

# THE KIDNEYS: in the Chinese Medicine Classics

An Instructive Discussion (from Larre & Rochat, 1992, *The Kidneys*)

## THE CHARACTER FOR THE KIDNEYS, SHEN



### Shen, The Kidneys

*Claude Larre:* The character for Kidneys is shen. The part below is radical 130, flesh or part of the body, which is used in the characters for all the twelve organs except for the Heart which being master is not a part of the body, and the Triple Heater which evades all the organistic structures. The upper part on the left hand side is the slave, but because the Chinese used to select those with ability amongst the slaves for use at court it also means an official or a minister who is in a prostrate position (i.e. bowing) before the king. (See Wieger Lesson 82E) The right hand section of the upper part is the right hand itself. The hand here takes the place of the king because the one who has power is the one who is able to make gestures and to draw people along like animals, by the hand. The fact that the slave/minister and the lord are facing each other is a ritual, because the lord faces the South and the minister must therefore face North.

We know the difference [between having power as a king, wang, as a sovereign, jun, which implies calmness and stillness, and as a master, zhu. A master is close to affairs, oversees the servants and expresses a direct power, which is not the case with wang. The king, wang, is higher than the master, because in every household there is always a master but not necessarily a king. So let's be very strict in our use of the English language in relation to the Chinese, and make a distinction between the Emperor, di, who is exalted and nearly the Emperor of Heaven, and the king, wang, who has the power to let people feel that he has the power! And the closer you come to the action, the closer you come to the master, zhu. As for the names of sovereign and prince, we may use them

rather freely because a sovereign could be both a king and an emperor at the same time, and a prince can just imply a gentleman. In Chinese classics the Confucianist or moralist type is referred to as jun zi, which indicates their quality of heart. The expression is more often used in Confucianist than Daoist texts because the Confucianists wanted to teach social and moral attitudes and the Daoists wanted to teach authenticity.

We will be relying on the ideograms of the Kidneys in order to understand their use in life's process. Each of the characters for Lung or Kidneys or whatever is the exact character which the Chinese want to use because there is something fundamental in the ideogram which indicates the depth of function. This is why we always emphasize looking at the ideograms, to impress upon you the differences between the organs and meridians according to the way they are presented in Chinese calligraphy.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* As Father Larre says, part of the character for Kidneys is the presentation of the slave or minister in a position of respect and deference. The minister is prostrate before the master. Adding the right hand gives the idea of somebody who is able to have hold of all men. The upper half of the character gives the idea of holding something very firmly, and is the phonetic. If we add different radicals below, the radicals can indicate in which field of knowledge or reality we are. For instance, with the part of the body it becomes the Kidneys, but if you add the earth radical you get the idea of something very firm and solid, something very durable. With the silk thread radical it's the idea of something important because it's urgent, and it's urgent because it's tightened and squeezed, so the meaning of this ideogram is to bind tightly. If you add the radical meaning a standing position you get the idea of something upright, or to erect vertically and firmly. With another kind of hand, meaning hand in a general sense, not specifically right or left, it means to hold. Lastly, if you add the cowrie shell, which is something very precious like money or treasure, the meaning of the whole ideogram is the sage, the wise man, the expert: a good man full of experience, virtue and knowledge. All this is a first approach to the Kidneys. But what are the Kidneys in the body? The answer is that they are the same thing as the character and radicals, because they are firm, solid and durable, and they are urgent and important because bound tightly as we saw with the silk thread radical. There are these notions of holding firmly, of being able to stand upright, and having all the wisdom which is necessary to hold the important things of life. In the human body the Kidneys are able to hold all the valuable things of life and make a firm foundation for life so man can stand upright.



Paying respects to the Master.  
Han Dynasty rubbing.

# SU WEN CHAPTER 1

## The Way of Heaven

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In the first chapter of the Su Wen the subject is celestial authenticity and how to reach this authenticity which is Nature within each of us. In this chapter there is no mention of zang and fu and so on, we are just on the level where life is given and how we should behave in order to live this life fully and reach a certain longevity. Afterwards it speaks of how with this life and vitality a man is able to make another life, because I think the main characteristic of life is to give life and to make another life. Life is a continuous movement of renewal. In Chapter 1 only two zang appear: the Heart, not as just one of the five zang but as the dwelling place of Spirits and the Master of the spiritual life in each individual, and the Kidneys as the source of life. The quotation says:

*Woman at seven years, the Breaths of the Kidneys rise in power, the teeth are renewed, the hair grows.*

*At two times seven years, fertility arrives, ren mai functions fully while the powerful chong mai rises in power; the menses flow downward in their time and she has children.*

*At three times seven years, the Breaths of the Kidneys spread out, then the wisdom teeth grow vigorously.*

*At four times seven years, the tendons and bones are very solid, the hair reaches its greatest length, the body is powerful and strong.*

*At five times seven years, the mai of the yang ming declines, the face begins to wrinkle, the hair begins to fall.*

*At six times seven years, the three yang mai begin their decline above, the whole face is wrinkled, the hair begins to go white.*

*At seven times seven years the ren mai is empty, the powerful chong mai declines progressively, fertility is exhausted; nothing passes any longer through the way of Earth. The body declines, she no longer has children.*

*Man at eight years, the Breaths of the Kidneys come to fruition, the hair grows longer, the teeth are renewed.*

*At two times eight years, the Breaths of the Kidneys rise in power, fertility arrives, the Essential Breaths, jing qi, overflow up to emission; through the conjunction of yin and yang he is capable of having children.*

*At three times eight years the Breaths of the Kidneys are spread out; the tendons and bones are powerful and solid, so that the wisdom teeth grow vigorously.*

*At four times eight years, the tendons and bones are full of vigour, the muscles and flesh are full and firm.*

*At five times eight years, the Breaths of the Kidneys decline, the hair falls out, the teeth dry out.*

*At six times eight years, the yang Breaths decline and are exhausted above, the face withers, the hair and beard go white in places.*

*At seven times eight years, the Breaths of the Liver decline, the tendons are no longer capable of movement.*

*At eight times eight years, fertility is exhausted, sperm, jing, is rare; the zang of the Kidneys decline, the body reaches its end, the teeth and hair abandon it.*

*The Kidneys master the liquids, receive the Essences of the five zang and six fu to store them. If the five zang maintain their rising power one has the power to produce emissions.*

*But when the five zang are in decline tendons and bones become loose and collapse. Fertility has reached its end. So hair and beard go white, the body grows heavy, the step is not so sure, one no longer has children.*

If we look at this text carefully we can see the presence of the Kidneys everywhere, both in the Breaths of the Kidneys and in the exterior manifestations of the Kidneys such as the teeth and the hair. In these two visible manifestations we see the double aspect of the Kidneys because nothing is more soft and supple than hair and nothing is harder than teeth. The teeth are like the push towards the exterior of the same thing which internally makes the bones, and the hair is like the push to the exterior of the same thing which internally makes Blood coming from Essences and from the yin of the Kidneys and so on. All the power of Essences and Blood arriving at the top of the head makes the hair grow, and the good state or decay of the teeth and hair are the visible signs of the rising or decline of the Kidneys inside. For other zang there is only one exterior manifestation such as the nails for the Liver or lips for the Spleen, but for Kidneys there are two manifestations in its dual position, the hard and the soft. For this reason in this text teeth and hair appear continually.

