Sea of Marrow), tan zhong (Sea of Breaths), Stomach (Sea of Liquids and Cereals), and chong mai (Sea of Twelve Meridians or Sea of Blood). This is very interesting because chong mai and Stomach have two very close connections. In Ling Shu Chapter 33, chong mai is one time called the Sea of Twelve Meridians, and another time called the Sea of Blood, and in fact chong mai is the Sea of a lot of things! It is the Sea of the zang and fu, and the Stomach also is called the Sea of the five zang and six fu. You'll remember that the pathway of chong mai passes through the region of Stomach-30, rises up along the abdomen and doubles along the pathway of the Stomach meridian and the Kidney meridian. But the special function of chong mai is to be the Root of Anterior and Posterior Heaven, and of the Kidneys' and Stomach's functions.

You can see that the Stomach is the only viscera in this series of Four Seas, and it is really a fu, because it receives exterior food and begins to engage the process of transformation, digestion, assimilation and the extraction of Essences.

Ling Shu Chapter 60

For this reason we have other chapters, like Ling Shu Chapter 60, which say:

The Breaths that man receives are the cereals....

It's very clear - if you want to have Breaths you need some basis for the assimilation and transformation of food.

....and the place where the cereals pour out is the Stomach. The Stomach is the Sea of Breaths and Blood which come from liquids and cereals. The Breaths from the clouds which come from the seas are everywhere under Heaven.

We can see in that an explanation of the meaning of 'Sea'. It's a place for exchange between Heaven and Earth because from the sea evaporation can take place and the Breaths of Earth rise up to Heaven and form clouds, and afterwards the clouds will give rain, rain descends to the Earth and forms rivers and rivers return to the sea. Influx coming from the sea fulfils Heaven and Earth.

Claude Larre: Wind is also necessary because if it was just an exchange between sea and Heaven, ascending and descending, there would be no fertilization on Earth as such. And the sea? I would refer you to Lao Zi when they talk of the one hundred rivers which gently flow towards the sea. They use it in a political manner to say that tributary states have to report to them. Or they would say that in an analogical manner all the currents they are describing in the human body finally have to return to one of the Four Seas.

Elisabeth Rochat: In Ling Shu Chapter 60 it is interesting to see that the Stomach is named Sea of Breaths and Blood, of all vitality and all that circulates in the meridians. The end of this quotation is:

The Breaths and Blood which come out of the Stomach, these are the ditches.

The meaning of the word sui, ditches or trenches, is that a meridian is a circulation of Blood, of Breaths, and various qualities of Breaths such as nutritive and defensive. It's exactly the same as in a large town now, we have circulation by cables for electricity, phones, gas, water, heating and so on, and all these kinds of cables or threads are in a sort of ditch.

Claude Larre: Ditches are casements for putting in a series of different influxes. They cut the crust of the Earth, dig a sizeable place and make a casement, through which everything goes. So it's less a ditch as such, than the ditch and the work and the final result with everything going more or less in the same direction.

Elisabeth Rochat: There is a Chinese expression, ditches of meridians, which has the meaning of designating all kinds of circulation which take place through meridians, Breaths, Blood, nutrition, defence, and these ditches, these channels, are the great network of relations of the five zang and six fu. Or you can take the same sentence in the singular not the plural, this ditch is the great connecting network, the great lu for the five zang and six fu. It's impossible to decide with only the Chinese text whether we should use the singular or the plural form. We will see this later in Su Wen Chapter 18 when we discuss the great lu of the Stomach.

But now for some more quotations

The Stomach is the great granary, da cang, the great storehouse. The five orifices of the Stomach are the great and small doors of villages and hamlets.

This is a very strange formulation. The meaning is that the Stomach has five orifices which are under its responsibility - the pharynx, the cardia, the pyloric sphincter, the ileo-cecal valve and the

anus. This is important because we see from this that the mastership of the Stomach extends from the pharynx, the first entry point of food, to the anus, the exit point of food, passing through all articulations and passages between oesophagus and Stomach, between Stomach and Small Intestine, and between Small Intestine and Large Intestine, and finally between exterior and interior, and interior and exterior. As a result we have two points with a particular action for the Large and Small Intestine, Stomach-37 and -39.

