

THE KIDNEYS IN OTHER TCM CLASSIC TEXTS

(from Larre & Rochat, 1992, *The Kidneys*)

LING SHU CHAPTER 29

Elisabeth Rochat: The quotation runs:

....with the Kidneys the power of mastering is turned to the exterior, wai, by that man can hear from far away.

The power of the Kidneys, which is like the foundation of life and which holds the valuable aspects of life very firmly, also has the capacity to spread out right up to the exterior and to grasp sound from far away. You know that in terms of orifices the Kidneys open to the ear.

This seems a contradiction in light of the previous text. Are the Kidneys mastering the movement towards the interior or to the exterior? This is just one example of the ambivalent presentation of the Kidneys in all the classical Chinese medical texts.

Claude Larre: What we call an ambiguity or ambivalence here is sheer nonsense for the Chinese for they are talking about movement. When things are dead or still they are either this or that, but when things are in motion they are necessarily contradictory. They are not contradictory one to the other - but to the state when they are not moving. When things are moving they must have those two aspects. Where motion is concerned there is no ambiguity or ambivalence, that only enters when the movement stops.

Question: Is this two-way movement at all similar to that of the Lung?

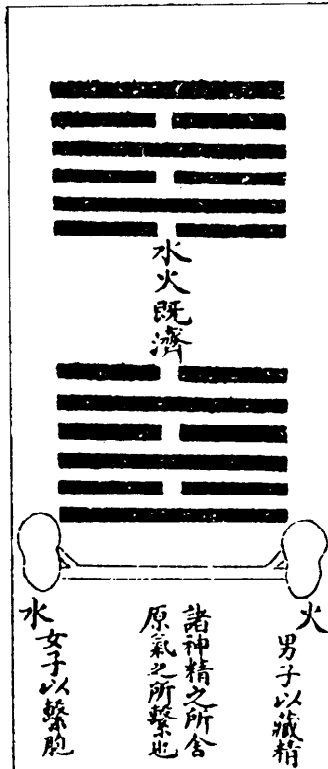
Elisabeth Rochat: No, it's different. Water and Fire both belong to the Kidneys in this context (which is different to the movements described in Su Wen Chapter 52), and a famous commentator on this chapter 29 of Ling Shu said that the Kidneys are in charge of giving the beginning of the power and construction of the body, and for this reason they master the achievement of the shape of the body right up to the exterior of the body. This is the power of the Essences but it is through the movement of Fire.

Another thing is that in Ling Shu Chapter 47 when the Kidneys are linked to the fu, the two fu related to the Kidneys master the most external region of the body, the cou li, which is the rhythm of life on the most superficial level of the skin. So this is an example of the deepest power spreading out to the exterior. Only that which is able to retain and hold firmly is able to stimulate that which can go outward to the most exterior part. It's only this double aspect of the Kidneys which is able to make the unity of life, and we call it Fire and Water, yin and yang or whatever.

NAN JING DIFFICULTY 36

Elisabeth Rochat: This presents the same idea:

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Nan Jing Difficulty 36

Nan Jing: Difficult Issue 36

The zang are all single, the Kidneys alone are double. Why is this? The Kidneys are double: they are not both Kidneys. The one on the left is the Kidney; the one on the right is ming men, the door of individual destiny. Ming men is the residence of shen jing, Spirits/Essences; it is where the original Breaths, yuan qi, are attached. There man stores the Essences (jing, sperm) and woman attaches the reproductive organs (bao, uterus). Thus the Kidneys are unique.

In different versions of the text this last sentence varies, some say, the Kidneys are unique, and others conclude that, the Kidneys are therefore double. But it is really the same thing.

So what does all this mean? The first statement is that all the zang are single: we have one Heart, one Lung, one Spleen and one Liver, so if the Kidneys are double it's the manifestation of a double aspect of the power inside them. The next point is that if the Kidneys are double, the double aspect of this power is that they are both Kidneys and ming men. Ming men is the presentation of the original Breaths of the Fire of life, the very spark of life by which a particular life begins.

In this text we have the presentation of the double aspect shen jing, Spirits/Essences, the Spirits which can give the Essences a good use for life, and the Essences which can serve as a good basis for the Spirits. We also have the yuan qi, the Original Breaths, which are on the yang side just as the Essences are on the yin side. So with the Kidneys we have the yin and yang mixed. The practice of referring to them as authentic yin and authentic yang developed after the time of the Nan Jing.