The text relates to the numbers seven and eight. Seven is an odd number and eight is an even number and odd numbers are usually on the side of yang, Heaven and so on, and even numbers are usually on the side of yin etc. In traditional Chinese thought, such as the Book of Change, seven is the number of shao yang and eight is the number of shao yin, yet we have here the very strange thing that for the woman cycles are ruled by seven and for the man the cycles of vitality are ruled by eight. This is another way of making it known that the compenetration of yin and yang is necessary for life and that the Kidneys are especially involved in this conjunction because they are the model or pattern of this conjunction for our own life and the possibility of this conjunction to make another life. The Kidneys represent the power of reproduction and sexuality because they are the power of the production of our own life at the beginning.

If we have a look at the woman of two times seven years and the man of two times eight years we can see this conjunction through several examples. The expression for fertility, tian gui (which arrives at two times seven for the woman) is very interesting. Tian means Heaven. Gui (Wieger Lesson 11 2H) shows the power of the Water deep inside the Earth. It is, by the way, the tenth Celestial Stem which is linked with the Kidneys and with the ninth Stem, ren, which we've seen previously in ren mai,

Conception Vessel. It's not exactly the same character but it's similar. So gui is the water and the liquids which are full of life and which are hidden in the bosom of the earth. The coupling of these two ideograms tian and gui has the meaning of fertility for a man and a woman. It's the power to realize this conjunction of yin and yang, and to make life with your own life. For the woman the expression of this meeting is through ren mai and chong mai. Ren mai represents the yin side and all that is necessary for the maintenance of the embryo, and chong mai in this context is the yang side. It's the Sea of the twelve meridians. It's the impulse for life. The conjunction of the ren mai and the chong mai at the level of the woman of two times seven years makes effective this fertility and she can have children.

For the man:

*...the Breaths of the Kidneys rise in power, fertility arrives, Essences and Breaths run out.*

In a way that is the sperm, but the sperm is just the visible aspect of the power of Essences and Breaths inside the man, with Essences for the liquids and Breaths for the strength and impulse. So through the conjunction of yin and yang he is capable of having children. In this context the conjunction of yin and yang is more than just sexual, it's a way of emphasizing this yin yang conjunction. If there is a conjunction of yin and yang you make life, your life and other life, and the Kidneys make life by the conjunction of yin and yang at every level. The Kidneys are mentioned here in the first position. Later on we see that all viscera are implied in sexuality and reproduction, but here in Chapter One we are at the general level not on specific points.

The last paragraph reads:

*The Kidneys master the liquids, receive the Essences of the five zang and six fu to store them.*

The Essences of the Kidneys are the Essences of all viscera in the organism because the Essences of the Kidneys are the model or guarantee of the identity for the continuity of the individual. In another way, to make another life it's necessary to grasp the most essential things coming from the five zang and six fu. In this sense in order to make sperm or to participate in the development of the embryo in the uterus etc the Kidneys need the purest and finest Essences of the five zang and six fu.

*If the five zang maintain their rising in power, one has the power to produce emissions.*

The emissions are the spermatic emissions, and the power is the alliance of Essences and Breaths.

*But when the five zang are in decline tendons and bones become loose and collapse*

This is the untying of life, the decomposition of life.

*Fertility has reached its end.*

This happens because there is no more conjunction. Tendons and bones are an example of conjunction and the pattern of Kidneys are responsible for the binding together of yin and yang, but if this no longer happens then tendons and bones will become loose and collapse. The yin has less and less to do with the yang and the yang has less and less to do with the yin, so finally there is separation. This happens in sexual intercourse, but also within our own body because it's the same movement.

*So hair and beard go white, the body grows heavy, the step is not so sure, one no longer has children.*

You can see that the power to have children is exactly the same movement as to have good vitality, and is linked with the Kidneys.

The text of Su Wen Chapter One does not stop here because the Emperor has another quite vicious question. He says:

*Yes, that's okay for the normal cycles of man and woman, but I've seen quite old men and women, over sixty four and forty nine respectively, have children, how is it possible?*

*Qi Bo answers:*

*These people have benefited from exceptionally long life, they have fully maintained their currents of Breaths, and they enjoyed an abundance of Breaths of the Kidneys these men can go beyond eight times eight years and these women can go beyond seven times seven years without the Essences and Breaths of Heaven being exhausted in them.*

We can see that some human beings have special vitality, they can have a very long life or very special strength, and this is a special gift of Heaven so that their nature is stronger than other individuals'. If the person is able to maintain this good vitality and doesn't spoil it they are able to have vitality over a long time and have children during a longer period than normal. There is also a link with the Kidneys via the original gift and nature, because the original gift is linked with the Kidneys in the Su Wen.

The Emperor also asks another question:

*Is a man of the Dao, even at a very great age, able to have children or not?*

The question is that if a man is a man of the Dao he must indefinitely realize in himself the conjunction of Heaven and Earth, but even if he transcends the numbers of Heaven for human beings, or the natural laws for human beings he is still a man. Qi Bo's answer is very simple: A man of the Dao, even at a very advanced age is able to keep the integrity of his body which is able to keep all yin and yang together, all hun and po, all tendons and bones and all Essences, Breaths and Spirits. But this man, in a state of extreme longevity, is not able to have children himself but is able to make the gift of life to children.

*Claude Larre:* The point is that the man, being transformed, is still man, but in being transformed there is no specific law for him. If he is a man then he is a living man, and a living man is able to give

life. So if the power to have children is proper to human kind, it's impossible that this person, who has gone beyond the limit, has not retained his power. This is like 'Goodbye Mr. Chips': at the end of the story he is sad that he never had a living son, but in fact he had so many that it didn't matter that his own son died. At the same time we know that this zi character stands for disciple, master and children. For the Chinese there is not so much difference between being a master or a disciple, having children or being a child. All these are a conjunction of Heaven and Earth, and it's interesting to see that the first part of the first chapter of Su Wen ends on this point, and it may be an indication that the so-called medical books are books which treat the human condition, and which by chance give treatments for this and that.

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## SU WEN CHAPTER 2

*The three months of Winter are called closing and preserving  
The water freezes up, the earth is broken up  
There is no longer any communication with the yang*

*One goes to bed early  
One gets up late  
One must do everything according to the light of the sun  
Exerting the will as buried, as hidden, and taking care only of oneself  
As falling back on oneself  
As in possession of oneself  
One must avoid the cold and seek the warmth  
One must let nothing flow out of the layers of the skin  
Through fear of losing all the Breaths*

*This is the way that is proper to the Breaths of Winter  
Which thus correspond to the maintaining and preservation of life  
To go against this current would injure the Kidneys  
Causing in Spring weakening  
Through an insufficient contribution to the production of life*

**WINTER**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Now we'll look at the Kidneys as the representative in the body of the movement of Water, of Winter, the North and so on. We start with Su Wen Chapter 2 because here the movement of Winter is shown to be the same movement among the seasons, and of the same nature, as the movement of Kidneys inside the body.

The three months of Winter are called to close and to store or to thesaurize. The description of Winter in this chapter is a closing in on yourself, nothing must be allowed to flow outside for fear of losing these Breaths. For example too much sweating or sexual emissions in Winter would be worse than in Summer because you lose Essences and through them the basis for Breaths. Losing Breaths you lose warmth, and in Winter you need this inner warmth of life against the cold and darkness or else you die. It wasn't just a metaphor at the time of writing. For this reason to go against the Breaths of Winter is a behaviour not properly adapted to the circumstances. To go against the Breaths of Winter means that the shao yin does not thesaurize, and the Breaths of the Kidneys are powerless in the depths.

