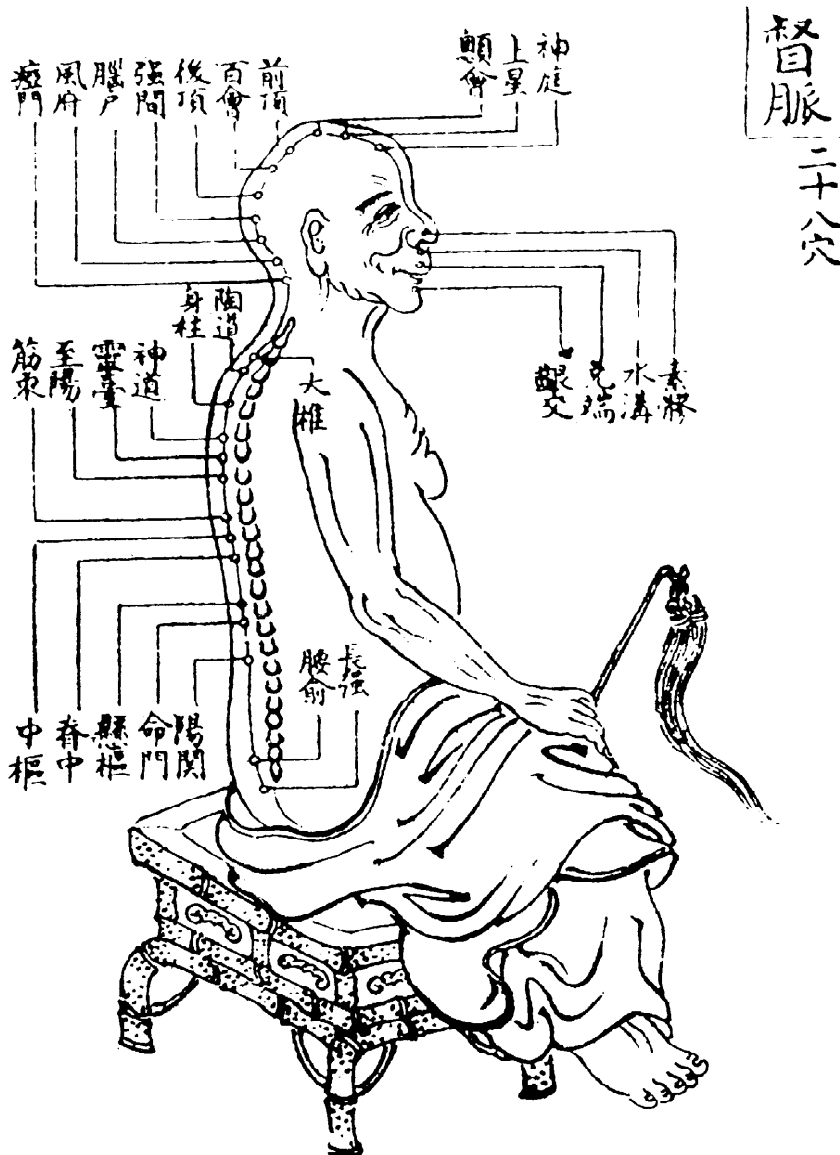


Du Mai/ Governing Vessel, part #1

Introduction, Pathway, Symptomology, Pathology

DU MAI 督脈

督



Du Mai,
from the
Neiwaigong
(Larre & Rochat,
1997).

LARRE & ROCHAT

Introductory Discussion

Elisabeth Rochat: In Wieger's Chinese Characters (lesson 124) the upper part of the character is given as collecting beans, but this meaning was quite obsolete even in classical times. The character

developed the meaning of uncle or more precisely, the father's younger brother, or the husband's younger brother. The lower part is a representation of an eye.

The meaning of the complete character is governor, but what kind of governor? It is a man, for instance a younger brother, who has the responsibility of a 'look out' for his elder brother. If we are thinking in terms of an empire or a kingdom, it would be something like a viceroy. In India at the time of the Raj, the viceroy was generally a man connected to the royal family. In China there would be a viceroy for example in Canton, and generally he would be a member of the emperor's family because that would be more secure.

This kind of governor is in charge, to inspect and rule, because he is close to the supreme general power, like a delegate. So we have all these associated meanings - to control, to watch over, to rule, to stimulate and also to correct. It is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, a viceroy, or a man in charge of overseeing in a particular area.

If we take the phonetic which is the upper part, we can use other radicals and get some interesting meanings. For example, with the radical for water we have good pure water, something very clear and pure, and if it is used to describe a man, is a man who is full of virtue, excellent, fine, good and even skilful. With the radical for woman it is a special title for the governess of the women in the royal palace, not only the maids, but the ladies-in-waiting and the concubines. She has authority over all the women.