Peter Firebrace: Stomach-37 and -39 are sometimes called Sea of Blood along with Bladder-11.

Elisabeth Rochat: We can find something about that in Ling Shu Chapter 33, the chapter on the Four Seas. If you remember, chong mai is called the Sea of Blood in this chapter, and the points for particular action on the Sea of Blood are Bladder-11 and Stomach-37 and -39. That might be the link in the text - but in this chapter it is in particular relationship with chong mai, it's not directly linked with Stomach, although we saw that Stomach and chong mai have a very strong relationship and perhaps chong mai is like an ancestor or a producer of what in a perfectly formed man, should be the function of the Stomach: chong mai is like a prefiguration of that.

In some texts, yang ming, the Stomach meridian, appears like a chief, important for headmastering all the meridians, or all the yang meridians.

Su Wen Chapter 34

Yang ming is the mai of the Stomach, and Stomach is the Sea of the six fu

Su Wen Chapter 44

Yang ming is the Sea of the five zang and six fu, it masters and waters the Ancestral Muscle, zong jin. Ancestral Muscle masters the bones that make a chain and it ensures the subtle mechanisms of all articulations and joints. It is a place of reunion and connection for all muscular forces in the body, and the commanding place for the muscles.

This is especially expressed in the attachment of all the muscles and bones which are so visible along the back in the vertebral column. The text continues:

Yang ming is the Sea of the five zang and six fu, and this yang ming masters and waters the Ancestral Muscle. Chong mai is the Sea of Meridians and it masters the irrigation and humidification of great and small valleys.

Chong mai makes a junction with yang ming in the region of the Ancestral Muscle. Yin and yang are gathered together and this gathering occurs in the region of qi jie, Street of Breaths, Stomach-30. But also this is the name given to a very important region which gives a good circulation of Breaths, and yang ming is the headmaster of this region.

All these regions and all these functions have a relationship of dependence with dai mai and a relationship of luo (connection) with du mai, and for this reason, if yang ming is empty then the Ancestral Muscle is loosened, and dai mai can no longer ensure good directing power. Consequently, the inferior members become impotent with flaccidity and can no longer be used. The importance of this is that the power of yang ming is necessary for all meridians and also for the extraordinary meridians, chong mai, dai mai, and du mai. It is also important for the whole movement of the body because yang ming masters and irrigates the zong jin, and this Ancestral Muscle is exactly like a point of gathering and mastering for all that is muscular in the body. It's necessary to have yang ming, to have movement, to have good articulation, to have good links between flesh and muscle and so on. I think this is the important point, that not only the twelve meridians but also the extraordinary meridians need yang ming.

Ancestral Muscle, zong jin.

Elisabeth Rochat: Zong jin is very interesting: it's the power inside the muscle, the connection between flesh and bones and the power for movement. It's not a muscle in the meaning of a muscular mass, it's the muscular power.

Claude Larre: It's the same question as Blood and animation. There is no real Blood without animation, and no real muscle without this zong jin.

Elisabeth Rochat: It's called ancestral, but what's the real meaning of an ancestor? An ancestor or the grandfather in a family is able to gather all the members together for special circumstances, for discussions or birthdays or special ceremonies. And sometimes this grandfather has some ideas on the state of the family or the right conduct of affairs and he can give direction. He has a kind of mastership of the family and he makes the spirit of the family. He forms the link between all members of the family because he's also the origin, all the sons come from him, so he is the one who gathers them together and commands or directs them, and also conducts worship to the family ancestors. This is the meaning of this ideogram zong. And zong jin is the Ancestral Muscle, but it's not exactly an accurate translation because muscle is not muscle and ancestor is not ancestor in this particular context. Zong jin is a very archaic mechanism of the body from which all expression of muscular power occurs in the organism. The best example of this muscular power is the penis with the phenomenon of erection, but it also occurs in every part of the body where a link, or tie between bones and flesh exists, or where there is articulation and movement.