The function of the Kidneys according to Su Wen Chapter 8 is in this strength, and if the Kidneys lose this strength there's no more foundation or ground. The jumper cannot jump if there is nothing under his feet, there is nothing for him to spring up from. This is a possible image of the relationship between Kidneys and Liver, or Water and Wood. with the rising up of life in the likeness of vegetation. Speaking in particular, if bones have no strength because Essences of the Kidneys have no power there is no support for the movement of muscles.

**SU WEN CHAPTER 9**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In the same way Su Wen Chapter 9 speaks of the power of the Kidneys in thesaurization.

***The Kidneys are the trunk in which is rooted that which controls hibernation and protects thesaurization.***

There are four characters to consider, zhu, to master, zhi, to hibernate, feng, to close with a seal, and cang, to thesaurize. The Kidneys are the deep root, ben, from which all these functions are mastered in the body. The Kidneys master all things in the body which are in the likeness of hibernation for animals. It's also the action of sealing up. Feng has the Earth character repeated twice and the meaning of this ideogram is to raise a mound in order to make a limit around something. It's like a border in feudal states - it's in order to protect and help something. We know that the Kidneys are

often likened to a barrier. In the text of Su Wen Chapter 61 we have the Kidneys as a barrier, guan, to the Stomach, because the Stomach is for the introduction of food and its transformation in order to have growth and elaboration of Essences. The Kidneys are the keeper of the Essences and hence the barrier because these Essences must never go outside the body. To hibernate, zhi, is also very interesting because it's the state of all the little animals before the sun of the Spring. If there is no hibernation there is no consequent uprising, it's the image of the seed in the earth during Winter.

*It is the residence of the Essences*

We know this already, that the Kidneys are the residence of the Essences of Anterior and Posterior Heaven, of Essences which are the pattern for the renewal of Essences, and of all Essences coming from outside. These Essences coming from outside, from so-called Posterior Heaven, need the power of the Kidneys to know how to integrate into the body.

*Its flourishing aspect, hua, is in the hair; the power of its fullness is in the bones*

In the text it is no longer a question of the double representadon inside and outside through teeth or hair with bones and marrow, it's just a question of something exterior and something interior. The hair on the exterior represents the soft supple aspect, the bones inside represent the hard aspect.

*They are the shao yin within the yin. They are in free communication with the Breaths of Winter*

## SU WEN CHAPTER 8

*The Kidneys have charge of arousing the power, zuo qiang, from them come skill and ability, ji qiao.*

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The only important thing to remember here is that the Kidneys in the lower part of the trunk are in charge of arousing the power. It's the image of the double bow which is bent or stretched, and when the arrow leaves, that is the Liver. The Kidneys are not that which make the arrow leave, but they are the retaining power behind it. 'Retaining power' is a good expression because you know that the important function of the Kidneys is to retain and keep and thesaurize. We see that in Chapter 2 of Su Wen for instance. But nothing is kept and retained if it is not for upthrust, or springing up. The power of the Kidneys is the ability or possibility of producing something, an effect. Afterwards, the 'skill and the ability' are to fashion or shape something, and they are the result of charging the power. According to some old commentaries we can see in the arousing power the specific power of the yang in the man during sexual intercourse, and in the skill and ability to give shape we see the specific power of the woman. But this is only one particular interpretation. The important point is that the Kidneys are like the basis of vitality and the strength and uprightness of life, and it's true that for general vitality and all kinds of work if you have good bones and marrow you are strong and can work very hard. If not, and your Essences are not able to give strength to your

bones and marrow you will have no strength in either bones or brain. Bones-and brain need Essences from the Kidneys, and you need good Essences if you wish to make life.

## SU WEN CHAPTER 52

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In Su Wen Chapter 52 each zang is given the region or aspect which it masters, for example the Heart masters the biao. From this perspective the Kidneys are said to govern the li, the intimate structuration. Therefore the Heart and Kidneys form a couple in this relation of biao li. In this context this is because the Heart is a yang zang and masters the Fire which flames up and goes everywhere in an expanding movement, so the Breaths which come from the Heart can reach to the biao. In contrast the Kidneys govern the li, and govern the movement which gathers together all the elements for the internal structuring of life. The Kidneys are a yin zang and master Water which by nature is cold and condensed and has a downward movement.

*Claude Larre:* The biao li relationship is one aspect of the structure of man. The biao is not exactly the outer part of the body, it's the movement from inside towards manifestation, which is the movement proper to the Heart. So when we say it is superficial or goes up to the skin we must not make this localization: biao is just some sort of movement which displays the quality of the inner body. Similarly when we talk of the Kidneys and understand that they involve everything which is for the foundation and grounding of life, we know that this is the same movement as for Water and describes li.

*Question:* Could we have details of what the other zang govern in this context of Su Wen Chapter 52?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Yes, just as the Heart and Kidneys form a couple, so do Liver and Lung. Liver gives life and birth by the left side and the Lung gathers and thesaurizes by the right side. The model for this movement is the rising and setting of the sun because the ascending movement is connected with the left and the descending movement with the right. The sun rises on the left and sets on the right.

The third couple is Spleen and Stomach, where the Spleen is the messenger and the Stomach is the market place. In this chapter, the order of presentation is first the Liver and Lung which relates to the daily movement of life with the rising and setting sun, then the axis of Heart and Kidneys with something expanding and contracting and which relates to biao li, and finally Spleen and Stomach in the central position with the Spleen as a kind of intermediary or go-between acting among all the others, and Stomach like a market place through which all the requirements for nourishment and maintenance pass.

But for the Kidneys the important thing to remember is the mastering of the internal structuration of the body, li, and its centripetal and retracting downward movement.

**SU WEN CHAPTER 5**

*The Northern quadrant produces cold  
 Cold produces Water  
 Water produces the salty  
 The salty produces the Kidneys  
 The Kidneys produce bones and marrow  
 The marrow produces Liver  
 The Kidneys master the ear*

*In Heaven it is cold  
 On Earth it is Water  
 In the parts of the body it is the bones  
 Among organs it is the Kidneys  
 Among the coloured aspects it is black  
 Among the notes it is yu  
 Among the sounds it is the sigh  
 Among the movements reacting to change it is the shiver  
 Among the orifices it is the ear  
 Among the flavours it is salty  
 In willpower it is fear  
 Fear injures the Kidneys  
 Reflective thought prevails over fear  
 Cold injures the Blood  
 Dryness prevails over cold  
 The salty flavour injures the Blood  
 Sweet prevails over salty*

**THE NORTH**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The character for North is bei, and we can see that it represents a position of no communication. It is to be back to back, and incidentally the ideogram for back is made up of the same character above and radical 130, the part of the body, below. The North is the quadrant of separation; when people are expelled or exiled they are expelled towards the North.

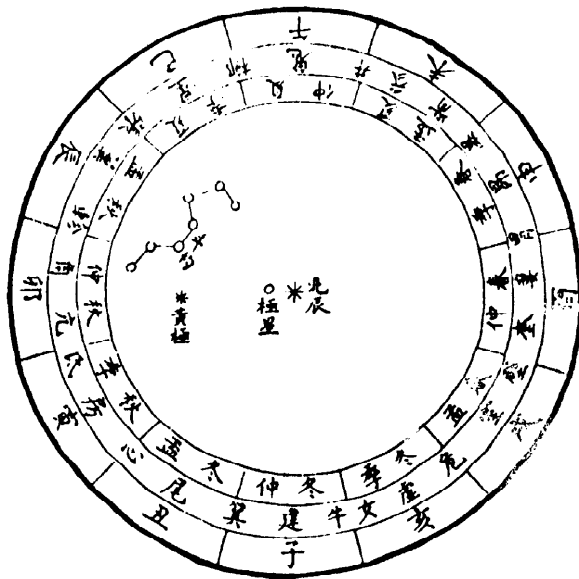
The explanation of the North and its relationship with the back also has something to do with ritual because when Man faces South (which is the ritual position for Man in Nature) his back is facing North and there is a communication between his back and North and his front and South. His back

faces obscurity and his front faces the light. In Su Wen Chapter 6 it's also the difference between life coming from the Kidneys and life shining from the Heart, and the difference between these two fires. Also, you turn your back in order to rebel or flee from something. In ancient Chinese thought the North or Water (because they are the same thing) was the region where the ten thousand beings withdrew to and hid. But if we come back to something it's because it was our origin, and the ten thousand beings retire to the North because in the North, or in the Water, they have the foundation of their origin. In this way we can see that the North is also the anchorage of the axis of life, and perhaps the guarantee of the supreme unity of each being and all beings.