If you add the cloth radical you have the idea of a seam, especially the seam in the middle of the back of a garment. Even in quite ancient times this seam was the symbol of the middle way and the right way to follow. This appears in Zhuang zi chapter 3, The Secret of Caring for Life, when he is advising to follow the middle way:

Your life has a limit but knowledge has none. If you use what is limited to pursue what has no limit, you will be in danger. If you understand this and still strive for knowledge, you will be in danger for certain! If you do good, stay away from fame. If you do evil, stay away from punishments. Follow the middle; go by what is constant, and you can stay in one piece, keep yourself alive, look after your parents, and live out your years [Burton Watson translation].

This 'follow the middle' is follow the du like a rule, and rule in Zhuang zi is also jing, the term we use for meridian.

So even in the first and second centuries BC, this character du already had the meaning of something very strong, something very constant, able to give a guideline for life. This is important when we compare it to the meaning of ren. If we use the same radicals with the phonetic ren, of ren mai, it gives quite a different meaning to each character.

In the Chinese classical texts we also have an explanation of this character du, with another of the same sound, an homophone, If there is an analogy of a sound, there is often an analogy of meaning. This other du has the meaning of a great town, a capital city, an administrative centre. And it is from this centre that the kingdom is able to flourish, become rich and prosperous. The explanation is that a capital city or an administrative centre is like the main rope of a net which holds all the other smaller strings in place. This is the comparison with the du mai.

Another character used to express the essential quality of du mai is gang, the same as is used in the ba gang, the eight principles, and the image is also of this great rope of a net. But the abstract meaning is more the principle of something. You can see that through this use of the character, du mai is like a director and the place from where all different forms of expression can be ruled. For all the yang functions inside the body, it is the administrative centre, the principle, the main rope for all the yang mai; not only the yang meridians, but all the circulation which is an expression of the yang power. It is where all the yang qi is mastered. Another name for du mai is the sea of the yang mai. Another is to be a supervisor, to gather into a unity - to be like a leader, to preside over something, as a general supervisor of all the yang functions of the body.

Claude Larre: If we were discussing the heart, the vocabulary would be higher, but we are talking of qi and the network of animation. We are not concerned with the higher level of authority which is presided over by the heart. That is why we have this aspect of being second best, not to put this governor in a place that is too high, but to keep him in his proper place. The prime minister is not the king. The prime minister is only the prime minister. We have to be careful with all these ranks. This man is looking over everything, but he is looking on behalf of someone else. He is the viceroy, the delegate and only that.

THE PATHWAY OF DU MAI

Elisabeth Rochat: By looking at the pathway of du mai we will try to see the significance of its function and role. The simplest description is in Nan jing difficulty 28:

Du mai rises from the yu of the lower ridgepole (xia ji); it doubles the spinal column on the inside; it raises to feng fu (Du-16) and penetrates the brain with which it takes a belonging relationship.

So what is the meaning of this character yu? Generally it is a designation of an acupuncture point; a place where something can pass from the exterior, for example the stimulation from an acupuncture needle, to the inner function of the body, or from the inner viscera towards the surface. That is why we have the idea of a boat floating and following the current of a river in the etymology of yu. Point is not a very good translation.

Du mai begins at Du-1, chang qiang, or occasionally it is said to begin at Ren-1, hui yin. But why this strange and complicated name here? If we look at the beginning of ren mai it becomes clear that it is in order to give a symmetrical presentation between du mai and ren mai. But the presentation of ren mai is also complicated. The author of the Nan jing wanted to emphasise this ridge pole, ji, as the starting point of du mai and ren mai, to show how these two meridians give the first unity of the body before it begins to take shape. This expression tai ji, supreme ridgepole, had a very significant meaning at the time of the writing of the Nan jing. The supreme ridge pole was seen as the supreme point of attachment for everything that exists.

Claude Larre: This reflects back to the liu he, the six junctions. We can take the view of the individual within the universe, or the universe within the individual. The individual being is in the centre of everything, as that is a fact of our consciousness, but the limitation of ourselves within the universe is not known. When we are talking of the supreme this or the supreme that, it means at the

same time the highest level of the universe and the beginning of our own life. And it is impossible to make a localization of the point where life is given or where life ceases to be active in ourselves. We must be careful to make a distinction between where life is visible, and where life is functioning but invisible.

Elisabeth Rochat: The tai ji, the supreme ridge pole of the universe, is what exists before the first division into yin and yang (the broken and unbroken lines of the Yi Jing). Then come the four images, the eight trigrams and the 64 hexagrams. This vision is a resection of the thought of the Han dynasty, which is the period of the Nan jing. The ji (ridgepole) is seen as the beginning of the du mai and the ren mai, and this is in order to give the idea of the first division into yin and yang from the primitive unity, where there is no shape and no form. The character xia (lower), is used here because it is only from the depths of the earth that something can rise up and move towards heaven. This is a yang movement of rising up and extending.

