

# The Lung: Chinese Medicine Classics II

An Instructive Discussion (from: Larre & Rochat, 1992a)

## SU WEN CHAPTER 8

### The Lung as Minister and Chancellor

*The Lung has the charge of Minister and Chancellor  
Thus is brought about the regulation of the relays for animation*

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In Su wen chapter 8 the Lung comes in second position just after the presentation of the Heart. The Heart is the Lord and Master and from him come all the radiance and illumination of the Spirits. Just after the Heart, the Lord and Sovereign, comes the Lung like a Minister and Chancellor, xiang fu. Fu doesn't exactly mean Chancellor but it's difficult to translate. The impression of xiang fu is of a person who helps his master. The Lung is situated in the upper part of the trunk just beside the Lord, the Heart, so the Lung protects, covers and envelopes the Heart. The Lung is very close to the Heart just as the Chancellor is very close to the Lord.

The result of having this charge of being Minister and Chancellor is that:

*thus is brought about the regulation of the relays for animation, zhi jie chu*

The regulation is the ideogram zhi, it is a way of governing. The same ideogram is used for to treat or to cure, or to know how to manage a situation. In the case of a government you have to know how to govern the country, in the case of a body you have to know how to conduct your life or how to cure the vitality in another individual. These seem different meanings in our vocabulary, but in reality they are the same thing. The ideogram jie means relays, it has the bamboo radical (no. 118). In this image all the relays of and for animation are found because animation always proceeds and progresses by relays. Relays are just different stages, and life or vitality proceeds by stages, never by a straight line. Animation needs relays just as bamboo needs knots in its structure. All life is articulations, articulations between yin and yang, between the Five Elements or between the twelve meridians. In special contexts jie can also mean acupuncture points because these can be seen as articulations in the animation. Articulations can be the stages of development in the Breaths of the life of man, and as acupuncture points these are the relays of animation and the stages of circulation of each quality of Breaths.

How and why is the Lung Minister and Chancellor? How and why can he regulate all these relays of animation? He stands beside the Heart, and he masters Breaths. In mastering the Breaths he can propagate and diffuse all kinds of yin and yang Breaths and send them into circulation right up to the skin and body hair. You know that from the Upper Heater and the Sea of Breaths in the middle of the chest, nutritive and defensive Breaths are sent everywhere in the body. Classical commentaries emphasize the fact that it is through the Lung that yin and yang Breaths are sent forth and mastered. Another aspect of this is that because the Lung masters the Breaths and each morning receives the

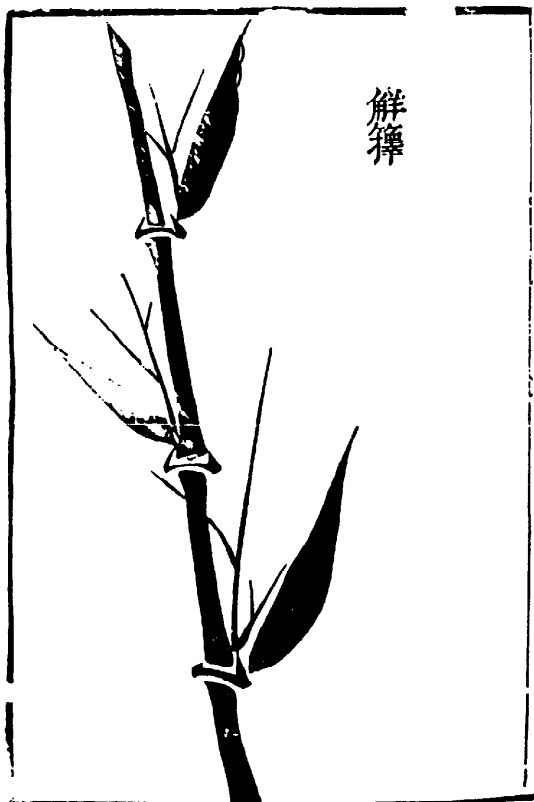
carriers of the network of animation, all the mo or mai, at the Court Audience, it can regulate them and put them in good balance again. And the regulation by the Lung is through all the relays of animation.

Another thing is respiration, either by the nose or by the skin, which is the rhythm of good circulation given to the Breaths of the body. This is due to the Lung.

