

THE WOOD ELEMENT IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

AN INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW: LIVER AND GALL BLADDER

(from: Claude Larre, Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallée: **The Liver** (1994); **The Secret Treatise of the Spiritual Orchid** (1992).

INTRODUCTION (Larre & Rochat, 1994)

Peter Firebrace: I'd like to welcome Father Larre and Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallée from the European School of Acupuncture. After our last seminar covering in broad outline the twelve zang, we are now going to go into detail on the liver and gallbladder. If you go back directly to the Chinese texts, the strokes which make up a character seem to give a direct insight into the energetic impulses behind the fundamental concepts of Chinese medicine. By working through the Nei jing, especially the early chapters, where these characters are put in a certain sequence to show the kind of movements that represent life and what happens when that is disturbed, you have a very clear perception and expression of things which is useful to us as acupuncturists. We are fortunate to have Father Larre and Elisabeth not only as translators but also as commentators. A translation is too short, it needs expanding in a commentary.

Claude Larre: I have no need to say how pleased we are to come back to London for a continuation of the work we have been doing in Oxford for the past four years. The trouble with us being French is that we do not speak enough English. But in a way that may be an advantage since it means you are obliged to pay more attention to what is said. You have to make your own translation, not from the Chinese but from that sort of half English to pure English. We ourselves have to make a more complicated journey from the Chinese text, which is not only Chinese but classical Chinese, and not only classical Chinese but classical Chinese intended to convey a lot of information on life and on normal and pathological ways of life. From that we come not to a translation but to some sort of intuition or comprehension of what the text means or wants to convey, all the time being very much aware that there is not just one way of apprehending life.

I feel that these seminars will be very helpful, not only for a theoretical basis but also for practice. Elisabeth has a very broad understanding of the Chinese classics, she knows when things are and she even knows when things are not. I personally do not know very much about acupuncture theory, but I know more about the larger setting of the so-called Chinese medical books within the broader framework of classical thought and specifically the Zhuang zi, the Lao zi, the Huainan zi and the other books which are usually the ultimate references for any Chinese medical text. The differences are not those between schools of thought, but rather what is appropriate for a specific medical case where the needle is called for, not a brush or a government. There is no difference in the way the universe is ruled and how my own individual body, mind and spirit might be.

The programme today is on the liver and gallbladder. As everybody knows there must always be a teaching on a pair of so-called meridians since one is the leading factor and the other is on another

level helping the first. There is some sort of subordination and co-operation, one is principally in charge, but is unable to make the function work properly without the other. This is seen everywhere, but specifically in Zhuang zi chapter 2 where something is said of the way the universe moves inside and outside of oneself. Looking from that point of view we are able to see that there is no pronouncement on human life which is not at the same time a pronouncement of the universal way, what we call dao (as: in the Daode jing), or what we call virtue, de, which is very close to the dao. Paying attention to the fact that an individual is a person who is made and sustained and destroyed by the universe itself, we feel that it is impossible to just make a presentation of what is liver or what is gallbladder, even in the Chinese way. We really have to take a view of all life, and we know that there are at least five aspects through which life is seen, as distinctly stated in Su wen chapter 5. If I feel that the heart is the supreme governor I am fearful that the beating of my heart may stop and that then the sovereign will be without a kingdom or power. So usually I say that as long as my heart is beating correctly and strongly enough I am in good health. But at the same time if I am a woman of about 49 or a man of about 64, I feel the lack of some sort of kidney energy, and I am no longer in a position, broadly speaking, to give the surplus of my life outside myself and create another life. So turning from the role of heart to the role of kidneys I hesitate and say maybe it is not the heart which is so important? The heart is the sovereign but the true power ascends in myself and is ready to expand outwards, so that is the power of the kidneys. But sitting beside the bed of a dying person I see that if the breath stops then life will stop, so I may have the feeling that life is not so much a question of the kidneys or the heart but of breathing and the lungs.

Looking at a plant I see that the first foliage is a very small green blade coming forth from the ground, giving the impression of life. Dropping the more complicated expressions of life, animal, vegetable or human, and just concentrating on the impulse of life which is seen through the expansion from green blade to plant to tree, with many branches and much foliage, then maybe all life is just constructed on this same principle. The final expression of life is just the combination of the more essential functions related to the less noble functions, all working together to bring forth and sustain life, and make it radiate. That is a concept of life. So we are not dismissing the lung or the heart or the kidneys, but today we will just take the aspect of life which is wood within the five elements, or muscular forces, jin, within the body actions, and liver within the organs. We are able to see this fibre which makes the wood able to expand and extend working in the universe through the colour green, and through all the muscular forces. These are only a way for the limbs to make motions, and they are exactly the same as wood as an element.

To first give a broad presentation we will make reference to the classical texts. This is not a luxury or something just for the specialist. It is something for everybody. From the point of theory it is impossible to fully understand anything systematically if you do not refer to the texts. If you do not know Chinese, you cannot understand everything from just reading a translation. Our discussion and presentation are an effort to give you access to the Chinese texts, because we take for granted that you do not know and do not want to learn Chinese! We have been studying these texts for years, and our position is that it is not only possible but necessary to convey the spirit and the organizational structure of the text. So this is a sort of general plea, not for your attention, but for your willingness

to perceive what stands behind what is said. We do not summarize or make a resume of anything in order to replace what is said by the Chinese by what we feel should be said. Many conflicts between different schools arise just because they lack the ability or even the desire to go to where the tradition has lain for centuries and centuries. There is no need to say that one text from the Ming Dynasty contradicts another from the Song Dynasty, or that the Song Dynasty so greatly changed the outlook of the Chinese that it is no longer the same thing as was commented upon during the Tang Dynasty. Not to mention the more original texts of the Han Dynasty or to take into account that what is written has been spoken not for centuries but for millenia.

Su wen chapter 8

Claude Larre: Let us turn to the presentation in Su wen chapter 8 where the charges, guan, are described and named, and then go through the first chapters of the Nei jing and see how the liver is presented. The name of chapter 8 is 'The Secret Treatise of the Spiritual Orchid'. It starts, as usual, with a question from Huang di. He asks to be instructed on the relative charges and ranks of the 12 zang. The celestial master, Qi Bo, replies 'What a vast question! If you will allow me, let us go through it all.' The specific charges of the liver and gallbladder are:

**The liver holds the office of general of the armed forces. Assessment of circumstances and conception of plans stem from it.
The gallbladder is responsible for what is just and exact. Determination and decision stem from it.**

This Treatise is secret and is kept in a special place in the Imperial palace library called the Spiritual Orchid, ling lan. We understand from this name that the essence of life is preserved through the various charges of the zang fu. If the Treatise is secret it is just because it can be dangerous to let everyone know the secrets if they are not able to act in accordance with the knowledge. In a way this is right, because it is never good to give pearls to swine. But you may ask 'Who are swine and who are not?' That is something we do not know, and the feeling of a democracy is that we have to give the best to the worst, and that it is right to disseminate knowledge. But if you print what is secret for public use then it is necessarily different, and what is printed is never what was sought after. Behind every thought is observation and the reflection of mind and spirit on what has been observed. So a good way to teach pathology is to give all the information through observations of the way the liver and gallbladder function as they should do, and it is only when something goes astray or when something is wrong that we see clearly what should be. When everything goes as it should it is so silent, so invisible and so secret that it is nearly impossible to understand what it is about. So it is through pathology that we have clues to normality.

In the first 12 chapters of the Su wen and the Ling shu where the general functions and outlook on life are given, normality and pathology are presented at the same time. It usually starts with normality and then alludes to the pathology. But the more you proceed through the 81 chapters of the Nei jing, the Ling shu or the Nan jing, the more it is the pathology which is described since these books were intended to help people cure diseases. There may sometimes seem a slight contradiction at points between the emphasis on the expansion of life, with the green and the wood and the foliage, and the

defence of life aspect found in Su wen chapter 8 which talks of the general commanding the armed forces with the gallbladder assisting in decision making. This is an open question.