Some commentators say that the first point of du mai is hui yin which we know as Ren-1. Hui gives the idea of a great gathering of yin, a great meeting in the yin area of the body, sometimes meaning the sexual area, sometimes just the lower part of the abdomen. If we take this meaning we can understand hui yin as the meeting of all the mysterious power of life coming from the depths of the belly. Hui yin (Ren-1) as well as chang qiang (Du-1) are just projections towards the exterior of the mystery of life in the lower abdomen.

Claude Larre: In dealing with the eight extraordinary meridians we must remember that we are thinking of this primitive embryonic aspect of life. If we were talking about the kidneys it would be different, and of course the starting point of the meridian would be on the foot. But with the ren and du mai we are concerned with a development before that of the four limbs, so the starting point must be at the bottom of the trunk. At this stage we cannot separate the ren mai and the du mai as they are still interconnected.

Elisabeth Rochat: We will see later that different commentators give other possible starting points inside the body, but the common starting point for both ren and du mai is often given as hui yin, and the mysterious beginning for ren mai, du mai and chong mai is within the body in this kind of vital envelope in the lower abdomen.

...It doubles the spinal column on the inside. It rises to feng fu (Du-16)...

This is not describing a superficial pathway, but a deep one. Du mai is on the back, and if it is said to be doubling the spinal column, it is to suggest that it is giving strength to the back bone, which is the core of the trunk of the body. It rises to feng fu (Du-16, Storehouse of the Wind), but why do they choose this point? The same text takes Ren-4 when talking of ren mai. Feng fu, is just at the end of the spinal column, between the spinal column and the skull and the brain. Wind is often used to describe the breath of life, or the qi. Long before it was used in relation to perverse energy, wind described the impetuosity of life, or the yang movement of life and its ability to go quickly and far away, to put in motion. So this is probably why this point is chosen.

Du mai's movement is an ascending movement, and the strength of this movement is visible in the hardness of the bones. Through fengfu all these strong influences penetrate the brain, bringing yang

and spiritual stimulation. Remember the brain is a mass of yin that needs the inspiration of the yang and the spirits to be energised and to have clarity for the functioning of all the upper orifices, and through the upper orifices the good functioning of perception, knowledge and adaptation to the exterior world.

The special relationship between du mai and the brain is a shu, belonging, relationship: to be, by nature, under the authority of something. They depend one upon the other, they belong together, and this relationship is the same as that of each of the twelve meridians with its own organ, the lung meridians with the lungs and so on. We will see later that the du mai has other relationships with other functions within the body, but in its ascending movement it has this belonging relationship with the yin of the brain. It is coming from the yin in the lower part of the trunk and ending in the yin in the upper part. And this upper yin, the brain, is the proper receiver for the finest yang influences coming from this other original mixing in the depths.

SU WEN CHAPTER 60

Du mai arises in the lower abdomen and descends directly in the middle of the bone (symphysis pubis). In women it penetrates to connect with the extremity of the urinary meatus. Its luo passes through the vase of yin (sexual organs) and makes a junction (he) between the two lower orifices at the perineum. It follows the curve of the perineum behind and through a detachment (bie) follows the curve of the buttocks; it reaches the shao yin (kidney meridian) as well as the central luo of the great yang (bladder meridian). It makes a junction with the shao yin, and rises on the upper internal face of the thigh; it passes through the spinal column and takes a relation of dependence (shu) with the kidneys.

It arises with the tai yang in the internal corner of the eye, it rises to the forehead and makes a crossing (jiao) above the top of the head (dian); it penetrates taking a connecting (luo) relation with the brain; resuming it leaves, detaches (bie) and descends to the nape of the neck. It passes through the internal part of the scapula, flanks the spinal column and reaches the middle of the loins; it penetrates and runs along the vertebral column and takes a connecting (luo) relationship with the kidneys. In men it runs along the penis and descends to the perineum; then it is the same as for women.

The pathway that rises directly from the lower abdomen runs through the middle of the navel, rises to go through the heart and penetrates the throat; rises to the chin, encircles the lips and rises to connect under the two eyes, right in the middle.

Elisabeth Rochat: This seems to be a very strange presentation of the pathway of du mai because it is not the usual pathway rising from Du-1 to the summit of the head, and after that descending to the inner lips at Du-28. We will see that this point Du-28, especially in the Su wen, is seen as a point of ren mai because as you know the present assignation of points to particular meridians is quite recent.