Also, at the level of the brain, the Sea of Marrow, or more precisely in the area of the eyes and the ears, we have zong mai, and this place has for the mai this same effect of commanding and gathering; and in tan zhong, the Sea of Breaths, we have zong qi, ancestral Breaths and in this Sea of Breaths there is the power of gathering and commanding all the Breaths of the body; and of course zong jin has a relationship with chong mai and Stomach, the other two Seas.

Su Wen Chapter 18

Elisabeth Rochat: This chapter deals with the change and transformation of yin yang and the four seasons which have very important repercussions on the human body and particularly on the beating of the mai, the pulse.

Because of these repercussions, Chinese medicine differentiates four different sorts of pulses according to the four seasons. But beyond that, these four pulses, differentiated according to the four zang and the four seasons, are rooted in the Breaths of the Stomach.

The aspect that my pulse presents always has to be even and very supple, well harmonized and well-tempered. If in each aspect presented by the mai, the Breaths of the Stomach are too weak, it's a sign of disease, and if there are no longer any Breaths of Stomach it is a sign of death. For the mai, the Breaths of the Stomach are like a root.

The Great Luo of the Stomach, xu li

It is in this context that the presentation of the great luo of the Stomach appears. The first thing must be to ask what exactly is the meaning of luo? It's like a network, a connection, or a special relationship between two things or two functions which are not the same but which have exactly the same quality of Breaths, and which can be complementary. For example, this luo connection is specific to the relationship between a meridian and the viscera with which the meridian is in a couple, for instance, the Spleen meridian has a luo connection with the Stomach, and the Stomach meridian a luo connection with the Spleen.

Among the luo there are fifteen great luo. These great luo stem from the meridians which are the great directional pattern of circulation of Breaths and the guarantee of the good quality of each type of Breath, tai, shao or jue yin, and tai, shao or yang ming. The Great luo are special connections between two meridians which are in interplay in a biao li relationship because they are the two-fold aspect of one Element, for example Stomach and Spleen.

A luo is not only these things but also the function of connecting this quality of Breaths of meridians with a special part of the body. The luo of the Bladder is very short but the luo of the Heart Master, for example, is very long and very important. From the point nei guan (PC-6) it ensures relationship with the Triple Heater meridian, and also the relationship through the communication with the Heart, with all the internal viscera.

We can also see the ideogram luo in all circulations which are not meridian circulations. There are infinite branches or ramifications right up to the most superficial aspects of the body.

We also saw this ideogram luo when we studied the Heart as Master, xin bao luo, with the function of enveloping and protecting the Heart and ensuring connections and communications of the Spirit of the Heart with all the other aspects of the organism, in particular the zang.

The Stomach has a normal great luo, one of the fifteen great luo explained in Ling Shu Chapter 10. Of the fifteen, twelve are related to the twelve meridians, one to du mai, one to ren mai, and the fifteenth is the great luo of the Spleen, da bao, which means great envelope. The ideogram bao is the same as in xin bao luo - sometimes the radical changes but it is this same idea of an envelope. Da bao starts on the sides of the body, it anchors the two sides of the body and spreads out in the direction of

the ribs and the thorax. It is that which gathers together and envelopes, and which has the possibility of bringing together everything which is a network or communication, *luo*, and which is therefore able to link in with the internal *zang* through its connecting power. It's a kind of enveloping matrix which is at the level of the thorax and which develops from the exterior and penetrates into the interior. This is very interesting because we will see a completely different movement with *xu li*, the great *luo* of the Stomach.

The text of Su Wen Chapter 18 says:

The great luo of the Stomach, its name is xu li. It crosses through the diaphragm and takes a connecting relationship with the Lung. It comes out under the left breast. Its movement beats under the clothes. It is the Ancestral Breaths of the mai.