Something which is very old in Chinese presentations is that there is always something double in the North. For example, with the symbolic animals where the dragon relates to the East, the tiger to the West and the bird to the South, in the North there are always two animals. Often the tortoise and the snake together. We'll see this alluded to again in our explanation of Su Wen Chapter 5. This

distinction between left and right is quite important, but why should the left be for Kidneys and the right for ming men?

蛇龜宅鎮



“In the North there are always two animals, often the snake and tortoise together”.

Claude Larre: As Westerners we do not pay very much attention to right or left or North or South because direction is not of the essence for us. But if we take solar power as being connected with the origin of life, both for ourselves and for all life in the universe, then since we are able to see where the sun rises and sets, in understanding life we have to see where it starts and where it finishes. So it's not an arbitrary question of right and left, it's to do with assessing the natural origin of life. As adults we face South, but when we are embryos this is reversed because we are facing our parents upon whom we are dependent. So all this question of left and right is important because the Chinese are considering things within the solar system from the place where they start.

Elisabeth Rochat: Nan Jing Difficulty 36 is really speaking of life and its transmission because in each individual ming men is the starting point of their destiny, and their destiny is just the unfolding of the Heavenly gift of their nature. Ming men is also the place from where the power to create another life from your own comes. A man stores his Essences there, and in this context that means sperm. This is the same ideogram jing in Chinese because if Essences are full of life and the power of life then in man the liquid which is most full of life and its power is sperm. For a woman ming men is where the reproductive organs are attached, and this is the special place of the embryo where it can be developed through the double work of the transformation of Essences by Fire. So the sperm of a man are a liquid which is passed outside the body with a strength which complements the enveloping of

the woman's reproductive organs, and commentators say that as the only double zang in the body the Kidneys are the prototype of the alliance between yin and yang.

Returning to the question of why the Kidney is on the left and ming men on the right, another explanation could be that a rising movement can only appear from the bottom and a descending movement from the upper part. We've seen this in connected movements of Heaven and Earth where Heaven makes its influence descend to Earth and Earth makes its response rise up to Heaven. From this perspective ming men is on the right side in order to command the ascending movement, because the right side is yin and from the yin comes the fire of the yang which is within the yin. The Kidneys are on the left because as the power of the Water they mark the power of the yin within the yang. Other commentators have presented this in relation to the trigrams from the Book of Change. The two trigrams are Fire, li, and Water, kan, with the unbroken lines being yang and the broken lines being yin. This explanation was very fashionable at the time of the Ming Dynasty and it is very simple: Fire comes first when a living being appears and it contains Water or yin within in the shape of the broken line. With the trigram for Water it's the same in that Fire is contained within the yin power, and this is an exact image of the two Kidneys with ming men between them. Here ming men is not the right Kidney but it's the Breaths and original Breaths of the Fire of life which is itself between the Kidneys or inside the power of the Water.

One commentator on Difficulty 36 of the Nan Jing explained this unfolding movement of the Kidneys and ming men by saying that the tai ji, the supreme ridgepole, creates the two principles which are presentations of yin and yang which then create the four symbols or images which are representations of young yin, young yang, old yin and old yang, and then these four symbols create the eight trigrams and afterwards the sixty-four hexagrams. And analogically ming men creates the two Kidneys which in turn create the six zang and six fu, which in turn create the four limbs and the one hundred bones of the body and so on. This commentator was just explaining how the universe starting from tai ji could create everything, and how in the human body it is from Fire in the Kidneys and the compenetration of Fire and Water that all creation and construction of life appears.

NAN JING DIFFICULTY 39

Elisabeth Rochat: This Difficulty takes up the same problems again but the beginning is different because the initial question is different. The question is:

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Classical books say that there are five fu and six zang, why is this?



The answer is very simple. Normally we say there are six fu and five zang but sometimes there are five fu and six zang, and here the basic theory is recalled. Then the answer says that when we find six zang it's because the Kidneys are a double zang or have a double thesaurization. You know that the ideogram zang has the meaning of thesaurization, cang.