THE LIVER AND GALLBLADDER

OVERVIEW FROM THE NEIJING JINGYI (from Larre & Rochat, 1994)



The Liver, Gan

THE LIVER: YIN ORGAN OF THE WOOD ELEMENT

The liver is located under the ribs; its meridian has a connection, *luo*, to the gallbladder; it has the relationship of *biao li*, interior exterior, with the gallbladder. Among the parts of the body it is linked with the muscles; its orifice opens at the eye.

Its functions are to govern the storage and depositing as well as the regulation of the blood in the whole body, and to govern the movements of the muscular and bony articulations.

In the regulation of the emotions and the mind, *jing shen qing zhi*, the heart plays the role of the central pivot and master, but this regulation is also closely related to the function of the liver.

1) The liver has the office of general of the armed forces, *jiang jun*, from this comes assessment of circumstances and conception of plans.

The liver, by nature, likes whatever is progressive and lively and dislikes whatever is melancholy and causes obstruction; it corresponds to the *qi* that initiates the upsurging of life, that of spring.

To be in good condition, the liver *qi* must not be either obstructed, withdrawn or full of melancholy, but neither must it be too strong.

If the liver *qi* is excessive, the *yang* rises too strongly and one is agitated and easily angered. If on the other hand, the liver *qi* is insufficient and loses the male force that characterizes its nature, then one is timid and fearful.

In pathology the aspect presented by these illnesses is directly related to the regulatory function of the liver on the emotions and the mind. Agitation, the tendency to anger, fear, timidity - all this follows from loss of the normal functioning of the liver, which gives it the office of the general of the armed forces; this has repercussions on the normal movement of the emotions and the mind and prevents the ability to analyse deeply or to conceive plans with consideration.

As it says in Su wen chapter 8:

The liver has the office of the general of the armed forces; from this comes assessment of circumstances and conception of plans.

2) The liver stores blood, gan cang xue

The liver's function of storing, cang, the blood is to be differentiated from the heart's function of mastering the life-giving network of the blood, xue mai. That the liver stores the blood shows the regulation of the quantity of the blood supply. That the heart masters the xue mai shows the motive force for the circulation of the blood supply.

The quantity of blood that circulates in the life-giving network, mai, is a function of the body's activity, with, in addition, the influences of the qi of the four seasons, day and night, yin and yang; this quantity varies, increasing or decreasing accordingly.

When engaging in activity, the quantity of blood in each part of the body must be increased. But when one is at rest or asleep there is less movement and one then needs less blood; the excess blood then returns to the liver where it is stored.

So, Su wen chapter 10 says:

When man is at rest, the blood returns to the liver, ren wo xue gui gan.

If the liver is affected and loses its function of storing the blood, then one can have numerous dreams, be easily frightened and not sleep well. These are symptoms of what is called 'the hun are not well housed'.

3) The liver masters the muscular forces, jin. It flourishes in the nails.

The muscles rely on the bony articulations; contraction and relaxation are the movements of the articulations linked to the bones. When a movement lasts too long or is too violent, then the muscular strength decreases and runs out and one gets tired. If that gets worse, the muscles are injured and can no longer flex or extend.

Su wen chapter 23 says:

Walking for a long time injures the muscular forces, jiu xing shang jin.

Movement is the role of the muscles but the nutrition and maintenance of the muscles originates in the liver. The liver diffuses the essences, jing, to nourish and maintain the muscles; when the muscles are well maintained, movement can be made with strength.

Su wen chapter 21 says:

The vital qi of solid food enters the stomach; there is diffusion of the essences, jing, to the liver, there is impregnation, yin, of the qi into the muscles, jin.

And Su wen chapter 5 says:

The liver masters the muscular forces.

But if the liver qi is weakened, it cannot supply the muscles with what is necessary for their perfect and full maintenance; then the muscular movements are reduced in strength. For example an old man has slow movements, without skill or flexibility; this is related to the fact that the liver no longer nourishes the muscles.

Su wen chapter 1 says:

In a man of seven times eight years the liver qi declines, gan qi shuai, the tendons and muscles are no longer capable of moving, jin bu neng dong.

The nails are the surplus of the muscles and the muscles are invigorated, sheng, or produced by the liver.

The state of emptiness or fullness, xu shi, of the liver is reflected in the nails.

When the strength of the muscles is robust and vigorous, the nails are very solid. When the muscles are without strength, the nails are very thin and soft. When the liver is ill, the nails are often brittle, dry, dull or change in shape.

Su wen chapter 10 says:

The reunion of the liver is in the muscles, gan zhi he jin ye, Its radiance is in the nails.

And again in Su wen chapter 9:

The liver is the trunk for extreme cessation (cessation due to the reaching of an extremity), gan zhe ba ji zhi ben, Its flourishing aspect is in the nails, qi hua zai zhao, Its full power is in the muscles, qi chong zai jin, It is for the production (invigoration) of blood and qi, yi sheng xue qi.

THE GALLBLADDER: YANG ORGAN OF THE WOOD ELEMENT

The gallbladder is the fu of the liver; it stores, cang, internally essential juices, jing zhi. Its meridian has a connection, luo, with the liver.

The Nanjing Difficulty 49 says:

The gallbladder is located between the short leaves of the liver, it is full of essential juices, three hundredths of a bushel.

What is therefore stored in the gallbladder are the essential juices; it is for this reason that the Ling shu chapter 2 calls it:

the fu of central essences, zhong jing zhi fu.

The essences stored in the gallbladder are the clear pure juices, qing jing, quite different from the cloudy, zhuo, substances that fill the fu that are said to be for transport and transformation, chuan hua zhi fu.

These are the fu that transport and transform in the digestive tract. This is why the Qiangying yaofang calls it:

Owing to this characteristic of the gallbladder to store essences, cang jing, it belongs to the six fu, liu fu, but it also belongs to the extraordinary and permanent fu, qi heng zhi fu.

The nature of the gallbladder is to be hard and straight. Being hard (strong, male) it is brave and robust, resolute and determined. So the Su wen chapter 8 can say:

The gallbladder is responsible for what is just and exact. From it come determination and decision.

The role of the gallbladder is determination and decision. It provides protection against anything that can unduly agitate the jing shen, the essences and spirits, such as great shocks, da jing, or sudden fears, cu kong.

It maintains and controls the normal circulation of qi and blood; it keeps the relationship between the different organs harmonious and well-balanced. Its role is therefore very important.

When the jing shen are agitated, this has repercussions on the normal and healthy functioning of the zang fu and can lead to disturbances in the circulation of qi and blood.

If the gallbladder qi is brave and robust, resolute and firm, then even if the jing shen are unduly agitated, causing repercussions and disturbance in the body, these will be of little importance and the return to normal is made relatively quickly.

But if the gallbladder qi is weak, there is the opposite condition, which often leads to illness.

LIVER AND GALLBLADDER PATHOLOGY

Principal Symptoms of Wood Element Disharmonies

Mental and emotional disturbance.

Pains in the ribs, xie tong.

Swelling in the ribs, xie zhang.

Problems in the lower abdomen.

Vertigo with blurred vision, xuan yun.

Headache, tou tong.

Buzzing in the ears, er ming.

Cramps, convulsions and numbness, chou, jing, mamu.

Bitter taste in the mouth, kou ku.

Hernia, shan.

Dysmenorrhea, yue jing bu tiao.

Vomiting of blood and nosebleeds.

Eye problems.

Jaundice, huang dan.

Cold and heat that come and go, han re wang lai.

Principal causes of Disease in the Liver

1) (Of) the six perverse influences, liu yin

Mainly wind and the others (cold, damp, heat, dryness and fire) combining with wind.

2) (Of) the seven emotions, qi qing

Anger, nu, but also fear, kong, fright, jing, and prostration from grief, you.

3) Other causes

Alcohol, Obstructions Sexual excess.

All three of these causes will produce either exaggeration (great excess, tai guo) or deficiency (not attaining, bu ji) in the main functions of the liver:

Pushing upward and surging up, sheng fa,

Free circulation and flow, shu xie,

Motion and shaking, dong yao.