And also, when the Heart is acting as the Master of Blood and the whole network of animation, he is acting in a couple with the Lung which is mastering Breaths. The circulation and compenetration of Blood and Breaths all takes place between Heart and Lung. It's like a country which is well governed by a Lord and his Prime Minister who have a good understanding.

*Claude Larre:* I would just like to make some sort of correlation between what was said yesterday and what has been said today. When we talked of Su wen chapter 2 it was just to show the balance of yin and yang, because chapter 2 is about that. It describes how the qi of a man follows the sway of yin and yang in nature. In chapter 5 we saw that the organization of life was the topic, and that organization has to be made by Five. Now in chapter 8 it's no longer a question of the organization of the Lung as such, the chapter asks how all that plays its role in the government of life. All the terminology is based on the analogy of the government of a state, so in first place some lordship has to be present to control everything. But the more you control the less you are visibly acting, because the more you interfere the less things go as they should go! If you let things go through, there will be no control over the activity of the government, so there must be a Prime Minister somewhere in order to carry out the will and to bear the responsibility of the head of state. This is the role of the Lung as Prime Minister and Chancellor.

The difference we are making between Prime Minister and Chancellor is very refined, and is taken from the Chinese text. If we say Prime Minister we are insisting that he is the head of all the other ministers, while if we say Chancellor we are talking of administration at large. Every order or nomination given has to be stamped by some authority so that the subjects can recognize that this pertains to the life of the country, or in the case of the Lung, the life of the body. The Lung needs to be close to the Heart in order to represent the active part of the Heart.



節

Jie,  
knots or relays

**Jie, relays for animation, as illustrated in the bamboo**

As far as the question of knots or relays, jie, is concerned, I would say that it is quite normal for there to be regular moves in life if man is just a result of the activity of Heaven and Earth. The regular moves are a rhythm, and we know that the tian yun, the large circulations of the influence of Heaven which make life in the universe, have a corresponding factor in our own life. We know that if there is a rhythm in the virtue of Heaven, the same rhythm and virtue is exerting itself in our own life. But Heaven itself does not take care of the rhythm in us because it is so high and powerful, instead his deputy and Minister the Lung does. The Lung makes the will of Heaven consistent in our own bodily life. So if the jie are seen more as bony articulations it's just because Heaven is expressing its own presence through Earth, and our earthly aspect is more in the direction of visible flesh and bones. But it takes the same Breaths to make bones or flesh or tissues or to make the body go through some rhythm. You see more if it is bones or flesh and you see less if it is respiration, but behind it all is the fact that the virtue of Heaven has to express itself. In itself the virtue of Heaven is not visible, but we are here in order to make it visible. This is why they use jie to refer to the twenty four different articulations in the calendar's weather, and why they do the same thing for the rhythm of life. Articulations also have to be in certain places, so if there are places then perhaps they may also be touched by a needle!

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Father Larre just mentioned the use of jie as being like an articulation of time or weather. During the year there are twenty-four divisions of time which are called the knots of Breaths, jie qi, or climatic periods. Each one is fifteen days. The meaning of this is that time, like everything else, is a quality of Breaths, and each fifteen days the quality changes in a perceptible way. Fifteen is

five multiplied by three, five is a small number of days perhaps related to the Five Elements, and three is the number of Breaths. In five days you couldn't really feel the difference, but in fifteen days you can feel something different. The twenty-four periods in the year were the rhythm of social life because each period had a name which indicated the rhythm of the labourer in the fields, and all the feasts.

Classical Chinese texts just after the Nei jing said that the Lung had twentyfour 'holes', or hollows, or perhaps the alveoli. The ideogram is kong, which is something like a void. The Lung ensures and sums up all the articulations of Breaths in space and time, and if they are able to do that their internal structure must reflect that. It's impossible in the Chinese mind that a thing can have a function and not be the natural structure for that function. If the Lung is able to master and regulate all the relays of animation in space and time it must therefore have twenty-four holes or voids in its structure to show that.