There is another use of this character bei in Chinese literature: bei dou. Dou is a spoon, or a ladle, and bei dou, the spoon in the North or the spoon showing the North is the name of the constellation of the Great Bear. This constellation has the Pole Star within it, and the Pole Star was considered, in the second century BC, to be the dwelling place of the great deity tai yi, the Supreme Unity. In the Analects, Confucius makes a comparison between the right ruler of a state and this Pole Star:

*He who governs the people by giving good examples is like the Pole Star who rests immobile while all the other stars move around it.*

圖 樞 天 杓 斗



**The Pole star, Tian Ji, and the constellation of the Northern Ladle, Bei Dou. Ming Dynasty**

It was the Chinese view that the only fixed point in Heaven was this Pole Star, and all the constellations and other stars just moved around it, it was the fixed point of the rotation of Heaven. For that reason it was the dwelling place of the Great and Supreme Unity because it was the unification of all the movements of the stars.

The North is also ambiguous and ambivalent because it is the separation back to back, the place of exile and no communication, just as Winter is the season of no communication. Su Wen Chapter 2 says in Winter Heaven and Earth are like foreigners, yin and yang have nothing more to do with each other and so on. But at the same time the North is also the place of returning, and returning to the origin and unity. This is very interesting because from this perspective the North is both the return to the beginning and the beginning of division and separation.

In the Winter the soil and water are separated, the soil is hard because of the cold, and the water is also hard because it is frozen as ice; but at the same time the core of Winter, according to the Book of

Rites, Yue Ling, is the moment for the mating of tigers and the period to keep seed for germination. It's the period of the tenth Celestial Stem, gui, the mysterious gathering of water inside the earth ready to receive the impulse of Heaven, the yang inside. This is like the yang of the Kidneys or the yang of ming men, which is afterwards revealed through the yang of the Liver and Heart which are the two yang zang. Of course we also have to remember that at the beginning of Zhuang Zi Chapter 1 the first word is bei, North.

Daoists are very interested in origins and the authentic, and we can find the origin of Nature and the authentic in the North and Water. In Zhuang Zi Chapter 1 in the North there is an abyss where the great fish resides, and this great fish rises up from the sea to become the great bird peng, which flies straight to the South. This is a good image of the power of the Kidneys and Heart and the rising up of life, of Water and Fire. So we find in this Chinese conception of the North is this double power which we have in the Kidneys: the separation but also the unity of the origin, the unity of life but also the seeds of diversity.

北  
方  
生  
寒

**The Northern Quadrant produces Cold.**  
**bei sheng han**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The ideogram for Cold is han, it represents a man inside straw under a roof, with the idea of freezing. The Cold is the time when men huddle together under the straw to make sure they don't freeze. It's exactly the movement of the North and Winter and the conduct of life in Winter. The North in classical Chinese books is both the place of separation and exile, and the land full of promise, and Winter is both the time of closing in and a good time for sexuality and germination.

In the following quotation from the Li Ji Yue Ling perhaps we can better understand how the Cold is related to Kidneys and Bladder, and how it is linked with the tai yang.

*The first month in the Winter is the separation because the water becomes ice and the soil is cracked. The pheasants plunge deep into the water and become oysters. The rainbow hides and no longer appears.*

Why is there no more rainbow? Because yin and yang are no longer visibly meeting and a rainbow is a manifestation of the meeting of yin and yang.

*Orders are given to the officers in these terms: the Breaths of Heaven remain above and those of Earth remain below. Heaven and Earth no longer communicate together, the pathways of one to the other are blocked, and Winter is established.*

So all the officers are ordered to cover with care the granaries and public storehouses. The minister receives the order to visit all the granaries and private depots so that all is safely gathered in and put in a secure place. At the same time the Son of Heaven asks the venerable ones of Heaven, the sun, the moon and the stars, that the Earth should be fertile for the next year. So the call for fertility comes just at the beginning of Winter.

***In the second month of Winter the ice becomes thicker and the tigers begin coupling. Everything must be kept well closed in or else all hibernating animals would die and men would be attacked with pestilential diseases. And in this month the shortest day of the year arrives. The yin and yang are struggling together because the yang begins to grow and the yin can never be as great as it is at that point. All living beings feel a movement.***

One of the commentators says at this point that all the plants prepare to give out shoots and prepare to bud. But the important point is that at the very heart of Winter, at the solstice, there is a kind of intermingling of yin and yang where the first resurgence of yang has a particular movement which all living beings feel deep within them. If you want you can see here the power of the Fire of ming men and the power of the Kidneys, but of course this isn't in the text because that is just a particular application of a general thing in the case of the constitution of the body.

***The wise man watches over himself and refrains from acting. He comes back to his foundation: he waits to see.***

***In the third month of Winter the wild geese go North. The magpie starts to make its nest. The pheasant cries, the hen broods over the eggs. The son of Heaven orders that a clay model of an ox should be led into the countryside to lead out the cold air. It's the moment when you prepare to till the earth.***

It isn't the moment to actually begin tilling the soil, that comes at the beginning of Spring, but they are preparing for it.

***The workers are told to join together two by two to prepare to till the earth.***

This mention of two workers can be taken to mean a couple as well, with the sexual aspect of this going together with it. Then in the first month of Spring the ground will be broken and opened, and then the barriers will be withdrawn so that yang can break out again.

So if we look at the Winter solstice it's like the tilting of yin and yang, a pivot, and it gives the orientation of Breaths of life, and the first yang which afterwards at the beginning of Spring or with the power of the Gall Bladder gives the direction for all the year and all the other yang and fu. I think that all the Breaths and all the expansion of Breaths move in time around this solstice of Winter, just as all the stars and constellations are moving in space around the Pole Star.

So the Cold which tightens things up is also that which will allow the springing up again of the yang. When the Cold leaves and the earth is broken up and opened by the plough all this force and strength of the yang comes out and manifests itself, and these are the buds and the hibernating animals.

# 寒 生 水

## Cold produces Water han sheng shui

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Water and yin are obviously linked. Some Chinese classics say that yin Breaths make Water. If you look carefully at this notion of Water as one of the Five Elements in the Chinese classics you can find some strange and quite contradictory affirmations, just as was true of the Kidneys in the Nei Jing.

For instance in the classic Chun Qiu Fan Lu, the affirmation is:

*Water is the last of the Five Elements. It has its dwelling place in the Northern quadrant and masters the Breaths of Winter.*

But if you look at the Hong Fan chapter of the Book of History, which is a great presentation of the Five Elements, Water comes in the first position. A commentator on this says Water is the first of the Five Elements. So Water is either the first or the last! I think the problem is that Water is both the beginning and the end, because it's a cycle from one element to another. Of course we have to make a distinction between this and the role of the Spleen and Stomach as a turn-table, it's not the same movement at all. This text says:

*Water penetrates in the depths and fertilizes and dampens.*

Another thing is that Water takes the shape and form of all receptacles but it doesn't keep any form or shape itself. And Water is very sensitive to the action of warmth or cold because as a result of the cold it becomes ice and under the action of warmth it evaporates. Water is easy to touch and feel but it is also impossible to grasp, and of course, it is absolutely indispensable for life.