Liver Syndromes, summary

1) The liver qi is obstructed and knotted, gan qi yu jie:

liver qi obstructed in its meridian,

phlegm, tan, and qi cause obstructions and knots,

liver obstructed, qi blocked, blood stagnant,

liver qi attacks the stomach,

liver qi overrides the spleen,

2) Liver fire blazes upwards, gan huo shang yan, or Full fire in the liver meridian, gan jing shi huo,

3) Damp heat in the liver and gallbladder,

4) Cold blocks the liver network, han zhi gan mai,

5) Liver wind moves inside, gan feng nei dong,

liver yang transforms into wind,

extreme heat produces wind,

emptiness of blood produces wind,

6) Emptiness of liver blood, gan xue xu,

7) Emptiness of liver yin, gan yin xu,

8) Through emptiness of yin, the yang is too strong, yin xu yang kang,

This syndrome is sometimes classified with 'liver wind moves inside'.

Principal causes of Disease in the Gallbladder

1) (Of) the six perverse influences, liu yin

Especially perverse fire.

2) (Of) the seven emotions, qi qing

Especially fright and fear.

3) Other causes

Repercussions on the gallbladder of obstruction in the liver.

Dietary disturbance, especially food that is too rich or too fatty.

Repercussions on the gallbladder (and liver) of damp heat in the spleen.

Gallbladder Syndromes, summary

1) Fullness of the gallbladder,

This is similar to 'liver fire rising up in inflammation': gallbladder fire, when too strong, burns fiercely.

2) Emptiness of gallbladder qi.

CLASSICAL TEXT REFERENCES

Su wen chapter 2

The three months of spring

Are called spring forth and display, fa chen,

Heaven and Earth together produce life,

And the 10,000 beings are invigorated, rong.

At night, one goes to bed, at dawn, one gets up.

One paces in the courtyard with great strides,

Hair loose, body relaxed,

Exerting the will, zhi, for life;

To give life and not to kill,

To give and not to take,

To reward and not to punish.

This is the way that is proper

To the qi of spring, chun qi,

Which thus corresponds

To the maintaining of the production of life.

To go against this current

Would injure the liver, gan,

Causing illnesses in the summer due to cold, han bian,

Through an insufficient contribution to growth.

Su wen chapter 4

The aspect of natural green, qing, of the eastern quarter, dong fang,

Penetrates and spreads, ru tong, to the liver,

It opens its orifice at the eye, mu,

It stores the essences, cang jing, in the liver,

Its disturbance is indicated by starting and trembling, jing hai,

Its taste is acid, suan,

Its own species is grass and wood, cao mu,

Its domestic animal is the cock,

Its cereal is wheat.

Corresponding to the four seasons, in the heights it is the planet Jupiter,

Consequently the qi of spring is in the head.

Its note is the note jue,

Its number is 8, ba,

Consequently its illness is seen in the muscular forces, jin,

Its smell is rancid, sao.

Su wen chapter 5

The eastern quarter gives rise to, sheng, wind, feng,

Wind gives rise to wood, mu,

Wood gives rise to acid, suan,

Acid gives rise to the liver, gan,

The liver gives rise to muscular forces, jin,

Muscular forces give rise to the heart, xin,

The liver masters, zhu, the eye, mu.

In heaven it is the mystery, xuan or yuan, origin,

In man it is the way, dao,

On earth it is transformations, hua.

Transformations give rise to the 5 tastes, wu wei,

The way gives rise to ability,

The deep mystery gives rise to the spirits, shen.

The spirits, in heaven, are wind,

On earth, are wood,

Among the parts of the body it is the muscular forces,

Among the zang, it is the liver,

Among colours, it is azure green, cang,

Among notes, it is the note jue,

Among noises, sheng, it is the shout, hu,

Among movements that react to change, bian dong, it is to grasp, wo,

Among orifices, qiao, it is the eye,

Among tastes, it is acid,

Among the expressions of willpower, zhi, it is anger, nu.

Anger injures the liver, sadness, bei, prevails over anger.

Wind injures the muscles, dryness, zao, prevails over wind.

Acid injures the muscles, acrid, xin, prevails over acid.

Su wen chapter 9

The liver is 'the trunk of extreme cessation', ba ji zhi ben,

It is the residence of the hun.

Its flourishing aspect is in the nails,
Its full power is in the muscular forces,
Its function is to produce, sheng, blood and qi, xue qi.
Its taste is acid,
Its colour is azure blue.
It is the shao yang within the yang.
It has free and easy communication, tong, with the qi of spring.

Su wen chapter 22

The liver masters the spring. The jue yin of the foot and the shao yang of the foot master the treatment. Its days are jia yi, (first and second heavenly stems). What affects the liver is being too tight, ji. When it is too tight, one must eat sweet things, gan, to relax it...

When the illness is in the liver, one gets better in summer. If one does not get better in summer, it intensifies in autumn. If one does not die in autumn, it remains throughout the winter and one recovers in spring. Do not expose yourself to wind...

When the liver wants to diffuse, yu san, one must quickly eat acrid tasting foods, xin, so that it can do so. Acrid is used to tonify and acid to disperse...

When the liver is ill, there are pains under the ribs on both sides, radiating to the supra-pubic region and one is prone to anger. When there is emptiness, then the vision becomes cloudy, the eye no longer sees and one no longer hears. One is easily frightened, like someone about to be arrested. One takes (needles) the jue yin and shao yang meridians.

When the flow of qi is contrary to normal, qi ni, then there are headaches, deafness and confused hearing, and the cheeks are swollen, zhong. One takes (needles) the blood (bleeding)...

The colour of the liver is natural green, qing. It is appropriate to eat sweet things such as late non-glutinous rice, beef, jujubes and mallow (sunflower).

Su wen chapter 47

The liver is the general who acts justly, zhong zhi jiang. It takes the decisions, jue, from the gallbladder. The pharynx is its messenger, shi. When someone is constantly analysing circumstances and conceives numerous plans without ever coming to any decision, then the gallbladder is empty, the qi rises and overflows and there is a bitter taste in the mouth, kou ku . To treat it one takes the mu and the yu (front mu and back yu points).

Su wen chapter 48

When the liver is obstructed, there is congestion, man, in the ribs under the arms on both sides. On going to bed, one starts with fright, jing, and cannot urinate.

Su wen chapter 62

The liver stores the blood, gan cang xue.

Ling shu chapter 2

The liver reunites, he, with the gallbladder.

THE LIVER, GAN



gan, the Liver

肝者將軍之官
謀慮出焉

gan zhe jiang jun zhi guan
mou lu chu yan

The liver holds the office of general of the armed forces. Assessment of circumstances and conception of plans stem from it.

An Instructive Discussion (from Larre & Rochat, 1992)

Claude Larre: Each of the zang is expressed by characters upon which we have to ponder in order to see, not exactly the translation, but the manifestation within it which is then developed in the sentence as the charge of the specific organ. This is the only way to go deeper than the ordinary level at which things are represented in our mind, and to simultaneously try and place our vision at the same starting point that the Chinese would naturally have devised and transmitted during their own teaching. To understand the etymology of a character gives the first enlightenment, and everything else takes place in that first light.

The second character in this sentence, zhe, is the same for each of the zang fu presented: xin zhe, fei zhe, gan zhe, dan zhe, tan zhong zhe and so on. It has the function of substantiating, or giving more importance to the preceding word. It gives more insistence to this liver that we are now talking about, so usually it announces more elaboration around the subject of a sentence. If I say gan, liver, as the ordinary beginning of an ordinary sentence it's not a statement as such. But gan zhe means beware, pay attention that this liver. This is not the only use of this character but it is the main one. Jiang is a strong hand. Jiang is really the man who is strong and who pretends to be strong in order to impress the people. The general of the army, or the commander-in-chief has to be seen as a strong man. The fourth character, jun, is part of a character which we saw previously in tian yun when we were alluding to the celestial movement and to how everything goes in a perfect circle with the influences from Heaven being regularly distributed to all creatures. This is yun, and the character is

made by jun with the radical meaning to go, to march, to travel. Jun itself is made with a specific part of a chariot. Since there was no army in ancient times without a lot of chariots for the transportation of heavy arms, equipment and provisions, so a chariot, to the Chinese mind, always called up the idea of an army itself.