Certain texts more recent than the Nei jing but prior to the 19th century say that the Lung is the first bodily structure to be finished because when a baby is born he is able to cry and breathe. Lung is also said to be like the trunk of life for man. In one particular text it then says that the Liver comes next when the baby opens its eyes, then the Spleen is finished completely when the baby is able to eat, and the Heart when the baby is able to laugh and speak, giving out noises which are not just cries, and the Kidneys when the baby can stand up firmly. And man is completely finished when he reaches his normal height and has his wisdom teeth. In the same text it says that at the end of life the Lung is the last to wear out because if the Breaths are not interrupted and respiration continues you are not dead. But all this is not in the oldest texts!

This function of the Lung as a Minister and helper to the Heart can also be seen in Ling shu chapter 36.

---

## OTHER NEI JING TEXTS

### Su Wen Chapter 9

*The Lung, it is the trunk in which the Breaths are rooted*  
*The place of the po*  
*It's flourishing aspect is in the body hair*  
*The power of its fullness is in the skin*  
*It is the tai yin within the yang*  
*It is in free communication with the Breaths of Autumn*

*Elisabeth Rochat:* We can see several different aspects here. First of all the Lung in relationship with Breaths, with the po, and with the skin, and afterwards their relationship with Heaven and the clear Breaths of Heaven and the movement of expansion.

Su wen chapter 62 says:

*The Lung thesaurizes Breaths.*

Ling shu chapter 8 says the same thing. In Su wen chapter 9 each of the five zang are presented as a trunk of vital elements in the human body. The Heart goes first which is like the trunk of life itself. Next comes the Lung which is like:

*the trunk in which the Breaths are rooted, ben.*

Then follows the Kidneys which are like the trunk of all kinds of thesaurization, hibernation and so on, and the Liver which is like the trunk from which activity can stop. Finally comes the Spleen along with the five fu for transformation, which is like the trunk for all kinds of granaries, barns etc. So you can see the Heart and Lung are in a special position with a special function for each. This means that all the Breaths in the body coming from every activity and each zang and fu are under the overlord Lung, which gives to them all that is essential for life, ea. a good rhythm, regulation and the relays of animation. The Lung gives all Breaths the possibility to express themselves in a good way.

## The Po

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The Lung is the place, chu, of the po.

It's a place from which the po can disperse their activity. We saw the po in Ling shu chapter 8 where they are linked with the Lung.

*Claude Larre:* When we say 'place' we have to remember that the Lung is an active facet of life, so if there is a place there must be a special power because in Chinese you never talk of a place without talking of the power related to that place. A place is therefore a place from which you can do something. So just as the place of the Heart is related to the shen so the Lung is related to the po. But the way these two things are presented is not exactly the same because the character used to describe the relation of Heart to shen is bian, change, because we know that shen are free to come and go and have a more airy movement. The po do not change, they are related to Earth while the shen are related to Heaven.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In the ideogram for po on the left side there is the colour white, bai. The other part is a Spirit of Earth, gui. Shen are Spirits of Heaven and these gui are Spirits of Earth. Hun and po both have this radical 194. In hun it is linked with the image of clouds, which are just the gathering in Heaven of the vapour rising up from Earth. In po it is linked with this white, the colour of sunset. po are linked with a descending movement and with Essences. In human life the po have all vital movement, perception and instinctive movement under their authority. But since the Lung thesaurizes Breaths, why are they also linked with the Essences and downward movement, all contrary things to Breaths, via these Spirits? And why are the hun which are exactly like Breaths in their expanding and rising up etc linked with the Liver which thesaurizes Blood. The answer is always the

same, if you want to have compenetration you have to make that compenetration between two complimentary things not two similar things. So if the Lung thesaurizes and masters Breaths it's necessary that the po be linked with them because they can form a couple. The po, linked with Essences, can grasp and be grasped by Breaths.

*Question:* You said po are linked with Essences, could you say something more about that?

*Elizabeth Rochat:* It's according to the Ling shu chapter 8 where there is a definition of jing, shen, hun and po. The definition of hun is that they can come and go with the shen and the definition of the po is that they go out and come in again in association with the jing. In all old Chinese texts we find hun in association with Spirits and po with Essences. Sometimes we can see that hun are like the soul of Breaths and po are like the soul of Essences, or hun like the yang aspect of Spirits and po like the yin aspect.