# 水 生 鹹

## Water produces the Salty shui sheng xian

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Traditionally Water was coming down and impregnating Earth with humidity, and in this movement was creating salty. Perhaps the idea is that when water penetrates the earth it becomes briny, and in this way we have the relationship between the water and salty inside the earth. And of course, we have the relationship between Water and salty in the sea. Rock salt is not excluded from this idea of salt, it's even the fundamental idea which is mentioned in the commentaries, ie. that salt comes out of the impregnation of the earth by water, as in salty marshes.

# 鹹 生 腎

## Salty produces the Kidneys xian sheng shen

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The salty produces the Kidneys because all that comes before, the North, Cold, Winter and Salty, represents the same aspect of the movement of life. So the salty can produce Kidneys because it is the result in nature of this movement of condensation and concentration and of going down into the depths. If salty has this movement and power in the Essences which compound it, salty is able to create and recreate the power of the Kidneys which are exactly the same movement inside the body.

We saw with the North that it was something analogous to Winter, Cold and Water, and Water is that which goes down inside the earth with salty as the 'fruit' of that compenetration of Water and Earth.

*Claude Larre:* The difficulty for me is that there is a connection between salty and earth. One sees that there is salt mixed with soil, that I understand, but there are so many other things, and why is it more typical to have salt with Water than with other substances. I noticed when I was working with Elisabeth on the text a few years ago that it was not only the ocean or the sea but that in the footnotes they were quoting other reasons for the connection between salt and Water. But I've always expected that they were wanting to expand something which was a fundamental connection between water and sea and the salt which was the first apprehension of this connection.

As regards the tastes, the names are secondary, the first thing to be considered is the movement of life which is represented. From that it is impossible to say that the reason why salt and Water are associated is the sea because it would be referring to the perception on your tongue and not the movement of life. If we are consistent with the doctrine we have to find an explanation at the level at which life is moving when it is a question of Water and Salt.

An opposition between South and North should also be known as an opposition between bitter and salty. If North and South are constructed in opposite manners then bitter and salty must be seen in the same light. The explanation would be just what we are looking for, what sort of movement of life is it that when we are considering the position we say North and South, and the taste we say salty or bitter. As long as we are unable to understand the movement of life which is concerned it is difficult for us to say bitter and salty are in opposition. One way to understand it is to try and trace the etymology of the characters.

The character for salt is xian. The left part with the two strokes crossing and the four dots inside represents a rock and four grains of salt. So this is the etymological explanation of the connection of salt with the rock. (Wieger Lesson 41D) The Chinese had the same problem as we had in Europe in that salt was an highly demanded condiment, and there were many places that were named after salt. Everywhere when people were able to discover salt in the ground and not in the sea they were finding

a rich product and were able to trade all over with it. So etymologically the connection between salt and rock is clearer.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The ideogram to designate salt coming from the sea is composed of this character with something added, and it's obvious that the first salt that was known in China was rock salt.

*Claude Larre:* The right part of the ideogram has the meaning to bite or to wound with the mouth. (Wieger Lesson 71). But all this does not give us what we are looking for which is the explanation of life's movement which makes the connection between the salty taste and Water. The Chinese were also very clear about the Four Seas, si hai, and the number four indicates the relationship with the four directions.

We have to be very clear about this. There are wells, sources and rivers under different names. Shui or jiang or he are the three most important names, along with hai which doesn't mean a very big sea but is something which is not flowing and not springing up. Through the names of water we understand that the Chinese perceive water from three major views. One is water which springs, the fountain, the bubbling well. Then from that water is a current becoming rivers and streams, and finally when water is neither springing or flowing but is just there that is hai. If it is bigger than hai it is the ocean which alludes more to the horizontal expansion of water.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* I am struck by the thought that salty is the only taste which has a form. We can extract salt from the Earth or from the sea but not in the same way that we can extract acrid or sweet or bitter or acid. We can have a salt cellar on the table but never an acrid cellar! A sugar or sweet container is quite different because of the way we obtain sugar. It's quite interesting because when water goes deeply into the earth it gives shape to the salt, and it's exactly like what happens when water, passing and repassing, leaves salt on the rocks. We can understand from that how salt can fix water because if water leaves salt behind in its flowing movement and afterwards you put this salt back into a liquid then it will slow down this movement in the liquid because the salt retains the water.

*Claude Larre:* Suppose we take an amount of water from the sea and we submit the quantity of water to evaporation by fire, then what remains is the opposite of fire. Fire is the action proper to the South, so what is left has to be the opposite, and the opposite of South is North. And the opposite of the pure water which is obtained through evaporation is just the salt which is left behind, so therefore the connection between water and salt is given from this quantity of water taken from the sea. That would be one explanation of the association between salt and Water when it is the sea which is considered. Now, if we take the question of rock salt we may use this process offered by Elisabeth, saying that inside the earth there are running waters, and when the water is loaded with salt some part of the salt makes a deposit and the other part remains in the water. Since the process is endless you finally get rock salt, and this rock salt is pure in as much as the constituents have been water and salt. So salty water is obtainable either in the sea or inside the earth.



**Kidneys produce Bones and Marrow**  
shen sheng gu sui

*Elisabeth Rochat:* We know that Kidneys are Water, the Original Water and the Authentic yin, but between the Kidneys the power of the Fire of Life develops, and this is the so-called Authentic yang.

We saw in Su Wen Chapter 8 that the Kidneys have the charge of arousing the power, and during the core of Winter at the time of the domination of the yin power, the first movement of yang moves the Ten Thousand Beings. The Kidneys, which are also the keeper of the Essences, are also called the root of Breaths. If the power of the Kidneys in the intimate structure of man is the double expression of bones and marrow I think it is because the bones represent what is hard, solid, firm and upright and marrow represents what is supple, soft and like a thick liquid inside the bones. This is exactly like the hair and teeth on the exterior which were also a double presentation of the yin and yang of the Kidneys. It's like an entire hierogamy, a conception of yin and yang at every level.

*Claude Larre:* One word is necessary here. Marcel Granet, who wrote about Chinese civilization and thought, and relied very much on the ancient view of things, felt that the meeting of things at a subtle level was so mysterious that the name for it had to be taken from the Greek language and he called it hierogamy. Hiero means sacred and gamy means marriage. So when Elisabeth is speaking of hierogamy she is referring to this expression of Granet.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In the couple of bones and marrow we have an example of this hierogamy. Bones and marrow are constituted from the Essences and Breaths coming from the Kidneys. From the quality of Essences and Breaths the bones obtain their uprightness and marrow obtains its richness for the maintenance of life and Blood. There is nothing deeper than the bones and marrow in the body, and nothing more intricate and joined. Thus the marrow gives the power to the bones and the bones keep the marrow. But at the same time there is nothing more opposed: bones are hard and marrow is soft and viscous.

*Claude Larre:* In Chinese arts when painting or doing calligraphy, the hardness or the strong aspect is seen as bone. But at the same time the fluidity has to be kept, and that quality is like marrow.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* In the case of the two Kidneys and the Fire of ming men the yin of the Water of the Kidneys is encircling and keeping the Fire of ming men. In the projection of that in the bodily structures we find the contrary with the hard aspect of the bones surrounding the yin liquid aspect of the marrow. This is just one example of the continual reversals in the building of life and its maintenance.