You can see that that great *luo* of the Stomach, in contrast to the great *luo* of the Spleen, *da bao*, is central in its position. It is not anchored on both sides but just springs out from the Middle Heater and passes through the middle of the diaphragm: the movement of very refined Breaths and Essences of the Middle Heater rising up, ascending to the Upper Heater. The movement is the contrary to the great *luo* of the Spleen which is rather like an external envelope penetrating to the intimate life, while this great *luo* of the Stomach begins in the more intimate depths, moving through the diaphragm coming to the level of the Sea of Breaths, *tan zhong*, and coming out under the left breast. So it leaves the central position and moves to the left. Why to the left? Simply because it's the place of the Heart. This *luo* is like the source of Ancestral Breaths, and the Ancestral Breaths activate the Breaths and give the beating movement to the Heart: it is the beating of the Heart which is this beating under the clothes. Through the beating of the Heart and the functioning of the Lung all Breaths are distributed through the circuit of the twelve meridians.

We saw previously the special relationship of the Stomach thanks to the great *luo*, *xu li*, with the Sea of Breaths and *zong qi*, the Ancestral Breaths, which are able to activate rhythmic circulation in the form of the circulation of the meridians, beating of the Heart and respiration. There is also a connection between the Middle and Upper Heaters, just as before there was a connection between the Middle and Lower Heaters with the Ancestral Muscle.

Before we go any further, let's take a look at the ideograms *xu li*, because they are so important. *Xu* is not an envelope, it is a void. I prefer this term void to empty. And *li* is an intimate structuration - though intimate structuration is not the exact translation. You will remember the name of the point *ren mai-11*, *jian li*. This is the same *li* ideogram, and *jian* has the meaning of to firmly establish something. Its location is just before the special point for the Stomach, *ren mai-12*, and this is perhaps the connection.

The Stomach is the great Sea for the five *zang* and the six *fu*, the great Sea for Blood and *qi*, the great Sea for cereals and liquids etc, so it is the place for the establishment of all renewal of the intimate structure of life. I think this is the meaning of the *li* ideogram, the construction of a very deep and intimate living relationship which is very well organized.

Claude Larre: It's difficult to isolate the meaning of li from xu or from jian because if you are describing an effect, this effect is in the median and there is no way to talk of the median except by talking of what makes the median - that is the two characters together. The difficulty is that we want two things at the same time, we want to understand what li is and we want to understand why they use this character. Because if they use this character it's because it's used in the median where life is establishing itself. So one may ask what do you really want? Do you want to know what li is or do you want to know what li is in that particular configuration? And then it is necessary to come back to jian or xu, because there is no meaning without them.

Elisabeth Rochat: Life, Breaths, assimilation, animation and distribution of influences can only appear through void, or voids, and perhaps this void is an allusion to the Heart? It's from the Stomach and the Middle Heater, and through the Sea of Breaths of the Upper Heater that these Breaths called Ancestral Breaths, zong qi, take form and allow the beating of the Heart, all of which is a manifestation that this man is alive and not dead. But the structuration, li, is coming from the Stomach. We can also say that the Centre or the central region has to be a void, in exactly the same manner as the wheel needs a void Centre in order to function.

Claude Larre: I would like to relate this to the Mawangdui Banner. We've recently been preparing a commentary on the banner based around the idea that if you cut the banner from top to bottom, there is an axis, and at this axis either it is revolving or it is void. So when Elisabeth is making a comparison between the necessity of the void in the Heart and the necessity of xu li which is connected with the Stomach, she is just saying the same thing. Whenever life has to be expressed with fullness in relation to two different points of view, one has to be this central sovereign quality of the whole authority of the Heart. In these two cases the configuration of the organization must be the same. If there is no void there is no circulation, if there is no circulation there is no life. In the banner it is the same because if the banner relates to the prayer of the people, it can't be done except through the void, because how can you circulate prayers, or how can you really pass from this world to the other world, or how could you be accepted there if there is not a place for this movement? So the representation of the banner has the same quality of central void as Lao Zi with the wheel.