In the sentence where the po:

***go out and come in in association with the Essences***

we find once again the idea of the rhythm of life. The ideograms to go out, chu, and to come in ru, are vast in their meanings. The first going out is birth and the last coming in is death, it's just an appearance and disappearance with a form, a shape and a body in between forming individual life. Another possible meaning could be respiration, because in that process air is coming in and going out, and it's linked with the Lung. There is also the input of food and the expelling of waste. We can also have in mind the infinite number of coming ins and going outs through the pores, and all the interactions of Breaths. All reactions, especially instinctive reactions, are under the authority of the po.

In this coming in and going out there is not much freedom, it's very strict. Respiration, birth and death and all kinds of reaction are not the expression of someone's freedom. The important thing in goings out and comings in at every level is the grasping of elements of vitality in the form of Essences, for example through respiration, or digestion or through the whole grasping of perception. The natural relationship of po is with the movement of association, for the hun it is the movement of following. The hun follow the Spirits and the po are in association with the Essences. The Essences are the expression of the power of descending and concentration and Earth. After death the Essences are no longer linked with the Breaths and are free to follow their own natural movement, so they return to the lower part and to Earth, in particular through the lower orifices. Spirits, especially the po, need doors to go out of, even if they are very fine and subtle doors. Pores are doors and orifices are doors, and even your Heart is a door, although it is not a material one. The door of the po is the anus, and throughout your life the po pass through that door in the form of waste. An ideogram for waste is made up with white and a grain of cereal. When you eat, all the vitality that you can grasp, digest and incorporate into your being is the jing, the Essences, and all the other part, which is waste, goes out of you by the anus. This is the descending part of alimentation. In death there is only the separation of elements which in compenetration made life, the knot of life is untied, and the po return to Earth.

*Question:* In relation to chapter 9 what is the significance of number 9?

*Claude Larre:* It's still a question for me! But I hope next year to be able to give you my interpretation. Usually if nine comes after eight it proves that nine is the expression of a more complex activity than what is said in eight. So, because eight and nine are quite far from the beginning, but quite near when compared with eighty-one, it proves that in presenting life and the interconnection of the different elements we have been distinguishing, eight and nine are very close to each other, but perhaps we see more how eight is made when we see nine. One chapter usually relies on the preceding chapter if the series of chapters is taken at the small numbers, from about one to twelve. That would not be true for the others because it's too complicated to enter the field of interpretation. But it would be valuable to register all the information given in chapter 9 about Lung and Liver and so on, because some words would be the same and some would be different and this would give the specificity of one zang in relation to another. If the same Chinese word is used for different things this tells us something. The text is so precise that when it is different there is a meaning and when it is similar it proves that the things are on the same level.

Coming back to the question of roots, as in chapter 9:

***The Lung is the trunk in which the Breaths are rooted.***

When we say rooted, if in our mind it's just the place where things are, it's not enough. The meaning of teen is to be attached to the place where things are made. Something is said to be rooted exactly where it stems from, so just as in gardening, you must take care of the roots above everything.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Continuing Su wen chapter 9:

***Its flourishing aspect is in the body hair, the power of its fullness is in the skin.***

We saw that yesterday, that the expression of the fullness of the power of the Lung, through the Breaths and circulation is perceptible through the good state of the skin and good defence at that level. This is an easy connection with the defensive Breaths which are passed into circulation through the impulse of the Lung, even if they are coming from the Lower Heater and ascending through the Middle Heater to reach the Upper Heater. The nutritive Breaths also circulate in the meridians through the impulse of the Lung, and tai yin, the Lung Meridian, opens the circulation of the twelve meridians. Also, it's particularly through yang Breaths, and to a lesser extent, defensive Breaths, that the Lung can give a good rhythm to the opening and closing which takes place at the level of the skin.

It is the tai yin within the yang. This is the maximum power of yin, so why isn't it connected with Winter and the Kidneys? I think it is because tai yin is the yin which can show magnificent effects, in the shape of fruits and harvest, of the produce of the Earth, so in this way it's the Autumn and the zang linked with Autumn which can be a tai yin more than the zang linked with Winter which is the imperceptible power of life through yin just showing the separation and the bareness. Winter is the yin

in its shao aspect, while from this perspective Autumn is the yin in its magnificence. But in other non-medical texts such as the Book of Changes you find Autumn as the beginning of yin in shao yin, and tai yin as the maximum yin power in Winter. According to commentaries, when the text says:

*It is the tai yin within the yang,*

the yang is referring to the part of the trunk above the diaphragm, which is the yang part and houses the Heart and Lung. Chapter 9 also calls the Heart the tai yang within the yang.