# 髓生肝

## **Marrow Produces Liver** **sui sheng gan**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Why is it only the marrow and not the bones and marrow which produce the Liver? I think it is because marrow represents the yin aspect of the Kidneys and Essences, and the Liver is rooted in the yin of the Kidneys, in the Essences and the Blood which is the liquid coming from the Essences of the body. You know that the nature of the Liver is yin, but that this nature is just the solid base for the yang expansion of the effect of the Liver.

The main function of the Liver is to thesaurize the Blood, and if the relationship of production between marrow and Liver is good, Water and Essences of Kidneys allow the constitution of marrow, and marrow itself is necessary for the good balance of liquids in the body and the production of Blood. For this reason the Liver needs the support of the Essences of the Kidneys for its vital maintenance, and the intermediary can be the marrow. It's difficult to say whether at this time the Chinese knew the haematic function of the marrow. In commentaries some centuries later it is very well explained, so it was at least known by the 16th century and perhaps before. Anyway, if the Kidneys are insufficient the Blood of the Liver is also insufficient, and at the same time the marrow is weaker. A lot of cases of hypertension are caused by this.

# 腎主耳

## **Kidneys master the Ear** **shen zhu er**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The ear captures sound, and can make it penetrate into the depths. The ear can hear all sounds, it doesn't have a restriction of direction, like the eye, but can take in from all round. So even if the eye can see almost to infinity, none the less it cannot see everything at the same time. The ear cannot hear from infinity but it hears everything that is going on all around, and it never stops working as there is not way to close your ears.

Another particularity of the ear is that it is the only orifice without emission to the exterior. There are tears from the eyes, but normally there is no discharge or fluid secreted from the ear. If there is a discharge it's pathological.

*Question:* How is ear wax considered?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* It's seen as pathological to have a lot of ear wax, it's a dirtiness. You can't compare it to the fluid in the eyes.

We can make an analogy between the ear and the Kidneys which also retain and are always working for life. It's also the nature of the Kidneys to take in everything within the environment. If you remember Ling Shu Chapter 29, it said,

*with the Kidneys the power of the mastering is turned to the exterior, by that man can hear from far away. By the good or bad state of the hearing man can know the nature, xing.*

This is a good way to link Kidneys and nature because if your Kidneys are strong you have a good and strong nature, and there is some possibility of longevity, and if your hearing is in a good state and you can hear from far away, you also have a rich nature.

We know too that Kidneys and ears have the same form like a bean or the moon. Another thing is that the ears are on the left and right of the head and the Kidneys are on the left and right in the bottom of the trunk. In addition, on the exterior of the body the ears are the sign of longevity and wisdom. If you have very long ears, as in certain statues of the Buddha, you have a good nature, longevity and wisdom, because wisdom is also know-how. We saw in Su Wen Chapter 8 that the Kidneys were linked with know-how and ability. Know-how is nothing other than wisdom, there is no wisdom without the realization of that wisdom and its efficacy. The name of Lao Zi was Lao Dan, and the meaning of dan is he of the long dangling ears.

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**Among colours it is black**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Why is it this black soot colour? The ideogram for soot black is hei (Wieger Lesson 40D). Etymologically it alludes to

*...that which the fire deposits around the aperture through which the smoke escapes, soot. In the primitive Chinese huts the smoke found its way out through the window.*

It's quite strange to find the fire radical (at the bottom of the ideogram) in the character for the coloured aspect which means black, and which is linked with the North and Water and so on. The fire radical represents the fire which warms the insides of the huts and it's the residual traces of this heat escaping which give the soot black colour. It's also the idea of smoking out, with the smoke rising up from the fire but no longer having the warmth or the colour.

In the pathological field we know very well that if we have a weakness in the Kidneys, for example, a so-called emptiness of the yang of the Kidneys with a tendency to get cold, this leads to stagnation, for instance in the Blood. In this pathological case the black colour is an indication of the bad circulation by the Blood and of the injury of the Kidneys.

*Claude Larre:* It looks to me that, as in the case of salt and Water, everything seems to hang on the idea of separation. If the heat and warmth is rising up, going to the South, then something is being withdrawn which then goes down, and this is the soot which is dark black. It's easier to understand one element if we take the opposite element and look at the process of separation between these two opposites. Man is always standing in the middle, so there is never pure red or pure anything. It's always a condition in which opposites are maintaining life, and when the Kidneys are showing it's just because the Heart is not having its share. The revolution of something in life is when the equilibrium of the balance is no longer kept. So in order to build a true image of the Kidneys or black we have to take this combination of opposite elements and see the relationship between North and South, and from this we have quite a good understanding, which is the way Zhuang Zi Chapter 1 is presented. It starts with the North, the ocean, the cold and the fish, and progressively we come to the South, to the light and the bird. That is the way to look at things.

If we were looking at the East-West axis it would be that Metal is just the contrary of Wood, that Metal is made by an accumulation of pressure on Earth and that Wood is made by expansion from the seeds which are contained in the Earth. The difficulty in explaining things is that usually we isolate one aspect and try to say a lot about that without seeing that this aspect is never understood except by a separation within the equilibrium which stands in the middle of things. The more we talk of black or red, the less we understand what it is because during that time we are forgetting the opposite!

# 在 音 爲 羽

## Among notes it is yu

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The name of the fifth note is yu. In the classical texts we find that this note corresponds to Water with a deep profound bass sound. Each of the five notes or vibrations are linked with something in society and its good maintenance. In books like the Historical Records, or in the Yue Ji, which is a special chapter in the Book of Rites on music, we find that this note yu represents things which are necessary for the maintenance of the people and their resources. When the vibration of this note is in disorder and the sound becomes anxious and nervous, it's a sign that your fortunes and riches are exhausted.

You can obviously see all the connections with the Kidneys and the body. We also find in the texts that there is a special connection between this note yu and the Kidneys. The Historical Records say

that the note yu moves the Kidneys and puts man in harmony with the perfect know-how, zhi, the practical kind of wisdom. If a man is able to hear the vibration of this note yu this means that he is able to remain in a good state and is able to practice rites, or the ritual life of society, correctly. But what is the meaning of the ideogram? It represents the feathers of a bird. The general meaning of yu, when it is not specifically the fifth note, is the feathers of a bird. It can also mean the feathers that are used in dances or pantomimes. In old Chinese mythology there is a link between the North and the feather. Another thing is that when a man is able to have feathers he is a man with wings, not quite an angel, but something like that, and in Chinese yu ren, man with feathers or wings, is a way of designating an immortal, ie. a man who has reached wisdom. It was also the way to designate Daoist priests, and there is an old Daoist expression 'transformation by feathers' which indicates death leading to immortality. This is because feathers also evoke the idea of the molting of birds, and molting as a renewal of vitality. For this reason we can see that yu evokes the barrenness of the North and the progression to the depths but at the same time has the promise of renewal, like the opening of the new year during the Winter which is the arrival of the Spring and the beginning of new life. It's a question of life and death, and life through death, and these are linked with the note yu and with the power of the Kidneys because it's always through the power of Essences, Breaths and Spirits that man can live and perhaps attain longevity. Remember that it is through the power of the Kidneys at the bottom of the trunk that the hair on top of the head can grow.

We can finish with a quotation from a book of the third century AD which explains yu saying

*...that is the spreading out and the ten thousand beings begin to reproduce*

This is the meaning of this vibration in the Chinese world, it is something deep, grave and bass, and at the same time always ready for renewal.