Nan Jing Difficulty 39

Claude Larre: To hide, to keep and to thesaurize are the three ways to understand the Chinese character cang. We are more inclined to use thesaurize because we are usually thinking of the Essences which are treasured somewhere. But other people are also right to use hide because the most inner part of life is hidden, and actually has no form. There is no difference in the Chinese between the active notion of thesaurizing and the passive notion of something being thesaurized.

Elisabeth Rochat: You can see that the ideogram for zang also contains the character for slave/minister which appears in the ideogram for Kidneys, and the Kidneys are the supreme zang because they are in charge of actively and firmly keeping the Essences of the five zang and six fu. The important thing in this Difficulty 39 is that when the classical text speaks of six zang the sixth is never xin bao lu or the Heart Governor, it's always this other side of the power of the Kidneys, the power which is not Water but the Fire of life. We can see how in later centuries this idea gets transformed into this aspect of the Fire of life at the level of the Heart, like a servant of the Heart. But originally this Fire of life was at the level of the Kidneys and it was the connection of the animation of life rising up until reaching the Heart and the Heart beginning the mastering of life through the Imperial Fire which is proper to the Heart.

Difficulty 39 continues by saying that on the right is ming men and on the left is the Kidneys, and that ming men is the residence of the jing shen, Essences/Spirits, and where the man stores or thesaurizes his Essences and the woman attaches her reproductive organs. The text also says that these Breaths of ming men are in free communication with the Kidneys, and it speaks of the double thesaurization of the Kidneys, Fire and Water, yin and yang etc.

Claude Larre: Would it be possible to have a comment on the fact that women are attaching and men are storing? There must be a balance between the two characters.

Elisabeth Rochat: The character for man is cang and for woman is xi. I think the explanation is that the Essences must be stored and kept, and so when the text speaks of a man's special Essences they are something very precious and full of life and must be kept very carefully, ie cang, stored. But for a woman with her intimate envelope of uterus etc. the problem is having a good connection with the rest of the body and the zang, the Blood and the Breaths, xue qi, in order to permit the development of life in the embryo. So perhaps for this reason we have xi, attach. To attach is to be connected, and connection is important for a woman who carries an embryo.

Claude Larre: My feeling is also that it is up to the man to guard preciously the ways and means for life, and that because he has stored them diligently and carefully he is able to use them. As a counterpart to this if the woman is not able to have that which is necessary to make those Essences of man prosper, then there will be no birth, no product, no child. So it seems to me that if I understand clearly what is asked of man I have a clue to understand what is asked of woman, because the same thing is asked of each, but according to their own sexual nature. The man's principle function is to keep the Essences, and the woman has all the machinery which is used to make those Essences into a new being. So if the woman is unable to maintain this organ in a good condition it's because the connections are not allowing that, and the attachment is not good.

Elisabeth Rochat: Because jing in this context relates to man, the translation can be sperm. For woman we have bao which really means something like an intimate envelope but which we can translate as uterus or reproductive organs in this context. Men and women both have jing and both have bao. Incidentally du mai, ren mai and chong mai all originate in bao, which is like the first envelope of life, and protects the beginning of life. Of course for a woman, who by nature is yin and resembles the yin movement of Earth, the expression of this special capacity is in the form of the uterus, which protects life for the embryo but also protects life for the woman herself in the form of Essences.

LING SHU CHAPTER 2

Elisabeth Rochat: In this chapter the idea of the double thesaurization of the Kidneys is also recorded. It comes at the end of the chapter and the context is the coupling of one zang with one fu, for example the Lung with the Large Intestines. The text reads:

Kidneys are joined with Bladder, and Bladder is the fu of the jin ye

This is normal and the same presentation of the other zang and fu but afterwards the text continues:

Shao yang is dependent on the Kidneys. The Kidneys, rising up, in the upper part are attached (lian) to the Lung.

Claude Larre: Why lian not xi?

Elisabeth Rochat: Because it's not a question of having a connection but of having a relationship.

Claude Larre: Why not luo?

Elisabeth Rochat: Because luo is a special network for communication.

Claude Larre: I guess that lian is the common word for when no special connection is seen, but there is just a normal relationship.

Elisabeth Rochat: In lian you have the character for chariot and the character for walking. A chariot can link two different places together, carrying something from one place to another.