Elisabeth Rochat: This void is also the only way to have a Centre for distribution, and an expression like "the crossroads of the four voids" appears in some classical philosophical texts. The idea is that only a void allows distribution in the four directions for communication. In the case of the Stomach it is at the level of the Sea of liquids and cereals, Blood and Breaths, twelve meridians, zang and fu, for the renewal of life.

Now, I just want to justify the reason why I said previously that perhaps the void was alluding to the Heart. If you look at the Kidney meridian points 23, 24 and 25, in the names of 23 and 25 you have shen, spirits, which are connected with the Heart, and the name of Kidney 24 is ling xu. Ling is spiritual influx and xu is the same as before, the void. Just add the radical of Earth and the meaning is like a place for a city, but the place of this city or void is obviously the Heart, because we are in the

place of the Heart and its function, and this point is just between two points with the name shen, spirits.

You can see that Breaths of the organism in the five zang need Breaths from the Stomach, and these Breaths of each of the five zang are gathered in the Sea of Breaths in the middle of the chest, and there is a special, direct relationship between Stomach and this Sea of Breaths thanks to the great lu of the Stomach, xu li. For this reason zong qi, Ancestral Breaths, are really the summation of all kinds of Breaths able to manage life in the organism, and when the text adds:

it is the Ancestral Breaths of the mai

The meaning is that the Ancestral Breaths are like a starting point of the circulation through the meridians, and it's also the Ancestral Breaths of the pulses. You know that the ideogram mai has this two-fold meaning, so when you take the pulses, you have to consider the state of the Breaths of the Stomach, and how they present in the particular pulse of each zang and fu. This is the meaning in Su Wen Chapter 18.

You can see this situation of the Ancestral Breaths more clearly with the participation of the Stomach in the middle of the chest, and through the beating of the Heart. This is the sign of life. Chapter 18 says:

When it overflows in fullness, whether there is panting, or whether it is frequent and interrupted, the illness is at the Centre, zhong. When it is knotted and transversal, there are accumulations, ji.

In this case transversal is the idea of going astray, or not in a good way.

If it is interrupted, jue, and no longer arrives, it is death. Under the breast its movement is echoed in the clothes: it is the Ancestral Breaths, zong qi, that flow out.

If the Ancestral Breaths are the summation of the Essences and Breaths that are necessary to live, it's evident that these kinds of Breaths must remain in circulation in the organism and never flow out. If they flow out there is a loss of vitality, and there's no more circulation in the mai. You can feel that on the pulses, and you can feel that simply through the beating of the Heart. The pulses are also the expression of the movement of the Heart, and the Heart masters the mai, with this two-fold meaning of network of animation and circulation of Breaths and Blood and pulses.

If you want an explanation of the pathological aspect of Ancestral Breaths we can say that when they overflow in fullness there is a very strong beating of the Heart. Sometimes we can have bad respiration and this is a sign that some perverse activity is taking place in the Ancestral Breaths and xu li. This word "panting" means bad respiration, but perhaps this kind of very strong beating of the Heart is also indicated in this particular case. When it's frequent, it's too fast, and it's a great and perverse intensity.

Intermittent means that sometimes there is an interruption, it's not an indefinite interruption, but it's a great irregularity in respiration, the beating of the pulses and the circulation of Blood and Breaths through the Heart. These illnesses are in the Centre. What is the meaning of this Centre?

Perhaps it is the Stomach? Perhaps it is the Centre of the chest, tan zhong? Perhaps it is the Heart? I think that the meaning of the Centre in this case is not well defined, but maybe it is just the intimate Centre of vitality, with a connection with the Stomach and the Ancestral Breaths, through Lung and Heart.

Claude Larre: It comes down to the same question we were talking about before, the internal and external not being on the same level. It is impossible to represent with actual location, the inner, but what is true of inner is also somewhat true of zhong. But there is a difference in whether this inner is in relation to something which is not itself in space and which is not said to be concentrated somewhere. When you say zhong, middle, it's necessarily inner, but it's more than inner, it's the space from where everything starts, from where directions are given, and it's a place where all my special powers are gathered under my ancestors' guidance, under Heaven's mandate and the gathering of all the Spirits. And the most special and extraordinary things that may come to me come to the Centre, the zhong.