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**Among the sounds it is the sigh**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Shen, the sigh, is of course a homophone of the ideogram for the Kidneys themselves. The character is like that of shen meaning to spread out and extend which has the character for man instead of mouth as in shen the sigh. This indicates that the movement occurs in the human body.

*Claude Larre:* Any character refers to man, it couldn't be otherwise, but here there is a specific extension which is heard in the sound of the sigh. This sort of sigh is an extension of the voice reflecting the structure of the Kidneys. We have to pay attention to the fact that we are always speaking about something we cannot describe in itself, but from that unspeakable point there are a lot of explanations, the colour, the sound etc., are all describing in different ways what is the core of this bodily element we call the Kidneys. So we have to keep in mind what has been said about each of the items in order to build the following one from the preceding ones, and thus the true notion of what exists is secretly built in ourselves. We don't pay too much attention to each individual item, but rather what is in the middle of it all. It's like when I was explaining about the East and West, North and South. It is the idea that in the middle we don't see anything, but when the separation starts then what was in the middle is shown in our mind, and we must use the emptiness and the void to understand what is explicit, and use what is explicit to come back to this void, and to nourish the knot where everything is given within our being and which must be kept in order that life goes well.

*Elisabeth Rochat:* We saw that a function of the Kidneys is to attract and anchor the Breaths in the depths. This is very important, and if it is not fulfilled you can have asthma and other troubles with the respiration. There are two ways of explaining a sigh. In normal terms it's just a sign of the good extension and rising up of the Breaths from the root of Breaths, Kidneys, up to the top of the body and the mouth. In this state you're able to read aloud and with a good voice and be able to give great meaning to what you are saying. In pathological terms if you have a weakness in the Breaths of the Kidneys for example, the elevation and surging up of the Breaths from the bottom is difficult and you have some blockage. The reaction to this blockage is to sigh, with very large and long respirations in order to help the Breaths to start spreading out and rising again, therefore overcoming the blockage. So a sigh is either the manifestation of good circulation of Breaths from the bottom of the trunk or the manifestation of the desire to re-establish this good circulation.

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**Among the movements reacting to change  
it is the Shiver**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* We can shiver because of cold or fear, both are linked with the Kidneys. I think the shiver, li, is always pathological because it is a reaction to a pathological attack on the zang, even if it is a very slight pathology. It's a reaction to an alteration towards something bad, for instance the cold. We can have an exterior cold attacking the defence of the body and this shiver is a reaction which wakes up the yang power of the defence.

But you can also imagine a situation where there is a weakness in the Breaths of the Kidneys, in the Kidney yang, and consequently the defence of all the body is weakened, because you know that the

defensive Breaths, wei qi, take their yang power from the Lower Heater which is the yang of the kidneys, ming men. If the yang of the Kidneys is not strong enough we do not have enough force to correctly stimulate these Breaths which should be able to oppose the penetration of the cold, and the shiver and trembling are just the manifestation of this state.

On the other hand a great fear also injures the power of the Kidneys and injures its Essences, which we saw in Ling Shu Chapter 8. As a result we have a blockage in the circulation, particularly between Lower and Upper Heaters, the Kidneys and Heart and so on. Because of the attack and the injury to the Essences there is a diminution of the resources available for the external zones of the body which would be used to counter perverse attacks. As a result we shiver, and we don't know if it is because of the cold or because of fear, but the two are always linked.

*Claude Larre:* There is another reason for this impossibility of distinguishing between cold and fear, which is that if it is cold it is dangerous. So from cold to fear is a normal sequence. If there is just fear, there's no reason to think of cold, but since our psychological life has already given us many occasions to shiver when it's cold, when we are shivering we may recollect other occasions when we have had this shivering which was then due not only to cold but to fear as well. So I would give more emphasis to cold; cold would give me a feeling of fear but fear would not give the same feeling of cold. After being in a condition of coldness if you suddenly come into a room which is heated, you not only feel that it is warm but that it is pleasant and even joyful. You have come from the North to the South!

For the character li, the Ricci dictionary reference is 3022. The first meaning given is chestnut tree, the second meaning is firm, solid, hard, compact. The fifth meaning given is the shiver either from fright or cold. So at the very beginning we have the concrete image of a tree, which is the part on the bottom right of the character. The upper part has the meaning to fall down, especially as in the fruit of a tree. Then we also have this idea of being firm, well-rooted etc. which is just like the Kidneys, and at the end of the explanation we come to the shivering. So once again we are talking about the same unspeakable thing; at the same time it is either a tree, a well-rooted thing, or it is a tree moving from the effect of the wind which makes the fruit fall down. If it is not a tree but the Kidneys, then although you are not dead you are in a very uncomfortable position. Fear causes the same movement in yourself as the wind in the chestnut tree, and to be well-rooted does not prevent you from being shaken. Since this is said for trees and for man it proves that beyond all concrete definitions there stands something that we can only perceive in different situations and examples, and the root of the meaning is something you cannot really express.

# 在志爲恐

## In the will-powers it is Fear

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Will-power, zhi, is of course, specially connected with the Kidneys. In Ling Shu Chapter 8 we have a definition of zhi which says that when the yi, purpose, is conserved then you have zhi. Zhi is like a tension or an intensity of life, taut and intent on a certain direction. The force of the yi which remains is zhi. In zhi there is the notion of something established and with a foundation.

When the zhi remains and at the same time changes, it is thought, because there is no mobilization with a decision but rather we look at everything which can change, we calculate, combine and discuss in order to reach a project or plan, and that is thought. In the ideogram zhi we can see the power of the tension of life, and this is a specific aspect of the Kidneys: tension, foundation, attention and the passage to knowhow.

The five will-powers, wu zhi, are the special natural living tensions which arise from each of the five zang. For the Kidneys it is Fear, kong, for the Liver it is Anger, and so on. So the willpowers are not exactly specific to the Kidneys but from the anchorage of the vital tensions of the Kidneys there arise the five emanations according to the five zang. This is also the way to designate the emotions, by five and not by seven. By seven you have the seven emotions, qi qing, which is another thing. By five, you just have an indication of the natural emotion rising up from each zang, taking life or the being in a certain direction. The seven emotions are perhaps more manifest and exterior than these five willpowers which are very internal.

*Claude Larre:* The higher we come in numbers the more manifest is the process of life. The function of numbers is to make more and more manifest what life is - so it's quite normal that if we are operating through two we have just yin yang, and if we are operating with four we have the four directions, and if we are operating through five we have all the permutations and succession of the phases, and with six we have the full set of relationships between the three yin and the three yang in the unity of life. Coming to seven we have a more specific manifestation of those relationships. It's absolutely true to say that when we see at the level of seven we have more vocabulary which is more explicit and manifest, than when we are working with five. It's a question of tools for operating our knowledge about life as it is.

*Question:* When you say five emotions and five willpowers is it the same character zhi?

*Elisabeth Rochat:* By five it's zhi, willpower or vital tension, by seven it's qing or emotion.

*Question:* What are the seven emotions?

*Elisabeth Rochat*: Anger, Elation, Obsessive Thought, Grief, Sadness, Fear and Fright.