Claude Larre: There's no silk thread in this ideogram, as there is in xi or luo. There's no network in lian.

Elisabeth Rochat: It's a connection because something passes between the two places, and the connection is continuous. **Ling Shu Chapter 47** also sees the Kidneys connected with two fu, again in the same context of the coupling of zang and fu. The text says:

The Kidneys are connected with the Triple Heater and the Bladder.

Commentaries on chapters 2 and 47 are very precise, saying, for instance, that the right Kidney is connected with the Triple Heater and the left Kidney is connected with the Bladder. This is only understandable in the light of the Nan Jing Difficulty 36 which we saw earlier where the left Kidney was presented with Water and the Kidneys themselves, and the right Kidney was presented with the Fire of Life and ming men. So in Ling Shu Chapter 47 the Triple Heater is connected with ming men on the right, and we know from the Nan Jing in particular that the Triple Heater can be considered like a messenger or servant of ming men for the distribution of Original Breaths, yuan qi, through the body. And the Bladder is connected with the left Kidney because the Bladder shares the Water element with the Kidneys. Kidneys and Bladder are also in a biao li relationship which means that they share the representation of the Water element in its yin and yang aspects. We saw this in Ling Shu Chapter 2 as well where it said:

Kidneys are connected with the Bladder and the Bladder is the fu of the jin ye.

This is the sharing of the power of the Water in this special biao li relationship. This text continues, as we saw, by connecting the Kidneys with the Lung, and this explains the double thesaurization. This double thesaurization of the Kidneys is represented on one side by shao yang, the Fire which is just beginning to spread out and which is the distribution of the Breaths of life, and which is obviously the yang power, and on the other side is represented by the connection with the Lung which are the zang in the upper part responsible for liquids in the body and for making them descend. In the seminar on the Lung we saw that in Su Wen Chapter 21 the Lungs are involved in the transformation and processing of the liquids in the body. The fire of the Kidneys or of ming men is in charge of elevation of humid vapours up to the Lungs through the transformations proper to the Lower Heater.

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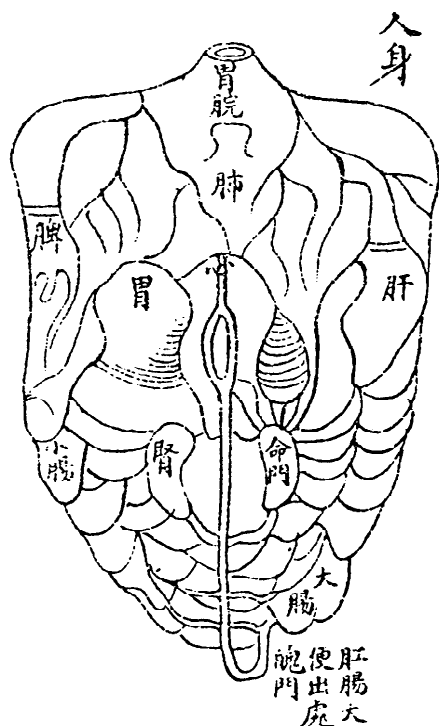


Diagram of the Organs showing Kidney and Ming Men. re Nan Jing, Difficult Issue 42.

All commentators record this double affiliation of the Kidneys to Water and Fire, and the famous commentator on the Nei jing, Zhang Zhicong, says the two Kidneys master the Water of Heaven which is One, the unity, and the Fire of Earth, which is at the level of Two. And he says that this division explains the double thesaurization of the Kidneys, and that therefore shao yang is dependent on the Kidneys and the Kidneys have to rise up to have a connection with the Lung. This means that by or through the Kidneys, Water and Fire, One and Two, Heaven and Earth compose a unity.

Claude Larre: I would like to add something. We are in the process of evolving a new creature, a new human being, and while man and woman are still separate we are looking at the unity of this composition. So when we are talking of the origin of man we are talking of the unity of the couple, and this is the double aspect of life when life evolves from generation.