Guan is the charge, being the representation under a roof of the buildings or places where administration takes place, and where everything is connected, making the offices efficient for the emperor. Guan has a different meaning from chen which we saw earlier when explaining the character of zang. We saw that inside the character of zang stands the small figure of a slave who became a servant to the emperor, and ascended to the dignity of a minister, maybe even prime minister. Guan is more the function and chen is more the person. So a chen has a guan as a servant has an office. When we say there are 12 zang, we may at the same time say that there are 12 charges. If we are speaking of zang we are speaking of the efficiency of life in a person, but if we are speaking of the 12 charges we are rather explaining how the functions of life are interconnected.

Mou lu chu yan. Mou has the speech radical (number 149), not fluent speech, but speech as in a command or statement. Classical Chinese has the dignity of administration, of a court and so on, and since it is always dealing with Heaven and Earth the nobility of the universe is reflected in it. The speech aspect of mou is seen in the mouth which is the bottom part. On top is a sign of multiplication, that is multiplication of the emissions from the mouth. This is speech. Lu is made with the tiger radical. Inside and below one grouping of strokes has something to do with meditation, not spiritual meditation but the consideration of things of the past, or circumstances, or the situation in which you are. This part by itself is si, to think. Put inside the tiger radical it has increased vigour, and is the strength of the thought when it turns towards speculation. To speculate about something is to take normal thinking and go further and further, in order that the plan for operating something is ready before the operation itself.

The last important character is chu. Chu means to bring forth, to come out, to come out from the earth, or ground like a herb or any small little blade of vegetation emerging and being visible. What is done in the zang itself cannot really be seen except through the elaboration of the qi or the elaboration of the senses nourished by the qi. Due to the pressure of life, what is in the liver will later on show itself in the form of mou and lu. All this chapter is constructed with the same systematic presentation. First there is the name of the zang, reinforced by the addition of zhe. Then the function is stated, and described as a guan. For example, the liver's function has something to do with or is exactly the same as the functions which are described as the duties and powers of the commander-in-chief of the army. So there's no description in terms of colour, biological function, connection with blood and so on, all that is not the scope of this chapter. The scope of this chapter is determined by the place of the chapter in the whole series of chapters, so number 8 necessarily takes on the consideration of the highest level, where all the functions have their co-operation without any manifestation of illness or pathology. It is seen at the level of 8, which is the level of winds, the winds which are the moving of heavenly influx. It's somewhat like Genesis where the spirit of God was floating over the waters. At that level life is already on the way to organizing itself.

I left the character gan until last on purpose. It is better to have a framework for the consideration of the liver before looking at the image itself. The character gan has the flesh or part of the body radical (number 130) on the left side. Let me remind you that only the heart and triple heater do not have this radical, and the explanation for this which we saw earlier was that the heart is not part of the body as such, it is invisible, and the triple heater has no form and no visibility either. On the right side of the liver is the so-called phonetic with the sound of gan (Wieger 102A). It represents a pestle, and by extension means to grind, or to destroy. At the same time it has the meaning of to oppose, to offend against, blunt arms, offence, or injury. We see that the upper part is like the horns of an ox, and that there is a stroke going downwards with a horizontal part to sustain that. So this device is strong enough to penetrate the ground or is good enough to grind cereals in a mortar. The feeling of the character is one of force, resistance, of offence, or of an appearance of life in which the demonstration of force is of the essence. It is quite different from what we saw with the heart. The heart is so peaceful, and is powerful by virtue of its own position, being at the centre and without visibility. The heart maintains things by itself without any demonstration of anything. But at the same time if there was not somebody to care for everything at the side of the sovereign then it would count for nothing. It would be like being the head of the Holy German Empire. Do you remember that? After the fall of Charlemagne everything fell into disorder, but the idea of a Germanic-Roman Empire was in the mind of the people, and they continued their national history under the guise of being related to this empire. It is also like the Zhou dynasty, when after a period of flourishing in the 8th century they had to move their capital because they were not very strong and the vassal kingdoms were no longer obedient and were just paying lip-service to the emperor. The dignity of the emperor was thus preserved, but he had no means of exerting any power. Thus the heart without the lung is a sovereign without any possibility of conducting the affairs of life. But to conduct the affairs of life with vigour is not the same as making a demonstration of strength. A demonstration of strength relies on another person, the commander of the army. The commander of the army will resist any attack from the barbarians, and if necessary will resist any upsurge from the citizens. Here we have clearly stated the function, or charge of the liver, and it is demonstrated in the character itself.

Elisabeth Rochat: The character gan is the same as in the celestial stems, tian gan, because it's a force or power which has a vertical axis, like a power coming down from Heaven. It contrasts with the power that spreads out horizontally, which is more in line with the terrestrial branches.

Claude Larre: You can see then that the stems and branches are not a construction of the mind which is unrelated to the duties of the liver. They apply to all the organs since there is a correlation between ten and twelve, or between two pairs of five and two pairs of six. Elisabeth says that when we say or write ten stems and twelve branches we put them in pairs, and this is done in order to correspond with the five elements and with the organization of the succession of time. Succession of time is not the measure of time, but the succession of influences which make time as energy or qi. Remember that we are always fighting against the measurement in our mind to liberate the thing which is being measured!

So, to come back to the liver, we say that it has the charge of being commander of the army. It means that it is for the defence of life, and something of an aggressive power is seen in the liver, something

is springing up, and that's the reason why liver is spring. We don't say that liver is compared to spring, we say that liver is spring. Then we can understand that any vegetation or organic life which is a sort of plant is of the same quality as the liver. We say that the colour green is proper to plants and is proper to liver, and is also the colour for the spirits.

Many roofs on many pagodas, small pavillions and temples necessarily have green glazed tiles since they are the manifestation of the presence of spirits. Reading chapters 4 and 5 of the Su wen we can see what is said about east, and we find that the eastern quarter is the first consideration of something separate from the oneness of qi. Qi in itself is indistinct, and we saw earlier that from one we come to two and from two to three and from three to four. When we come to four, within the oneness in our mind which reflects what is between Heaven and Earth, a quarter of what is really there is called east. If we look at the character for east we see a tree, and we see the power of life working in that tree as a sun. Thus we understand graphically that the east is the source of the power of liver. If somebody asks a question about the liver we have to consider its origin and state which quarter the liver is related to. If you know that it is the east then that is where you start your answer. All determinations on the same level will therefore have something to do with liver. Everything is reciprocal with everything else in this presentation of life.

Coming back to the charge, this is not easily defined for me. We saw that for heart and for lung there were two characters. With the heart there was the position, the sovereign or lord, and the expression, the mastering. With the lung we similarly had the position as minister close to the heart, and also that it is an auxiliary, giving an efficiency to the silent power of the heart, and the regulator of all the synapses of life. Now the question is, if I am using two Chinese characters to make a single French or English expression, commander of the army, why shouldn't we also have two sides of the function, one the being of something, and the other the expression of that something? My feeling is that jiang is the strength of the commander in himself, without any enforcement, and being strong, or pretending to be strong since the pretending is in the character. Then jun is the way to make this power felt to enemies.

Elisabeth Rochat: It's just like we had in the heart. You have an aspect which is more Heavenly, and a second aspect which is more Earthly. In Chinese jiang jun is an expression of two characters that go together, they form a couple. Jiang on its own has the sense of a general, of someone who is on the point of doing something, somebody who is ready and has got together all his capacity in order to make an action or do something. In current Chinese jiang is often used to mark the future as in 'shall' or 'will'.