Now what is fear? According to Su Wen Chapter 39

***Fear makes Breaths go down.***

It's very important to notice that all emotions are defined by a movement of Breaths. It's not said that Fear is when you have something very frightening in front of you, but that even if you don't have any physical causes it is the movement of Breaths going down. The explanation given afterwards in Su Wen Chapter 39 is that when there is Fear the Essences withdraw and as a result the Upper Heater completely closes which means that the Breaths return below and there is a swelling in the Lower Heater. For this reason Breaths can no longer circulate. What this means is that Fear realizes the separation of yin and yang, of the Upper and Lower Heaters, of bottom and top and so on, because all the yin goes to the bottom and the yang is blocked in the upper part with no way for exchange or communication between them. For this reason the Essences are injured by Fear, and in Ling Shu Chapter 8 we read that,

***Fear and Fright which cannot be got rid of injure the Essences***

In this case when Essences are injured bones are painful, we have a kind of impotence, and everything sags or collapses. And sometimes the Essences descend on their own, as for example in spermatorrhoea. The explanation of this situation is that due to the separation of yin and yang there is no longer any communication between them at the level of the Kidneys. Because of the Fear, the Essences no longer have good strength and the bones can no longer ensure their power and uprightness, and become painful. Of course Breaths and Essences can no longer circulate right to the body's extremities and as a result perversities can penetrate. Also, all the movement of the body through the muscles and so on is without strength.

So, if all the yang is blocked in the upper part of the body there's no way to keep the Essences very firmly in the bottom of the trunk, and the power of the Kidneys to thesaurize Essences is injured, and therefore the Essences sometimes descend on their own. This is the situation created by Fear, and it can happen suddenly, or little by little. There's the expression to 'die of fright', and you can also say that ones' hair goes white with fear, but Fear can also be a situation established little by little.

*Claude Larre*: The character for Fear, kong, is referred to in Wieger Lesson 11F. The lower part is the Heart, and the upper left means 'to do a work', with the upper right part supplying 'by pressing or knocking'. So with the Heart added to that you have the idea of the Heart pulsating and pounding as it does in fear.

*Elisabeth Rochat*: The ideogram for fright, jing, shows the trembling movement, and has the character for the horse within it at the bottom. It is sometimes linked with the Heart and sometimes with the Kidneys. It indicates the movement of surprise and fright, and can be the result of a weakness either in the Spirits (connected with the Heart) or the Essences (linked with the Kidneys).

Fear is definitely a movement going towards the depths with the effect of separating, but it can be transformed into a flight from the situation. When you are afraid either you yourself move away from the situation or things move downwards in you.

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恐

### Reflective Thought prevails over Fear

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The descending movement, which is proper to the Kidneys, is exaggerated as an effect of Fear, and continues to the point of losing the Essences. But Fear also attacks the relationship between the Kidneys and the Heart. In Ling Shu Chapter 8 it says that as a result of the injury to Spirits from Fear and Fright you can lose possession of yourself.

Si, Reflective Thought, represents the movement of the Centre or turn-table, which is able to re-establish all exchanges between the upper and lower parts and to restart communication and permutation and to recentre the individual who has lost possession of himself. We can see that reflection or thought means to see all the circumstances of the situation and the way to adapt, and this is the best way to overcome Fear.

Su Wen Chapter 49 says that Fear is like the result of a struggle and lack of harmony between yin and yang. Su Wen Chapter 62 says that Fear is like a result of a deficiency of Blood. In both cases, si, Reflective Thought, the movement of the Centre among the emotions, can reestablish good balance and good relationships between yin and yang. The Spleen, which is also the Centre, can actively participate in the reconstitution of the Blood. In clinical practice Chinese books say you can often observe an overriding of the Spleen and Stomach as a result of the perverse fullness of the Kidneys through Fear, and the cure is to re-establish si. Of course thought allows you to reason and understanding the situation, whereas with Fear there is no reason.

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勝  
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### Cold injures the Blood Dryness prevails over Cold

*Elisabeth Rochat:* Under the effect of Cold, Blood will congeal, but why does Dryness resolve the situation? Perhaps it's because Dryness in this situation is of the same species as Warmth and therefore can dominate Cold. This is no longer the ke cycle because Dryness is linked with the Lung and Metal.

But it would have been impossible to say that Humidity could dominate Cold as there is a great affinity between them, and they join together much more easily than they restrain each other. Here we can see that realism prevails over some sort of automatic functioning of the ke cycle. We also notice the implication of the Blood in this particular part of the text which is devoted to the North, Kidneys etc. Usually if we had been in some automatic run-through of the subject we would have the bones and marrow in the place of Blood, because if you look at the quotations we have taken for the other zang in Chapter 5 then you would notice that for example in the case of the Liver it's the musculature that's attacked and for the Spleen it's the flesh and for the Lung it's the skin and body hair. The only other exception is for the Heart because in that case it's the Breaths which are injured by Warmth. So there is a couple at this level between Heart and Kidneys with the Breaths and Blood being injured. A classical commentator on this chapter of the Su Wen says:

*Breaths are yang and Blood is yin. Fire is yang and Water is yin. The Heart masters Fire and that is Warmth. Kidneys master Water and that is Cold. Thus Warmth injures Breaths and Cold injures Blood.*

The injury comes from something that is the same type. Finally this commentator says,

*Heart and Kidneys are the masters and rulers of Water and Fire, yin and yang, and this is the reason why the presentation is different from the other zang.*

So we can see that this text is never just the application of some kind of data table, there are always exceptions and rule breakings, because that's how life works!

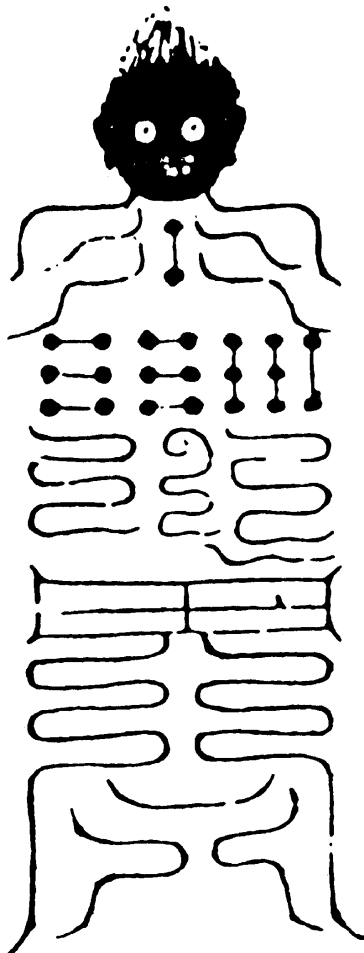
*Claude Larre:* Maybe it's the verticality of the relationship between North and South and Heart and Kidneys which makes the relationship so immediate because it's not the same thing as going from one zang to another according to a certain order, or the cycles of sheng and ke. Going up and down might be like the structure of life which is to receive the influx of Heaven through Earth and to rise up. It would be quite normal that the relationship of Heart and Kidneys would have a privileged position in the presentation. The same might be said of the middle. It's different when you want to go from North to East, for example. So when Elisabeth says there is an exception it may just be that something more simple is going on.

甘 鹹  
勝 傷  
鹹 血

**Salty injures the Blood  
Sweet prevails over Salty**

*Elisabeth Rochat:* The Salty has the characteristic of softening, and too much injures the Blood and leads to a dryness. We know very well that if you eat too much salty taste it makes you thirsty, this is in Ling Shu Chapter 63, and that is a sign of the diminution of bodily liquids. According to Ling Shu Chapter 63 the Salty taste goes to the Blood by affinity, and as a result there is stagnation and congealing of the Blood.

The same thing happens to the juices of the Stomach. But the Sweet taste has the ability to increase the liquids in the body, particularly the jin, and the clear liquids produced by the Spleen. By this means we can bring a good humidification to the network of animation carrying the Blood and re-establish the liquid flux and movement of circulation, thus removing dryness and thirst. This is the ke cycle once again.



**Daoist talisman of the Black Supreme  
Ruler of the North**