Another aspect of this numerology is that if we have Heaven on the one hand and Earth on the other it's sure that we should attribute the number One more to Heaven which gives general inspiration, and number Two to Earth which corresponds in a manner similar to what happens when you look in a mirror. When you look in a mirror you have the feeling of yourself and the image in the mirror, but when you are not looking in the mirror you only have the feeling of yourself. So since Earth is always a replica of Heaven's action it's quite normal that it should be given the number Two. Adding One and Two together you come to Three, and in Three you have the feeling of reunification because One and Three are uneven numbers and One, Three, Five and Seven show the unity of life while Two, Four, Six and Eight show more the contrast of life.

Elisabeth Rochat: So why does the commentator speak of the Water of Heaven and the Fire of Earth? I think it is his purpose to show the yin inside the yang and the yang inside the yin, which is precisely the definition of the Kidneys. We know that there is Water in Heaven, because if not there is no rain, and without Fire in the Earth there is no life. It's because there is a compenetration and junction of yin and yang, and a fertile exchange between Water and Fire that life can continue, and the presentation of this in the body is in the Kidneys because they master the thesaurization of the Essences. The Essences are always present where life is, as stated in Ling Shu Chapter 8 and many

other places. Between life and Essences there is only the difference of point of view, because Essences are just the form and shape which life takes. The Kidneys master the thesaurization of Essences from all the body; and they keep the special Essences, which were later called the Essences of Anterior Heaven, for renewal of the being. The Kidneys are also the source from where the Breaths can take life or the source for the Breaths of life, these are the same thing.

LING SHU CHAPTER 8

Question: Does this relate to the thirteen parts of ourselves as described in Ling Shu Chapter 8?

Elisabeth Rochat: Yes, the relationship is through Essences, because Essences which are stored by Kidneys are the Essences which come between life, sheng, and Spirits, shen, in the thirteen entities or parts. There is virtue, de, Breath, qi, Life, sheng, Essences, jing, Spirits, shen, so Essences appear at number four which is in the likeness of Earth.

Claude Larre: As regards number four being attributed to Earth, Earth takes care of what has shape so since Essences are in charge of giving the exact authentic shape to an individual, Earth and Essences are performing a similar function, and are the same aspect of life.

Elisabeth Rochat: Another interesting thing in Ling Shu Chapter 8 is that in this presentation of the thirteen entities the Kidneys are at the end of the spiritual aspects of the zang in position number five. We studied this chapter in the seminar on the Heart. After de, qi, sheng, jing and shen comes hun, po, xin, yi, and then zhi, will, and finally comes si, thinking, lu, reflection and zhi, know-how. In the middle of the five spiritual entities (hun, po, xin, yi, zhi) comes xin, Heart. This isn't the Heart as one of the five zang, it's the Heart as the highest master of life, the dwelling place of the Spirits and so on. Amongst these spiritual aspects zhi, which is linked with the Kidneys, appears last, and the Essences, jing, which are another aspect of the Kidneys stand before these five spiritual qualities. So we can see that the Kidneys appear at the level of that which is just the formalization of life in a living being, and before the spiritual aspects of the zang which need Essences in order to exist in an individual, and also at the end of the list of the spiritual aspects. So the Kidneys are like a bracket to enclose the highest aspects of vitality.

At the end of Ling Shu Chapter 8 we find the five zang connected with each of the special aspects of life, such as qi or mai, which are under its control. For example the Liver thesaurizes Blood, xue, and Blood is the dwelling place of the hun, and the Spleen thesaurizes the nutritive aspect, ying, and this is the dwelling place of the yi. The Heart thesaurizes the mai, which are the dwelling place of the shen, the Spints, and the Lung thesaurizes the Breaths which are the dwelling place of the po. And finally the Kidneys thesaurize the Essences, which are the dwelling place of the zhi.

After the presentation of the thirteen entities there comes a description of the pathology of the emotions in six tables. The first relates to the Heart, the second to the Spleen, the third to Liver, the fourth to Lung and finally there come the Kidneys. The text says that very strong anger which cannot stop injures the zhi, the will. After the Kidneys there is a sixth case which is not related to any of the zang, but which talks about fear and fright which we are unable to be free of, and which injures the Essences. The important thing is that in Chapter 8 of Ling Shu we have six cases of pathological disorders in emotions: five are connected with the five zang and the last with the Kidneys via the jing.