*It is in free communication with the Breaths of Autumn.*

We saw this yesterday, that the same quality of Breaths and movement of Autumn can be found in Man in the Lung. Actually, we should say that the same quality of Breaths and movement of Autumn are the Lung in Man, because there is no Lung if there isn't this movement and quality of Breaths.

*Claude Larre:* The invisible function is always more telling than the physical anatomy of an organ. The primary conception of the text is the function, and that is why they talk of tai yin etc. If they are talking of the yin and yang aspects it proves they are more concerned with the way that life is functioning, and only after that comes a consideration of the physical, objective, sensible, concrete reality which you can cut out and replace. It is the void, kong, the invisible and the yin and yang aspects which are the concern of the text. So once again we have to warn people not to start from their pre-conceived ideas of what a Heart or Lung is and then try to fix that from the text, we must just follow what is given.

## **Su Wen Chapter 10**

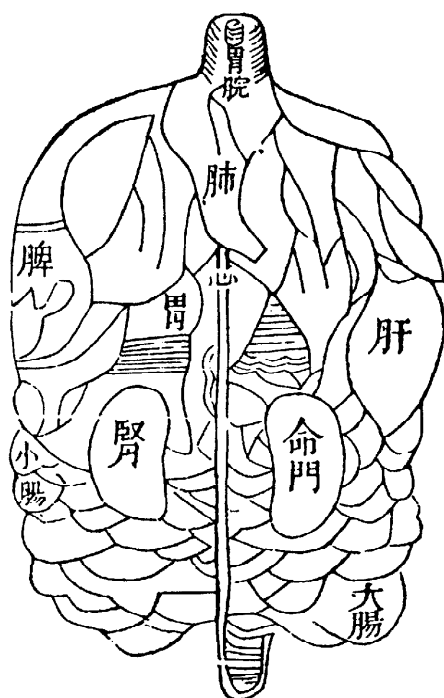
*Elizabeth Rochat:* We must interpret Su wen chapter 10 in the same way:

*The Lung, its reunion, is in the skin.*

The meaning of that is that the movement which is the Lung inside the body, is the skin on the exterior of the body at the level of the materialized structure of the body. For this reason the skin and the Lung are interlinked by this he, this conjunction of Breaths. So if this movement of life is disturbed at the level of the skin there can easily be a reaction at the level of the Lung because they are an harmonic.

## Ling Shu Chapter 29, Su Wen Chapter 46

### The Lung as a Canopy



**The Lung as a Canopy,  
from Lingshu Suwen Jieyao**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In various chapters of the Nei jing the Lung is said to be like a roof or canopy for the Heart and the other zang and fu, for example in Ling shu chapter 29 it says:

*The Lung is like a canopy for the five zang and the six fu*

and in Su wen chapter 46 it says:

*The Lung is a canopy for the zang.*

Consequently when the Breaths of the Lung are increasing their power all the network of animation is great and large, but if the Breaths of the Lung are too strong and powerful then the network of animation and therefore the pulses are too strong too, and the man is unable to lie down quietly. The meaning is that if the Lung is like a canopy, a roof or an Heaven, it has to be very regular, and with good rhythm, and if the Breaths are too powerful they act like a countercurrent because they go too strongly, are excessive and rise up too much, so you find the rhythm of animation is disturbed and the man will be panting.

What is a canopy? It's not simply a roof or a little piece of tissue or material over a bed or a throne, or something like an umbrella extended over an important person. This kind of canopy has to attract good influx from the heights, and to transmit that to the man below. In this case, if the Lung is called a canopy for the Heart and the other zang and fu, it is because it is in charge of attracting the influence of Heaven and translating it to the others, particularly through the network of animation, Essences, Breaths and so on. Therefore if the natural current is too strong or too weak through excess or deficiency of power, there will be a general malaise as exemplified in Su wen chapter 46.