Zong Qi and the Six Breaths

Question: I have a question from earlier which is not clear. Would you compare or contrast zong qi with the six Breaths?

Elisabeth Rochat: Zong qi, Ancestral Breaths, are a mechanism of all the Breaths which are renewed in and through the organism. You can call them Breaths of Posterior Heaven.

Claude Larre: Elisabeth is insisting on Posterior Heaven because there are other breaths, the yuan qi which are of Anterior Heaven. So if zong qi is ascribed to Posterior Heaven it's just because the true origin of life is the origin of the universe, which is necessarily called Anterior Heaven. It means that before anything can exist in me or elsewhere it is necessary to prepare this distinction between Heaven and Earth in the chaos.

If we say "before I myself existed" it is not the same. You can say that for myself there is a non-existing state, yuan qi, which is preserved in me after I am born. It is the same with embryology, which is still having an effect on my life after I am an adult. Now, after my birth, I am still governed by yuan qi, but this yuan qi in being contrasted with other qi, is contrasted first with zong qi. Then zong qi is understood to be the connective device to preserve the ancestral mind in myself and to make myself me, because yuan qi does not aim to conserve or preserve the characteristics of my personality. Yuan qi is the origin of my life, while zong qi is the specific origin of my life and this specification proceeds from the fact that I am a man, that I am a man of this time, from that lineage, and that I am this particular individual. All that comes under the rubric of zong qi. There is then no conflict between yuan qi and zong qi, but the point of view is not the same. And if the point of view is not the same you have a different character for it. But just because you have two different Chinese characters you are not supposed to make such a contrast that you think that they are opposite! They are contrasted but they are the same, it's the same reality, but it's not seen from the same angle.

Elisabeth Rochat: It is because zong qi is related to Posterior Heaven that the link between Stomach and zong qi is so strong, because the Stomach and Spleen are the root and trunk for posterior Heaven in the body.

Claude Larre: But Tim was asking about the relationship between zong qi and the six Breaths.

Elisabeth Rochat: The six Breaths are Essences, Breaths, jin, ye, Blood and mai. We can have three couples or three dual expressions: Essences/Breaths, jin ye, Blood/mai. Mai being the storehouse for Blood. You see that these six Breaths, or forms of life are everywhere. There are Essences everywhere in the body, Essences from Anterior Heaven and Posterior Heaven, and the patterns and mechanisms for the renewal of Breaths are all a kind of animation, an ascending and diffusing movement from the Centre to the periphery, bringing power, strength and warmth. Jin ye are exactly the same mechanism between the renewal of the matter of life and animation, but at the level of the bodily liquids, giving animation, circulation, nutrition, irrigation and watering in a diffusing movement. Blood and mai are the last couple. For this animation by the mai and for this red liquid full of life and the Spirit of the Heart, you need the work of the Spleen and Stomach. You know that through the richest and finest juices coming from the Spleen, rising up to the Lung and being offered to the Heart, Blood can be renewed. Why is there this dividing of the vitality of the body into six? Because six is the number for exchange and for maintenance in a very well defined space.

Claude Larre: The Chinese either take qi as the big mass of everything which we are concerned with for life, or they take it under the Heaven/Earth/ Man relationship, and this would necessarily come under the number six. Six is for relations. When you take one for one the relationship is not seen. It doesn't mean that there is no relationship but it is not explicit. The big problem in talking about acupuncture in English or French is whether we are ready to look at the same thing under different aspects or not. If we are ready we need a guide, and the guide will be that five is five and six is six, and five is not six and six is not five, except in cases where five is six and six is five! And what seems to be ridiculous is just that. We are ridiculous, it's not what I say that is ridiculous. We are ridiculous because we are asking Chinese people to force their minds and practice into our own model.