The sixth case concerns an injury to the foundation of life through the Essences, so it's not exactly the Kidneys themselves, but something which is within the power of the Kidneys. The very spark of life can only rise up from the Essences which are both Water and the element of everything which exists. *Claude Larre*: When we say will, zhi, we understand will-power, and we are just using a shortened form. This should be made clear because when we talk of will in the West it's a very intellectual consideration of man's activity, but the Chinese character zhi is to do with what makes life within an individual emerge from all the universe. They call this the will of life, so in zhi we must understand the roots of life where will is built, and the power to organize things, not from an intellectual point of view, but in terms of the strength which arises from the five zang, and in particular from the Kidneys which is where the Essences reside and where they are controlled from.

Question: Why are the fifth and sixth cases of pathological disorders not related to the double aspect of the Kidneys?

Elisabeth Rochat: Because Essences obviously, and in this chapter textually, are connected with Kidneys, and for this reason we can see that the first attack on the Kidneys results in disorder in the will, but after this there is no more mention of Kidneys, just Essences. This is exactly as in Ling Shu Chapter 47 or 2 and Nan Jing Difficulty 39 or 36 where there appears a doubling of each important aspect. I think that in the Chinese mind each time we reach a central important point, there is a doubling. For example the Heart has a double power in the Imperial and Ministerial aspects, and at the Centre there is the doubling of the presentation of the exchange between Heaven and Earth, the rising and falling of Stomach and Spleen. And the Kidneys too are important and central because they are the beginning and they are double. The ideogram used in the Nan Jing and in Ling Shu Chapter 2 is not the ideogram for two as in the series one, two, three, four, etc, but a special ideogram liang, which means two in a pair or couple. The doubling at the level of the Kidneys is life as a unity but coming from a couple. The Virtue of Heaven and the Breaths of Earth work together in order to give life. A couple is at the origin of each living being, and within each new life there is this doubling again with the Kidneys which enables life to begin once more. The Kidneys are the model of all coupling and the synergy inside a couple.

QUESTIONS

Question: You were talking about shao yang and how the Triple Heater carries yang Fire energy of the Kidneys, is it the case that the Gall Bladder carries the yin Water energy of the left Kidney?

Elisabeth Rochat: Shao yang is connected in this context particularly with the Triple Heater and with the power of ming men according to the Nan Jing, but the relationship with the Gall Bladder comes centuries later. The Gall Bladder is a special fu with a special connection to the Essences, because as an extraordinary fu, the Gall Bladder thesaurizes Essences. The Gall Bladder also has something to do with the uprising of life and the first appearance of life in the Spring etc., but in the special context of Ling Shu Chapter 2, shao yang is certainly more representative of the function of the Triple Heater in the special link between the Triple Heater and ming men or the yang aspect of the power of the Kidneys. The Gall Bladder is never connected with Water.

Question: How concrete is the pathology relating to the two sides, right and left, of the Kidneys?

Claude Larre: Diagnosis of the illness affecting the Kidneys will tell you whether it is the right or left. The question is difficult to answer outside the treatment room! If a person has only one Kidney, I wonder how it affects things? Do you have anything to say on that Elisabeth?

Elisabeth Rochat: It's really difficult to say because if the Kidneys are the pattern for the interpenetration and synergy of yin and yang then if the so-called yang of the Kidneys is decreasing after a time the so-called yin will also decrease, and if the yin of the Kidneys is decreasing then you can have the phenomenon of yang which is too strong because of lack of yin, and in reality the functioning of the yang is in disorder too. If you look at the symptoms of yin or yang deficiency in the Kidneys they are quite similar: weakness, tinnitus, pain in the lumbar region and lower part, vertigo, mental confusion and problems in the sexual area.

The principle is, not only for Kidneys but for all vitality, that Essences need Breaths in order to be carried, and Breaths need Essences in order to be released. Ling Shu Chapter 8 says that if the yin is empty then there are no more Breaths and the result of that is death. So if yin is decreasing then Breaths are decreasing and vitality is decreasing, and this is true of each part of the vitality of the body or the life of the universe. Within man, of course, it is the Kidneys which are responsible at the highest level for this. The role of the Kidneys is to manifest this interpenetration and collaboration of yin and yang.