## Su Wen Chapter 44

### The Lung as Leader

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In Su wen chapter 44 there is another presentation:

*The Lung is called the leader of the zang.*

The leader here doesn't mean the same as it does when we say the Heart is the Lord and Sovereign, the leader is just the one who is at the head or the front of the march. This chapter speaks about illnesses connected with the wei syndrome. The wei syndrome can attack each zang but generally speaking it is under the mastership of the Lung because this kind of impotence can cause lessening in the distribution of the Lung and in particular of the liquid of the Lung and the liquids in all parts of the body by means of the impulse of Breaths. If the Lung receives any kind of dryness or warmth it burns and is unable to distribute, or participate in the distribution of Breaths or the liquids which are carried by Breaths to the four limbs.

*Claude Larre:* A good analogy is the abbot in a temple. The temple has several buildings, with the rear part higher than the others and having a roof with a sort of canopy featuring a couple of dragons perhaps, and with a courtyard inside, a yuan. The abbot who presides over all this complex is the yuan zhang, he's the principal, and his authority is exerted for the good of all the people who are inside. He has the position of elder among the others who are brothers, he leads the way.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* We have another quotation in Su wen chapter 18 which asks what is really authentic in the thesaurization, or the power of the zang? It says that when thesaurization is made in the highest position it is made through the Lung, and it causes defensive and nutritive Breaths to circulate, and yin and yang. This means that inside the body through the five zang or through the five ways to actively store Essences, we see the releasing of Breaths at the heart of life.

For the Heart there is the possibility of being in free communication, for the Spleen it's the possibility to make good irrigation, and for the Lung it is to ensure the highest position, ie to be in the heights like the Breaths of Heaven, and to be the highest among the zang. The purpose of this is to make defensive and nutritive Breaths circulate well, because in the highest position the Lung has the quality of the Breaths of Heaven which make things circulate. The Lung has the charge of being Minister and Chancellor, and the Minister and Chancellor can establish and maintain harmony between all parts of the country or organism, and can propagate Breaths and the will of the Lord and Sovereign through Breaths. Here we have a connection with the Sea of Breaths, which is not the Lung but is connected because the location is between the two Lungs. The ancient texts say that the Lung is just a single zang but since the Nan jing they also say that it is divided in two parts.

### The Lung and the Breaths

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In the last part of Su wen chapter 5 different qualities of Breaths are placed in connection with zang and fu, and for the Lung it says that the Breaths of Heaven are in free communication with or through it. The Breaths of Heaven are clear, qing, and the Breaths of the Lung

have to be clear and fresh, as said in Su wen chapter 2, for instance. It also says that the Lung, being like a roof or canopy, is also like an Heaven for the other zang and fu. In old texts of around the 6th and 7th century the Lung is referred to as the Heaven within the body. So if the Lung are a canopy, a leader and an Heaven, they have exactly the same movement as Heaven itself, ie, to distribute influx, to put into movement, to give impulse to circulation and propagation, and also to make rain descend to Earth. All these functions are found within the Lung itself in its movement of expansion, diffusion and distribution of influx not only to the skin but to the zang end fu and the Heart. And at the same time the Lung causes liquids to descend.

The connection with Heaven is well explained and expounded in Ling shu chapter 78, which is a chapter where the meaning of each number is given in accordance with medical theory and the parts of the human body. At the beginning is 1, which is Heaven, and Heaven is yang, and among the zang it is the Lung which corresponds with Heaven because the Lung is the canopy of the five zang and six fu. Skin is in reunion, he, with the Lung, and the skin is the yang part of man because it is at the surface and exterior.

In Ling shu chapter 40 you can find differentiated all that is clear and unclear in the human body. The clear Breaths come to the Lung through the Breaths of respiration, which are clear in contrast to the Breaths of alimentation. Clear, qing, and unclear, zhuo, never designate anything precise but only a movement, or a tendency. It's exactly like yin or yang, they are always and only understandable in context, and with respiration and alimentation one is clear and one is unclear in reference to each other. But in another context some parts of alimentation are clear and some are unclear. For example, the Essences which are extracted at the level of the Middle Heater and which can be incorporated by the person are clear, and they can rise up to the Upper Heater. And the five zang receive Essences in the shape of the five tastes which they work on to release Breaths which eventually all return to the Lung. You also know that the junction of the clear from respiration and the clear from alimentation at the level of the Upper Heater is the Sea of Breaths and the Ancestral Breaths, zong qi. Zong qi has a very special function for respiration because it is through its activity that man can inhale and exhale.