Claude Larre: Elisabeth rightly says that it is the idea of something which shall happen, or to be on the verge of doing something. That means that the preparation is already made, and the decision has already been taken, but that the execution is not yet under way. The action will be represented in the following character, jun. The commander of the army who will move is jiang jun. For there is no Heaven without Earth, and Earth by itself is not able to do anything. It has to wait for the power coming from above which is inspiration without form. The difficulty for us in understanding Heaven contrasted with Earth is our difficulty in penetrating the logic of the Chinese mind, where Heaven is nothing without Earth but must be expressed as Heaven. So we have to make some sort of statement

saying that Heaven is the initiative. But if you ask what sort of initiative, we have to call on Earth in order to have a representation or formalization of this power. Usually in books people do not pay enough attention and when they say that Heaven is initiative, they want to say more and they use words which are taken from the role of Earth, and these are inserted in the explanation without any warning. So finally you are never able to understand what the power proper to Heaven is since just to express that power you need so many qualifications coming from the side of Earth.

Elisabeth Rochat. The liver is the general of the armed forces. He has to be someone who is courageous, brave, and even impetuous, but that is only if it follows reflection beforehand. If not, that is the best way to lose the war! If we look at the *The Art of War*, the treatise by Sun zi from the 4th century BC, we find the following advice. If the general of the opposing army can easily be brought to anger, then do everything you can to anger him, and at that moment his mind will be all over the place. He won't see clearly anymore and he'll direct his army without a good plan. You find here the emotion which is usually linked to the liver, nu, anger. Anger is fundamentally an impetuous thrust that pushes life upwards. In fact the Chinese character is not always translated as anger, it can just be the effort to make things rise.

Claude Larre: A violent effort. For the Chinese and Japanese any sort of martial art has something to do with containing strength and liberating strength. The shouting is not intended to terrify the adversary, it's just to let the qi come out. And when you are doing that you are just acting along the lines of nu.

Question: Does it have the heart radical underneath it?

Claude Larre: Yes, nearly all the sentiments are written with the heart underneath.

Elisabeth Rochat: Nu is the effort especially present at the beginning of doing something. But you have to be careful that it doesn't transform itself or change into anger which will scatter the spirits. It's for this reason that the general has to be careful to keep the balance between peace and war. He does not act the same way in times of peace as in times of war. In the same way the liver must keep the balance between its yin aspect of taking care of the blood that it stores, and the qi that it emanates. Similarly the liver has a different role with the blood depending on whether it's at rest or in activity. It's the liver that sends the blood to all the different parts of the body when the body is in movement, and in the same way it stores the blood and gathers it towards itself when it is not needed by the muscles. It's a similar, though completely different, rhythm to that of the lungs. With the liver it's a voluntary movement or rhythm which depends on the intensity of the movement or the depths of the rest. This gives a connection with the conception of plans and the assessment of circumstances. There is in the liver something that always has to estimate and evaluate the situation, whether it's for the quantity of blood available, for the fight against the perverse evils, or more generally for the conduct of mental or emotional life. This leads us quite naturally to the hun which are kept by the liver. Their role is to have this intelligence which allows evaluation and judgement, all of which you see in the liver.

When we say beginnings we also have to be clear about what we mean. We can have several kinds of beginnings. For example, with a plant does it begin when it comes up above the ground or when it comes out of the seed? What happens underneath the ground when the seed germinates is much more

in the sphere of the kidneys. So there is a maintaining force, a basic force, which allows the appearance of the first signs of life and ensures that life does not die, and there is another force that allow life to surge up and appear.

Claude Larre: We come back to the old issue that the Chinese see the movements of life with a minute attention to detail. They are able to make distinctions between the power which keeps life and the power which allows development of the situation, when what is needed is not containment but a firm grasping in order to let it come forth or rush out. This is the reason why Elisabeth is making distinctions in the movement of life relating the first step to the kidneys where the maintaining is of the essence. Then, when it is no longer a question of keeping, we are at the end of winter and the beginning of spring. But where is the distinction inside life itself between winter and spring behaviour? That is the secret of life. If you cast your vision in the direction of the past, then winter is more and more important, and if you evolve your imagination of life towards development, then spring is more and more influential. This is true at the change of each season, when the disturbances of the atmospheric conditions are in contradiction with the normal constitution of all beings. For example, if an organism is waiting for spring and the winter is too long and too severe, then if the reserves of the plant are not enough it has to die. Similarly if the heat is too much in summer then the plant dries up. What we see in the life of plants in gardening is the same in ourselves. So it's important to know which organ is concerned when some trouble arises because of a personal condition which is withstanding pressure and a general surrounding condition which is exerting a pressure. We have to see the role of the liver within the different variations of the conditions of life, such as the atmospheric conditions which are the subject of chapter 2. And the relation of one chapter to another has to be kept in mind. Here we are in chapter 8 but we have to refer to the commanding chapter which is chapter 2.

Elisabeth Rochat: The general of the armed forces is the one who spreads the influence of the empire everywhere in times of conquest, who has a masculine and impetuous force, and who has the same ability to penetrate physically as well as with thought. This ability to penetrate is like penetrating the future in order to make a plan, to make things circulate and unblocks passages. You find this action of penetration or unblocking in many of the chapters on the pathology of the liver, especially in the knotting of qi due to a bad mental state, or in blood stagnation. And when the liver is carried away by anger you have the fire that rises up, like an army or troops that penetrate a different part of the country creating disorder.

Claude Larre: The final condition of that being that the troops themselves will be destroyed. You invade the territory of your neighbour and at first it's a big success. But finally you have exhausted all your own forces, you are far from your capital, your people and your sustaining basis. Then you will be destroyed there.

Elisabeth Rochat: This is just an example of how you can in fact draw all the major pathology of the organs from chapter 8.

One last thought is that the liver has the ability to consider and reflect, and at the same time has the courage of the general of the army. He's responsible for the muscles, not in the sense of flesh but in the sense of the activating force in the body, and the characteristic of the muscles in Chinese is to be

like bamboo, supple and flexible. They must be able to go in a certain direction without getting blocked or obstructed, and be able to bend depending on the situation, just as the general with his battle strategy has to decide how to act according to the circumstances.

THE GALLBLADDER (DAN)

膽者中正之官
決斷出焉

Dan zhe zhong zheng zhi guan
jue duan chu yan

dan, the Gallbladder

The gallbladder is responsible for what is just and exact. Determination and decision stem from it.

An Instructive Discussion (from Larre & Rochat, 1992)

Claude Larre: From the liver we move right on to the gallbladder. The character for gallbladder will be seen at the end of the explanation, as was the case with the liver. It is quite an elaborate character, but when it has been explained according to the etymology it will be found full of meaning, and not difficult to understand.

The gallbladder has something to do with the round, zhong, and the square, zheng. When something is not round it is square, and when something is not square it is round, because there is only Heaven and Earth. Heaven is round like your head and Earth is square like your foot. Man is only the representation of Heaven and Earth at the level of his morphology, and at the level of his inspiration. It's too simple to say that the head is round and the foot is square, and besides some people may dispute that. So further explanation of what is round and what is square is needed.

What is round has no form. What is round is something very similar to what we call time. Time is circling, time has no form, time is close to Heaven. But time without space, circle without square, does not work for man, because man, being at the junction or crossing of Heaven and Earth and

being the response of Earth to the solicitation of Heaven, must have marked in himself the characteristics of round and square. As for the squareness of the foot one may observe that the ancient graphic really gave the impression of the square foot because all the toes are blocked and are more or less equal length. If you look at early Chinese inscriptions in bronze you really do have the feeling that they had the impression that the square was the way to express how man has contact with Earth. Anybody who has seen Chinese architecture is convinced that everything is square or round. Square is the basis for all construction, but square does not necessarily mean a geometrical square. Square means that there is a 90 degree angle. So we take the expressions square and round for what that means: that essentially there is something circling and perfect in roundness which is representative of Heaven, and that the solidity, firmness and clarity of Earth comes from the fact that it is regulated by the square. Whenever something is said in Chinese we have to make some sort of appreciation of it and some understanding of the two opposites. Heaven is more round than anything because of Earth, and Earth is more square than anything because Earth is not Heaven. One is the opposite of the other, and when you are not saying something, you are, in some other part of your mind contemplating what you are not saying. The person you are addressing hears what you have to say and also tries to hear what you are not saying. That's the Chinese way.