Elisabeth Rochat:

When it is knotted and transversal there are accumulations

A knot is a very irregular frequency. This kind of accumulation can be very varied. We can have accumulations in the area of the Heart or in the abdomen, or in the Stomach of the region of the diaphragm. We can have local mai with or without strength. For example, if we have a kind of sensation of pulsing or beating, irregular but with great strength, there is a blockage in the circulation. There are sometimes clottings, with the blockage taking a shape, because there is this perverse fullness. If the aspect is knotted and very weak it may be after a long illness with a great loss of liquids or Blood. Or if there is a powerful and strong emotion such as fear and the Spirits disperse

and are unable to gather again, you will have the impression of weakness and irregularity, because of the connection of the pulses and mai with the Heart, and through the Heart to the Spirits of the Heart. Sometimes when the Breaths of the Heart are damaged by one cause or another this can effect the proper movement through the zong qi and the activity of xu li, and there is an accumulation. Then there is no good activity from the Stomach and no good distribution to the zang and fu and to the Breaths and so on to renew Essences and vitality.

Under the breast its movement is echoed in the clothes.

When you can feel the beating of the Heart too much, it's a sign that the Ancestral Breaths are flowing out and no longer keeping within the Sea of Breaths, tan zhong. They are in a state of over-excitement, an over speeding up, and you know what happens with a horse or a machine in this state!

I think that this chapter is clear now; the connection of the Stomach and xu li with the Lung, Ancestral Breaths, respiration and distribution of influx through the Sea of Breaths, the beating of the Heart, and, of course, life and death.

Su Wen Chapter 19

The five zang receive the Breaths distributed from the Stomach. The Stomach is the root of the five zang.

This is an important point, the Breaths of the five zang cannot arrive by themselves at the tai yin of the hand. The meaning is that to arrive at the tai yin of the hand, where they can be felt on the radial pulse, they need the effect produced by the Breaths of the Stomach. Another way to say exactly the same thing is that it happens through xu li and the Breaths of the Stomach with its special ascending movement. The Breaths of the Stomach release the most subtle Essences for the renewal of life for the five zang and six fu, through meridians and through zong qi. It is through this that all the variety of Breaths, in particular of the five zang, can be felt on the radial pulse through the tai yin of the hand. The pulse is also the way by which you can see the equilibrium between yin and yang in the shape of Blood and Breaths, and the strength of circulation in the quality and quantity of this red liquid.

Ling Shu Chapter 56

Another thing is that from the Stomach not only zong qi but also nutritive and defensive Breaths are renewed. This is very clearly said in Ling Shu Chapter 56:

The Stomach is the Sea of the five zang and six fu, liquids and cereals all enter the Stomach. The five zang and six fu all receive the Breaths of the Stomach. The five Tastes each go to the place that pleases them. The cereals of which the taste is acid go by preference to the Liver, they are attracted by the Liver. Those of the bitter taste go to the Heart, those of sweet to the Spleen, those of acrid to the Lung, and those of salty to the Kidneys. The Breaths of the cereals and the jin ye that come from them circulate. The ying wei, the nutritive and defensive, or nutrition and defence, circulate freely everywhere. Then