Claude Larre: There is no answer to your question as you may see! What it would mean is that one Kidney would be performing the double function which is impossible because everything is in the crossing. The Chinese make a division between left and right and yin and yang in terms of the general constitution of man, but in a concrete case in your treatment room if someone has only one Kidney there will certainly be a lowering of the power of the Kidneys. I suppose the answer is that it is nearly impossible in relation to treatment to make a distinction one to another. But this is a question for practitioners and it depends on what they have observed. As for the text, the text is a presentation and although not arbitrary is theoretically distributing roles. In a practical case you are not helped by that.

Question: If one reads Nan Jing Difficulty 36, ming men is the residence of shen jing. Now that isn't a particularly yang function, more a yin aspect, and yet very often one tends to equate ming men with the yang function, so it seems one has to consider ming men in relation to both aspects, yin and yang. Can you comment on that?

Elisabeth Rochat: I think in this context of the Nan Jing the purpose is to present ming men as the origin of life, and as the origin of life it is just the junction of all this is coming from Anterior Heaven, yin and yang, and the Kidneys are just in charge of presenting the movement of Water. In this context of the Nan Jing, ming men is really the root of the twelve meridians, the great door for expiration and inspiration, the source of the Breaths of life and so on. After this, the Kidneys which are double, represent the first division between left and right, yin and yang, Fire and Water, etc. That is the perspective of the Nan Jing. From another perspective which dominated in centuries afterwards, when the Chinese people spoke of Kidneys they were implying the yin side and when they spoke of ming men they were implying the yang side. But although there is a great unity in Chinese thought

because it is Chinese, within that there are different schools and one of these in certain epochs did say that ming men is the tai ji, the ridgepole, in each living being and that everything comes from that. That is the perspective of the Nan Jing, but it is not the perspective of all Chinese texts. In modern texts ming men represents Fire and the yang aspect of the Kidneys, and the Kidneys are the more yin aspect. It's a question of epochs and schools. But as far as I understand it the point of view which is common to all these currents of-thought is that at this level we have something which presents the first junction of two kinds of Essences, Water and Fire, yin and yang and so on, and that from this point all life explodes.

Question: Is it a later attribution then that ming men is between the Kidneys?

Elisabeth Rochat: It is in the Nan Jing, because when it says that the right is ming men and the left are the Kidneys I think that it's not a physical distribution, it's an appropriation of the left and right - not a physical appropriation of the two masses of the Kidneys. It's in Difficulty 66 that we have the presentation of ming men as the Breaths which are beating between the two Kidneys, and you can see that it's a kind of Sea of Breaths in the Lower Heater, and the Breaths are the Original Breaths carrying the force of the Origin. If they are the Breaths of the Origin then they are also the Breaths of Heaven and the Authentic, and they are hidden in the depths of the back. At the level of the Heart we also have the Sea of Breaths in the chest, Breaths which cause the beating of the Heart at the top of the trunk and in the front. So there is a vertical axis between the Kidneys and Heart and between the two kinds of Sea of Breaths. There is also a link with the spinal marrow and cord.

Question: Is it in this text that it goes from back to front?

Elisabeth Rochat: No. But in some texts we have this notion that ming men is these kinds of Breaths which are beating between the Kidneys, and the same ideogram is used to designate the beating of the Heart under the influence of the Ancestral Breaths in the middle of the chest, tan zhong. So it's impossible not to make the link because the same ideogram is used, but there's no text saying that, because it's not the way in which the Chinese explain themselves! They don't have an axis in their vocabulary as such. They prefer left and right and beating and so on.

Claude Larre: When they say 'to spread' or 'to rise' or 'to go down' they are not talking of an axis, but the normal interpretation is of an axis!

Elisabeth Rochat: Another point is that in this Nan Jing Difficulty 36, ming men is the first conjunction of our own life, and it is also by its power that we can make another life.



Ming Men

Question: Can you explain the ideogram ming?

Elisabeth Rochat: The first thing is that in the upper part, two are joined as one. It's the idea of gathering. This is the upper part of another very useful ideogram he, junction, as used in the six junctions, liu he. Below we have the mouth on the left and the sceptre on the right. The sceptre is here for authority, because only an important person like a king can hold a sceptre. I think the mouth is here for the blowing of Breaths, and of course, the mouth can also be the organ by which man gives orders, and can symbolize the power of the master who gives orders and who is obeyed.