So we are not surprised here to see that the gallbladder is responsible for forms, not at the morphological level, but at the innermost level which is where life takes place and takes command. It is up to the gallbladder to be sure that your imaginative power and your strength which have been shown in the liver now come to a decisive step. And if you are supposed to take decisions, you have to take decisions that are absolutely exact. They are exact when they are in the middle, and they are exact when they are correct. Zhong has the meaning of an arrow sent to the target and hitting it right in the middle so that you see the arrow cutting it in two. So one part of being exact is to hit the mark. This reflects the Heavenly side of all propositions, all problems and all decisions. They have to be exact. We also say we have to be just. When you are looking over students' papers for marking you have to be just in your mind. It's not a question of being kind or benevolent, it's a question of your own mind being right. Our relationship with Chinese people shows us that fancy does not alter judgement. They are usually very exact and correct. It's some sort of quality which is in the civilization, and is inscribed and reflected in the classical texts. There is never hesitation. It is true or it is false, just or not, exact or not. This sort of dogmatism sets the Chinese free. It lets them make any fanciful construction they wish to build - palaces for fairies in the air, spirits going here and there, all the festivals, all the tales of the imagination and so on. It's very colourful! But when it comes to things which have to be decided upon they have the same sort of spirit as our own engineers building a machine, you take measurements and you produce exactly what is wanted. Who is responsible for that? The gallbladder. The gallbladder comes with the liver and makes some sort of formalization of the energy, and gives the plan its correctness. So we can see the very close association between liver and gallbladder. More precisely, where do we see the effect of it being round and square, correct and exact? We see it in the decision. The power is in the gallbladder but the decision is the effect of that power.

The decision is expressed by two characters, one is jue and the other is duan. There is the same mutual relationship between these two characters as we saw in the cases of heart, lung and liver, and in the others to come since, there is always an expression formed by two characters. Jue has the water radical on the left, and duan has an axe on the right side.

Elisabeth Rochat: In jue there is the idea of a decision taken. There is the idea of forcing a passage. Whether it is a decision or a circulation everything has to be done with natural upsurge. What has this ability to force a passage or a decision is on the side of the yang, and within the yang it is shao yang, the young yang full of force and some kind of promise for the future. You can see in chapter 8 in the definition of the 12 charges, that there are very few ideograms that are repeated, but this ideogram, jue, comes again in the description of the charge of the triple heater, which is the other shao yang. In the case of the function of the triple heater it is linked to the idea of making everything, all the qi and the liquids that are carried by the qi, circulate correctly so that nothing can obstruct or block the circulation. So jue is the idea of something that makes its way, makes a channel, because it is deeply anchored in a decision that has been taken. Jue is profoundly anchored and has the force of passing all obstructions and obstacles.

The other character, duan, is the image of an axe. This shows it is something clean-cut. This function is reaffirmed in the next chapter of the Su wen, chapter 9, when it's said that the eleven viscera come to the gallbladder to make the decisions.

Claude Larre: It means they are not able to make a decision by themselves, so they go to the gallbladder. This is like two people who are quarrelling with one another and are not able to make a decision, they go to court, and the court clearly cuts through the problem saying you are right, you are wrong, you are partially right, you are partially wrong, you owe so much money and so on. When we come to the triple heater we will come back to the question of why they use jue twice.

Elisabeth Rochat: But there is a question which has to be answered. Why is such an important charge given to one of the fu? And also why does the gallbladder come in the fourth position before the other two zang?

First we must see that the function of the gallbladder is the logical continuation of the liver. Liver and gallbladder are a couple, a very close-knit couple both in medical terminology and in popular use.

Claude Larre: Let me refer you to Zhuang zi chapter 2. The discussion there is whether the liver and gallbladder are very much united or very much separate from one another. It's not exactly put as a question but as an observation that if you want to see how they are similar you may say that there are no two things more closely related than gallbladder and liver. In Zhuang zi, which is certainly not a typical medical work, they use a popular expression saying they are like the fingers of a hand. But, they say, if you are looking from the point of view of some sort of inner difference you see that there are no two things more separate than gallbladder and liver because one is a zang and one is a fu. The same thing seen from different angles is either very close or very much apart.

Elisabeth Rochat: The liver analyses or assesses circumstances and decides the plan of action. The gallbladder, being a yang aspect of the liver will have the firmness to make a clean decision and force through the situation so that the decision can be carried out, spreading the orders of the general far and wide. The gallbladder is the shao yang or young yang, which gives the force or strength of the

beginning of life, just like the spring. The first month of the year is often called zheng yue. Yue means month and zheng is the same character that we find here meaning correct. Why is this?

Because it's in the beginnings and the first appearances of something that we have to follow a good line. If, when a tree springs up from the ground, it's knocked sideways or bent by the wind or by storms then it'll grow that way, bent. It's the same force that makes things spring upwards which also assures some kind of rectitude and straight growth. This power of beginnings is linked in another way to the origins of life since we know that the shao yang is very much connected to the fire of ming men. This is particularly the case with the triple heater which commands all the qi of the body, assuring the renewal and circulation of all qi from posterior Heaven, and ensuring the circulation in the body of all qi from the original qi. The shao yang has a close relationship to and is rooted in the original qi of ming men and the depths of the being. It's because of this that it has the extreme force to take the right direction in life. It's life springing up, like fire that springs out of water, just as the liver and gallbladder come after the kidneys and bladder.

The good direction of life depends on its own deep nature. All that goes in a direction other than the proper direction for life will be bad. It is therefore in the root of your life that you should find a good direction, and it is in ming men or the qi of ming men that the root of your life is found under the name of original qi, yuan qi, of authentic yin and yang or original, authentic fire and water. When we use the word authentic it means something that conforms to the real, deep nature of an individual. Now we know that shao yang has a privileged place with respect to the original qi and is particularly expressed by the triple heater, whose main function is to make qi circulate and diffuse, and by the yuan qi. The gallbladder has also got the same quality of shao yang which gives it the capacity to give good direction to things in life. It's because of this that it governs the first aspects and the beginnings of things. For this reason all the other organs come to the gallbladder in order to have it make decisions.

There is another important aspect concerning the gallbladder which is that it is not an ordinary fu. It is an extraordinary fu. In Chinese it's qi heng zhi fu. Fu is fu and zhi is a connective particle. Qi is something out of the ordinary, something extraordinary. This means that it is something different from the normal everyday conduct of life. Heng is something that is a continuity, some kind of equilibrium. It's a permanent equilibrium, something very stable. When we have this expression qi heng it's not relating to something that is very extraordinary or magical, something fabulous or fantastic, it is just showing the regulation of life beyond the ordinary running of it. But it's a regulation which is not visible because it is a much deeper aspect, and very often it is deeper because it was there before other regulations, just as the 8 extraordinary meridians (which have the same ideogram qi) are a regulation before, below or at a deeper level than the 12 meridians.

So here we are with this qi heng zhi fu, the extraordinary fu, at the level of the beginning of the being. These are the fu which are special because they store, and what they store are, of course, the essences. The normal fu are especially concerned with the digestive function, but they don't keep anything. They make things circulate, evacuate, come in and go out. The storage of the essences is the function of the zang. The extraordinary fu therefore have the name of fu because they do not store for the spirits but they store the essences, jing to make the body work, and to give the body good

form. It's for this reason that in Su wen chapter 11 they are given a definite relationship with the qi of the Earth. In the present chapter, chapter 8, we are at the fourth charge, the fourth official, and 4 is a number which is linked with the qi of the Earth, for the distribution and spreading out which is well-ordered and well-conceived. This goes with the function of the gallbladder, governing in a certain way its distribution and construction. On the other hand there is the fact that the gallbladder stores the essences, which gives it a place not exactly amongst the zang, but in an elevated position because it works on that which is clear, and not on that which is cloudy, impure and not-clear.