宗氣

Zong Qi

Another characteristic of clear Breaths is that they have a special affinity with all voids, holes and orifices, which brings us back to the structure of the Lung and the orifices on the skin and the whole rhythm of opening and closing. From this perspective, therefore, the Lung are allowed to receive all that is clear, both directly from Heaven and from alimentation. The circulation through the meridians, the beating of the Heart and the movement of respiration depend on this. We can also mention at this point the special trajectory of xu li, the great luo of the Stomach because it is a connection between the

diaphragm and the Upper Heater where it passes through the Lung like a network of ramifications and branching in order to distribute influx. Afterwards it goes out under the left breast, which is the beating of the Heart.

In order to finish looking at the connection of the Lung with all kinds of Breaths there is a quotation from Ling shu chapter 56.

***Cereals come into the Stomach, and afterwards there is jing wei.***

This is the intermediate state of the Essences which compose the alimentation and the Essences which compose our life. Food has to be decomposed in order to become the pattern of our own vitality, but the decomposition must not injure the vitality of the Essences. After the decomposition the Essences can be recomposed through the zang and the special activity of the Kidneys. The quotation continues:

***The jing wei first springs out at the Middle and Upper Heaters in order to water the five zang. This springing out is made in two ways, by nutrition and defence.***

Through this you can see the movement of communication of the most subtle Essences of alimentation with the Middle and Upper Heaters, and then the differentiation of the two circulations of nutrition and defence. The Middle Heater gives the elements of composition realized in nutritive and defensive Breaths, the Upper Heater gives the movement of propagation and distribution.

***The great Breath beating and accumulating in the middle of the chest are called the Sea of Breaths, and they go and spread out through the Lung, and afterwards they follow the pharynx.***

This shows the connection of these great Breaths, which are the Ancestral Breaths, with the Lung. It's through the activity of the Lung that the connection of the Essences of alimentation and respiration can be in activity everywhere in the body giving the movement of life. So if the zong qi is responsible for the going out and coming in of respiration and for the beating of the Heart, then we can see again this idea of rhythm everywhere.

In Ling shu chapter 62 it says:

***The Breaths of Stomach rise and flow out to the Lung, and afterwards they go to the orifices of the head, the face and the brain.***

So there is no circulation of the Breaths of the Middle Heater if not by the force of the Lung.

You can see the relationship of the Lung with defensive Breaths at the level of the skin and body hair, which ensure warmth and good irrigation of the superficial flesh and skin amongst other aspects. The circulation of nutritive Breaths also begins through the Lung meridian, and afterwards goes through the twelve meridians and du mai and ren mai before returning to the middle of the Lung from where it goes into the body with the tai yin and the yang ming.

Wei Qi

衛氣

Wei Qi

營氣

Ying Qi

*Question:* When you said that in Ling shu chapter 62 the Breaths of the Stomach rise up to the Lung, was that referring to the relation of the nutrition with ying qi, because usually it's the Spleen energy which is said to rise up?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In this case it's in relation to wei qi, defensive Breaths, because it's to do with this movement of rising up and threading through. Tai yin is also first in the circulation of nutritive Breaths, and Ling shu chapter 18 says that tai yin masters the internal, because the nutritive Breaths, which first go to tai yin are for the maintenance of the interior.

*Question:* Are the texts clear about the specific pathways of wei qi, or do they just say it's more superficial in the day time and deeper at night?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Well, when you first wake you do not have enough sensation to perceive a little thing, but when you are wide awake you have all the subtlety of perception, and all this is in relation to the defensive Breaths.

*Claude Larre:* To be defensive you have to be on the alert, and to be on the alert you have to use all your senses, and to do that you have to have enough qi.

*Question:* But if the wei qi flows deeper into the zang at night that does not seem very defensive!

*Claude Larre:* That's the reason why you lock your house, you lock your door, and you lock yourself in your bed and close your eyes. Then, if you feel protected, you sleep. It's a question of Heart, because if you feel safe the guard can come inside the palace, but if you feel the enemy is outside even if it is night you put sentries on the walls and guards everywhere.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* It's part of the function of wei qi to conserve the well-balanced equilibrium between the zang, so it's not just the role of nutrition to support this. Defence and nutrition are not really separable.

---

## 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 luo 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.

---