Those are the elements of the ideogram ming, also seen in Wieger Lesson 14 I. So what is the meaning? It is that I start my life through this conjunction of two other Essences, or Spirits, or living beings - my parents representing the two complementary forces of the universe, yin and yang and so on - these two Essences make a new composition and I exist. And I exist with my proper nature, which is the composition of elements given at the very beginning, having the ability to develop in the highest and best way. It's a way of expressing the power and virtue of Heaven in me. It's the idea that Heaven for me or the destiny given to me by Heaven is nothing other than the unfolding of my proper nature in the best way. This must also be according to the circumstances of life, but there is another ideogram which is often joined with ming - and it means all the circumstances of life and all I must do according to my nature to follow the right way, which is the way of authenticity. If I realize my nature I become authentic and I become a celestial being. It's the same at the level of a dynasty, the so called tian ming, mandate of Heaven, is just the same as for an individual. If a lineage has a virtue, a power which enables it to ensure the charge of Emperor or warrior or king, then it has to follow that way through each of its members, generation after generation. That is the tian ming, Heavenly Mandate, for the lineage. If one day a member of the lineage is unworthy and does things which are not in the nature of the lineage and its authenticity, then the Chinese said that Heaven would withdraw its mandate because there's no more power and virtue in the lineage and it no longer realizes its original and primitive nature. It's the same for man. If he becomes unable to realize his nature he becomes unworthy and just perishes without illumination or longevity.

Claude Larre: The difficulty may arise from the fact that when someone commands us to do something we feel this is different from what we want, and that it is against our own will. Or if we do

things we do not refer to any authority. But it seems that the Chinese of old thought and acted quite differently because they said that if I do something I am obeying the mandate of Heaven. The difficulty is that we are unable to accept the dual aspect of Heaven as supreme power and as that which makes the personal nature within myself. As long as we are unable to see that the command of Heaven and the realization of our own authentic way are the two faces of the same thing, it is impossible for us to make any commentary on the will of Heaven or proper destiny etc. It's purely a question of understanding that Heaven and Nature are so much the same thing that the Chinese do not have two characters for them, and when they say tian, Heaven, we never really know if they want to express supreme power or the true nature of things. But it's true that when they are talking of xing as nature, they want to express a Nature which is perceptible for us because whenever the Heart radical is used to form a character we know it is an actual, perceptible reality. And when they use ming they want to show the other aspect. Ming and xing, proper nature, pertain to the same highest level, but looking at ming I see my future which is within myself, and looking at xing I see the condition of my future which is my character, my temperament, my nature and all that. So when we use Chinese characters we have to understand that they come in series, and we really have to know which one is the fountain, the source of the others. The highest source of everything is Heaven, Earth or Man. The second layer is Life, and within that we put many other characters. At the second level when we use one character there is also another opposite character to cover the field which is left uncovered. So we have ming and xing.

The consequence of this is that whenever the author of a medical book translates tian with Heaven it means that he is making a choice of saying Heaven more than Nature, but this doesn't mean that he does not understand the idea of Heaven as the individual's own nature. Conflict between people is when they oppose their natures and characters and they try to convey the idea that they are not opposing other people but are just doing what Heaven has asked them to do. They forget that the other person is in the same situation. So the conflict is always in the name of Heaven! But in fact it is always the opposition of what Heaven is in Me, not Heaven as such. So we come back to the question of the ego which is so important in Ling Shu Chapter 8, where it doesn't say Heaven is Virtue but that Heaven in you is Virtue. That Virtue is of a specific kind because you are not your neighbour, but your neighbour also has a Virtue, and the name 'Virtue' is common for every person. All this is clearly said in Zhuang Zi Chapter 2 where they are alluding to my position and the position of everyone like me, which is opposing your position and those of your ranks. So you get the Tories, the Liberals, Labour, the Alliance and all that! But medically speaking the analysis is just to be able to understand the particular nature and condition of the person you are treating, which is different from the person who came just before and the person who is in the waiting room. The good point about the Worsley school is that J.R. has been able to put the emphasis on the knowledge of the Self of each patient, and around that he has built a lot of things he has drawn from the Chinese tradition. Everybody knows that his strong point is that he is able to isolate, by means of his perception, the nature of the patient, and being full of strength is able to do a very impressive treatment.