What is clear, qing, is something which is so pure that it rises and diffuses in the same way as the qi that constitute Heaven. You can see in the ideograms for essences and clear, jing and qing, that there is a common element. This part, which is pronounced qing is often called the colour green, or blue-green. It is in fact the colour of life. It's the aspect that is seen in beings when they are full of life. For example, in springtime, when the sap that is full of life rises upwards, then the vegetation in the fields has this colour qing. And you can look at the sky and say that it has the same colour because the sky or Heaven is full of invisible life. The Chinese also said that the poet Li Po, who was one of the greatest poets of the Tang dynasty in the 8th century AD, had green hair! This doesn't mean that he was like the punks in London and Paris, it just means that he manifested an exceptional quality of virtue in his poems. It means that within him his qi had an extraordinary quality, rising from his kidneys up to his head, and his blood was full of life rising to his head, so that the vegetation which grew there revealed the deep vitality which the poet had, making his hair a beautiful shining black. But what is called black here is this same character qing, which means not green, but to be manifesting a deep vitality. What we call essence, jing, is everything that is good for the renewal of this vitality, which can be drawn from seeds and cereals, and what I call clear, qing, is the movement of this animation of life which is given by the flux of the waters. This gives the idea of rising to Heaven and of circulating and diffusing. That which is not-clear will have a movement of condensation and lowering. In the case of digestion that which is clear is extracted from food to be incorporated into my being or vitality, and that which is not-clear goes downwards through the digestive organs, the stomach, small intestine, large intestine and bladder, and will finish by being evacuated as excrement or urine.

Claude Larre: We should come back to the very important question of why the correctness and right direction of life is connected through the shao yang to the yuan qi and to the qi given in the sphere of posterior Heaven. Why does shao yang have this directness and firmness that enables it to give the right direction to life, and why does this have a special relationship with the yuan qi? Let me just return to what we were saying about archery. To hit the mark the arrow must fly in the right direction, but it must previously have been held in the most stable position on the bow itself, held firmly between two or three fingers in the hand of the archer. But this hand is itself firmly at the end of the arm, and the arm is connected with the stability of the trunk. The stability of the trunk is given by the mind and the respiration, and if the respiration is not correct or the mind not peaceful, and if the eye is not in a position to see the relationship of the tip of the arrow with the target, then there is some deviation. So we can see that the correctness, and the straightness of the shooting of the arrow is based in the most profound origin of life in that person, and we know that shao yang has some

quality very close to this quality of the fired arrow. Shao yang is not, as is very often translated, a lesser yang, it's young yang.

Question: Does the character shao in shao yang give any idea of it being a hinge, as for example in the penetration of fevers where you have shao yang as the last yang stage from where it could possibly go deeper into the yin stage or back to yang ming? As I understand it, the character implies the channelling in one direction, like a river flowing in one direction, and you pointed out its clarity of direction, while the hinge is more of a mechanical idea of going either way.

Claude Larre: It may be contradictory in your mind, but when a man is firmly established in a place with a clear vision of something, he may suddenly turn the other way. This is just because he is in that position of command. It's typically Chinese to be able to keep in mind the two necessarily reciprocal aspects of something. So this hinge effect you were alluding to is the complementary aspect of the firmness which is in the origin of the being.

Question: But the word hinge implies a mechanical action or force, and the character gives very much the feeling of energy flow, of dominating or regulating that.

Claude Larre: That's true! And furthermore one of the most important and difficult Chinese characters related to this is ji, which is a crossbow. A crossbow is a very small mechanism where the force and strength is kept tight before unleashing. Ji is in the expression shi ji, which means occasion, and the ji is the turning point of the occasion. For example, you had the chance to come to this seminar, and it may change your life! The occasion is a ji. The upper part is the silk character written twice, and on the left hand side is the wood radical which implies a mechanism because machines were built in wood not iron or metal then.

The difficulty with English or French words is that when we pay attention to the meaning we may be misled. We may think that there are twelve meridians, and that we call the further eight extra because we already have that supply of twelve. But that is very silly as a concept because we start with the eight, so which are the extra ones? It's the same with the fu. Which are the extraordinary ones? Because like the meridians the extraordinary fu are formative for life, they have to be quoted first and regarded as more important than the others. All the field of acupuncture is full of these kinds of things which are not false but which have been presented without any systematization according to the old Chinese classical texts. What we are trying to do in all our teaching is to keep as much as possible to what has actually been written, and to place it in a larger picture where everything is just a component. And sometimes we have to comment on one presentation or one given name in order that everything fits together.

Elisabeth Rochat: If we take the order of presentation of the zang in the 8th chapter we see that the first three are the zang which have the function of storing the essences and of government by the spirits, and they they are linked to the three higher aspects which relate to the spirits, the shen, the po and the hun. We also see that the gallbladder is linked to beginnings, to the essences and to the pure and clear. We see that the centre of the chest is located in the upper heater, and here we have a separation or a pivot, with the role of the stomach and spleen which are also concerned with the clear and not-clear. Then we come to the realm of the intestines which are concerned with what is not-clear. Here we can see that the gallbladder is acting in its role as one of the extraordinary fu working

on the essences and being full of clear, pure juices which it sends out to particularly help with digestion. You can also see that we have in the series of the first five officials three functions that are in the upper heater, in the region above the diaphragm, which itself protects them from everything which could rise up from the lower regions. We can see that it's a place from which the circulation of the breath begins, especially at tan zhong, the sea of qi in the chest. And we have the liver and gallbladder which traditionally belong in the lower heater. This is not to say that they have an inferior position, but rather that they manifest the vitality of life from the deep. It's because of this that the liver is in fact situated or located higher than the kidneys or the intestines. What's very striking to the Chinese is also the difference in size between the liver and the gallbladder. The liver expresses its power with a development of form, and the gallbladder by a concentration of force or strength.

Claude Larre: These spirits which are called hun, stored in the liver, are responsible for the imaginative life. Nowadays, when there are new trends in science, it is important to be clear about imagination. Imagination leads to new discoveries and is a way to escape from the rigidity of either round or square. So doctors who study with us and who have had a strict teaching from the Occidental mind come because they feel that as good as their training and practice is, something is missing. Imagination is then the complement for any other exercise of the spirit in ourselves. But this does not mean that Chinese medicine is imaginative to the point of not being exact and correct. It is exact and correct in observation and has the logic of the living being in order to regulate these observations and allow them to fall into place and produce patterns. As I have said before, Chinese paintings are closer to the natural state of things than photography. The photograph gives you the external appearance. But the limit of the external description is that usually it takes such a hold in the mind that there is no place left for the imaginative power. If we understand this relation of the imaginative power to the external vision it leaves enough hope that the imaginative power will be regulated by some inner mystery of the universe and not just fanciful thinking. The imaginative power is necessary to displace the frontiers of knowledge itself, and this is proper to the liver, controlled by the decisions of the gallbladder.

Presently we will have other things to say about the regulation of mind which is proper to the spleen and kidneys. Then it will be appropriate to look again at the shen, the hun, the po, the yi and the zhi, and to understand that the mental system is dominated by heart, lungs, liver and also the gallbladder, but couldn't really do without the inferior zang which are in a position of service. The will power and the power to make things in a form are subservient to the higher power. This looks like something which is not logical in the Occidental system of the functioning of the mind, which has to be above the body, though nobody knows what 'above' means exactly! But in the Chinese system we see that things essential to make a full image of mental life are distributed some at the highest level and some at the lowest level. Nothing in this scheme is by accident, and that's the reason why one has always to be on guard and not to overlook the way, the time, and the position, where and when things are said.

More Details on the Gall Bladder (from Larre & Rochat, 1994)

Elisabeth Rochat: The charge attributed to the gallbladder in Su wen chapter 8 is to have exactitude, justice and correctness:

The gallbladder is responsible for what is just and exact. Determination and decision stem from it.