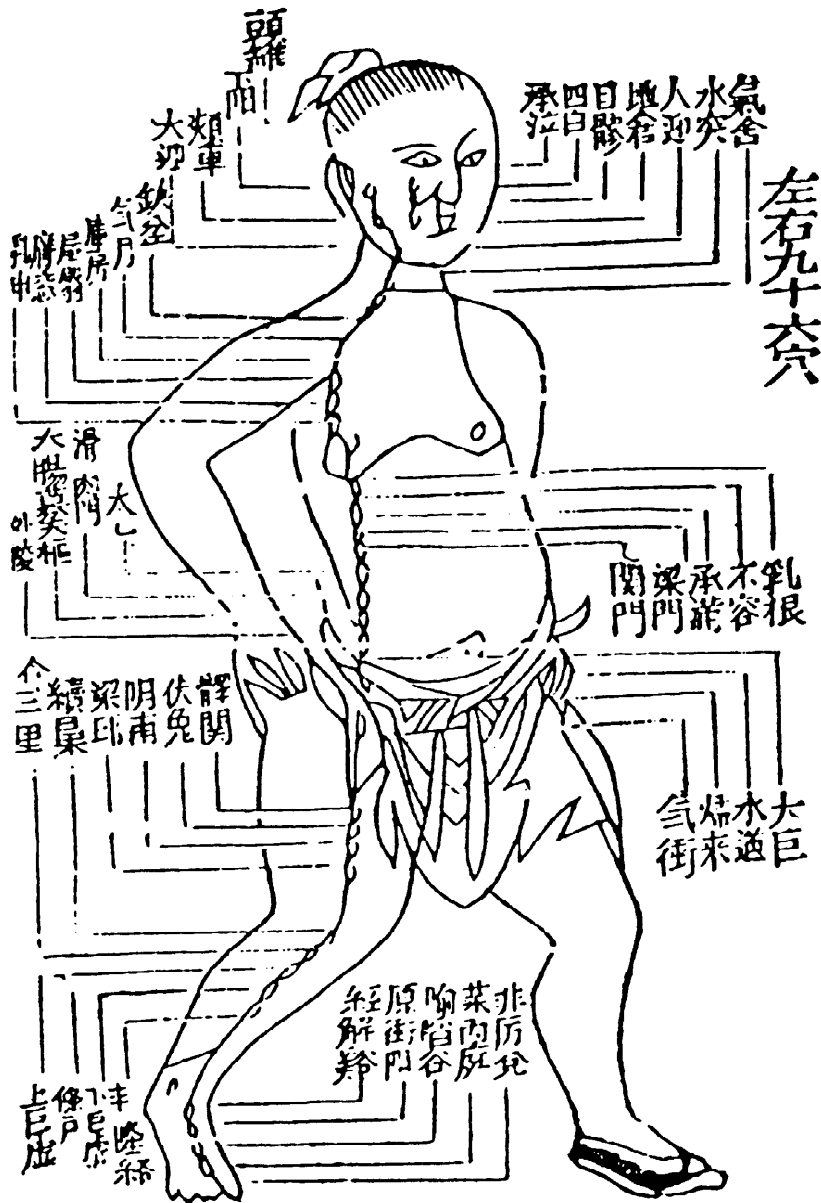
through transformation there are the residues and wastes which are directed as they must, below.

The important point is that the Stomach is really the turning point for the releasing of Breaths in the form of Ancestral Breaths, for the renewal of the zany in the form of the five Tastes, the bodily liquids, and defensive and nutritive Breaths, and finally, also in the form of the separation of the wastes and disposal.

Ling Shu Chapter 28

In Ling Shu Chapter 28 it is said that the eye and the ear are special places for the accumulation of the Ancestral mai, zong mai. It follows that when there is a great emptiness in the middle of the Stomach, then the zong mai are empty, and being empty, all flows downwards and the mai become like a spring that dries up. For this reason we have a kind of buzzing in the ear. We now have the final relationship with the zong activity in the body. We saw the relationship of the Stomach with the Ancestral Muscle, zong jin, with the Ancestral Breaths, zong qi, and now we have a text pointing out the relationship of the Stomach with the Ancestral mai, zong mai. We have covered the middle of the chest, the upper part of the abdomen, and now we are in this part of the head, with the brain involved too. Here it is not only an external ear, but an internal ear, and it's the same for the eyes. So why do the zong mai have a special relationship with this part of the body, not only with the Heart and the Sea of Breaths, but also with the eye and the ear, and with the finest Essences of the brain. The mai are an expression of radiance, the radiance which is the radiance of the Spirits through the Essences by the Heart or by the brain. It's the power of the Stomach shown in the rising up of the finest Breaths, and for this reason there is the pathway of the Stomach meridian on the head and connected with the orifices (see Ling Shu Chapter 62). This also shows why the pulse of the Stomach is so important, because it governs all this movement over the head.

足陽明胃經



The Zu Yang Ming Stomach Meridian,
from the Ling Shu Su Wen Jie Yao (Larre & Rochat, 1990).