難經曰。膽在肝之
 短葉間重三兩三
 銖長三寸盛精汁
 三合。○是經多血
 少氣。○華元化曰
 膽者中清之府號
 曰將軍。○主存而
 不瀉



六節臟象論曰凡
 十一臟皆取決於
 膽也

**The GallBladder,
 from the Lingshu Suwen Jieyao**

The idea of being just is expressed in the ideogram zhong, which is also the idea of the centre or median. This character zhong comes up very often in relationship to the gallbladder, and it is called 'the fu of the essences which are in the middle' or 'the fu of what is clear and in the middle'. This indicates that the gallbladder is not an ordinary fu but an extraordinary fu. It is part of the series of the brain, marrow, bones, mai, gallbladder and uterus which are referred to as the 6 extraordinary fu. These all have a function of storing essences, or storing the vital code, pattern and basis for all structures of life. In this series only the gallbladder also belongs to the 6 ordinary fu, and it therefore has a double role. It is concerned with what is clear and pure, in a manner which is central and which gives exactitude. It works from the interior, and in contrast to the other digestive fu it does not have contact with the exterior. Nor does it have direct contact with the alimentary canal, so it is not in direct contact with food like the other ordinary fu.

Claude Larre: It is like a sort of controller. He is not there on the spot, but he knows everything about the situation. You never see him, but he knows you!

Elisabeth Rochat: It is because of this that the gallbladder has the very elevated, noble position that you see in Su wen chapter 8. It represents the yang aspect of the wood, taking decisions and seeing that they are applied without obstacles. The hard strength of the qi of shao yang makes sure that it can go through any obstruction. The rectitude which exists in the beginning of things ensures that it has the right way, and that there is no deviation in the way life goes on. It has the idea of something which is very contained, straight and direct. It is for this reason that Su wen chapter 9 says:

the eleven zang take their decision from the gallbladder

They need the gallbladder in order to make their decisions, and they consult with it because it has the capacity to give correct judgement. This has an influence on the defence of the whole body and on all the vitality expressed in the jing shen, the vital spirits. The surging up of qi could quite easily get out of control, and it needs good direction, like a young child needs a tutor. This is the role of the gallbladder. Therefore it is said that a man who has good gallbladder qi is resolute and firmly established, and if his jing shen gets over excited or depressed, then the return to normal will be made relatively quickly and easily. Conversely if a man's gallbladder qi is feeble and too loose, then he will be constantly subject to illnesses and disturbances. He will never feel well. A symptom of an emptiness of the gallbladder is the tendency to unfounded fears, difficulty in going to sleep calmly and too many dreams. You can also have a bitterness in the mouth, although this can sometimes be a symptom of a fullness of gallbladder qi. As an ordinary fu the gallbladder plays a role in facilitating digestion and the absorption of liquids and cereals with the emission of bile, so the loss of this function will have repercussions on the digestion and on the stomach and spleen. You could even have jaundice. Essentially the pathology of the gallbladder as an ordinary fu presents with symptoms of heat, for example bitterness in the mouth, dryness in the throat, pains in the thorax and sides, vertigo, etc.

Question: I would like to know about the relationship between the gallbladder and the shen?

Elisabeth Rochat: The most obvious relationship is that being an extraordinary fu, the gallbladder stores essences, and therefore participates in that process which brings the essences to the heart. The essences provide a place for the shen, a structure and a means of penetration. The gallbladder also has an intimate relationship with the liver, and is a means of expression for the hun and for that which is most yang and active. This gives it the ability to make decisions for the eleven other zang. It is because of this that it is put in this relationship with the ensemble known as jing shen, vital spirits. This is in commentaries later than the Nei jing.

Claude Larre: I am sure that one part of the problem is that in a way the shen are more or less under the domination of the jing. I mean that if you are able to concentrate enough jing you are sending out a call to the shen, and they will come in response. While you have to say that the shen are free, at the same time you also have to say that they like to come when they are called. We have the same thing in Christianity with the problem of grace. If you do what you are supposed to do then some sort of good or benevolence comes to you. It would come freely, but it is asked for. There is true friendship between jing and shen. Not only that, but in the very ordinary texts of Huainan zi it states that the final aim of all human life is to be a companion of the dao, so if that is the goal the means must follow

the same pattern. We have to be friendly with the shen, and there has to be a purifying of our essences.

Injuries to the Gallbladder

Elisabeth Rochat: When the gallbladder is attacked or injured by outside influences, or by internal attacks coming from the 7 emotions, the results can be seen in its dual role as ordinary and extraordinary fu. The gallbladder is strong and straight, exact, robust and firm. It knows what is just and correct, and it is determined and resolute. It also has the same quality as the qi of shao yang which has the strength of beginnings. But it is also the pivot or hinge between different levels in the body. It is said that the shao yang is the hinge between the face turned to the exterior and the face turned to the interior, like two sides of a coin, one being a manifestation of the other.

Claude Larre: Exterior and interior are larger concepts than the sides of a coin! That which is inside the human movement of my own personal life may be manifest but not seen. What is not seen is still constructed, and this is called li. Although the li is not seen it is being built from the time of conception to the time of death. But it does manifest itself and can be seen, and this is the biao. The biao is closer to the exterior, while the structure, li, is closer to the interior, so we can refer to them as exterior and interior, but we should really think of them as biao li.

Peter Firebrace: There is a difference between interior and exterior as nei and wai, and as biao and li. It is quite difficult to find an example of English equivalents. It has been described as the two sides of a coin, and it is definitely not the same as inside and outside.

Elisabeth Pochat: Interior and exterior is rather the definition of two realms, two domains or spheres which can be found at all levels. Biao li is the definition of a passage, something that will turn towards the interior or towards the exterior. Biao is made in order to show the effects on the exterior, and li is made to reinforce the vitality on the interior. It is exactly the same thing as in paired meridians which show the two sides of an element. It is never said that the two meridians are in the relationship of nei wai, interior and exterior, but they are always described as being in the relationship of biao li, showing on the exterior the effects of the element, and then coming back into the interior in order to build the structure of life in the interior.

When the gallbladder is attacked by fire, which is the external attack to which it is most prone and sensitive, then you have symptoms of heat and cold which come and go because of its position as a hinge. The role of the gallbladder as a hinge is because it is both an ordinary and an extraordinary fu. It is at the same time that which makes the bile flow and that which stores and treasures the very pure, clear essences. It is a fu which has the function of a zang.

In the realm of emotions it is above all an emptiness of the gallbladder which is most significant, and which affects its most noble function of storing the pure essences, jing. This, therefore, influences the vitality which is expressed through the jing and shen. When the gallbladder is empty there is a kind of fear and apprehension which dominates the person because the movement which should be pushing forward is deficient. There will be accompanying symptoms such as insomnia, madness, blurred vision and bitterness in the mouth. The function of giving a good direction to life is disturbed.

Of course all the dysfunctioning of the liver will have an effect on the gallbladder. For example, blockages in the liver qi would prevent the transmission of bile, and we would have all the symptoms which are classified under the yang of the liver being too strong.

The gallbladder can also be linked in pathology with the stomach and spleen. For example, humidity and heat attacking the spleen can have repercussions on the gallbladder and give rise to certain kinds of jaundice. If there is irregular eating, or eating and drinking too quickly or too much, or if the food is too greasy or there is too much alcohol, all this will give rise to the formation of phlegm and obstruction at the level of the middle heater. These blockages will then have repercussions on the liver and gallbladder and the circulation of qi and the transmission of bile. All this will give rise to a general congestion which implicates the liver, gallbladder, stomach and spleen. Pains in the ribs can be explained by the pathway of the gallbladder meridian. These pains normally appear when there is blockage in the qi which prevents its spreading out and thus causes pain. The pain can be intermittent, or it can start as not very severe and then become more intense. When the pain is due to stagnation of blood it does not move around and is sharp as a needle. Swellings in the ribs often accompany pains in the ribs, and they can often precede the pain. When this symptom gets worse then it can reach the top of the body, the thorax and diaphragm. Below it can affect the whole region of the lower abdomen.