Here we have three trajectories of du mai, one in the lower part of the trunk, beginning in the lower abdomen, and commentators in later texts identified this place inside the lower abdomen with

the intimate envelope called bao. The meaning of this character bao is of a matrix, a very precious wrapping of something. For a woman it is like a special envelope for new life which we call the uterus and which is one of the six extraordinary fu. But man and woman both have bao, so it does not only mean uterus, but also how I hold and keep my own vitality at the origin inside my lower abdomen. This bao has a very strong link with the kidneys, in this case with the kidneys as the keeper of original yin and yang, authentic fire and water and so on. Bao is a kind of protection of my own life and the mysterious point from which the division and differentiation of my qi bursts out. The term bao zhong is often used to suggest the centre of life which is protected.

So some texts will describe the origin of du mai, with ren mai and chong mai, as this well protected centre, or as in the lower abdomen, or the area of the kidneys, and it is all much the same idea, as it is not possible to give a precise location for bao when it is not the uterus of a woman, but just this concept of the mysterious beginning of life, and how it is preserved.

From this joint beginning the du mai descends directly in the middle of the bone, the heng gu (as in the name of the point Kidney-11), or the pubic symphysis, meaning horizontal bone. If you look at the body you have the backbone, which is the best example in the body of the verticality, the ascending yang power, with du mai and the tai yang bladder meridian. This backbone is like a column, but in the front we have the opposite, the horizontal bone, heng gu, the symphysis pubis, and also the hyoid, because in the vision of the body, both symbolic and real, we always have an opposition between the back and the front, between du mai and ren mai, between the yang and the yin, and between the verticality of the qi and the yang and the horizontality of the earth and the yin. So at the front of the body we have this supporting bone, and at this level we have both the ren mai and the du mai making a network of communication in the perineum and having a relationship with the two lower orifices.

In this area there is a close relationship with the kidney meridian, and also a strong influence of du mai on the sexual organs, because the sexual organs are not only governed by yin, but need the yang to move the yin. We all know the problems in the lower abdomen are not only because of yin deficiency, emptiness of blood for example, but also because of an emptiness of qi. There are many examples of that relating to the pathology of du mai later in this chapter.

... It follows the curve of the perineum behind and through a detachment (bie) follows the curve of the buttocks; it reaches the shao yin (kidney meridian) as well as the central luo of the great yang (bladder meridian).

The central luo of the great yang is just another way to say the bladder meridian. This is the area of Bladder-35, hui yang, which is a meeting of the yang, a kind of exit from the yin to the yang, at the beginning of the spinal column. Here something is completed, something from the lower abdomen moving in a kind of loop, passing through the genitals and passing through the lower part of the spinal column.

... It makes a junction with the shao yin, and rises on the upper internal face of the thigh; it passes through the spinal column and takes a relation of dependence with the kidneys.

This is the same as the description of the bladder meridian given in Ling shu chapter 10. In the lower part, du mai is central, then as it follows the curve of the buttock it becomes bilateral - perhaps having a special relationship with the kidney meridian. It is important that we think of this meridian as affecting the whole area rather than as a thread or a single line. The single central line is more like a symbol of the effectiveness of du mai.

... It arises with the tai yang in the internal corner of the eye, it rises to the forehead and makes a crossing (jiao) above the head; it penetrates taking a luo relation with the brain; resuming, it leaves, detaches (bie) and descends to the nape of the neck. It passes through the internal part of the scapula, flanks the spinal column and reaches the middle of the loins: it penetrates and runs along the vertebral column and takes a connecting (luo) relationship with the kidneys. In men it runs along the penis and descends to the perineum; then it is the same as for women.

It has a luo connection with the brain which is the same relationship as each meridian has with its associated viscera, for example, the spleen meridian with the stomach, the lung meridian with the large intestine. It also has a luo relationship with the kidneys. As it ascends it has a shu belonging relationship, and as it descends it has a luo relationship. Finally there is a third trajectory in the middle of the belly. Coming from the lower abdomen through the navel, through the heart and rising up to this area under the centre of the eye, which is the traditional ending for ren mai.

... The pathway that rises directly from the lower abdomen runs through the middle of the navel, rises to go through the heart and penetrates the throat; rises to the chin, encircles the lips and rises to connect under the two eyes, right in the middle.

We can see that all the great yang centres of movement, the original qi and the original fire, are represented in the first trajectory at the level of the lower abdomen. The kidneys give us another expression of the origin; original yang and original yin. In the brain the finest and most subtle yang qi accumulates. The clear yang rises up to allow the superior function of the brain and the upper orifices, facilitating communication with heaven and the exterior in the most subtle way through the orifices with the eyes, the ears and the nose. References to the communication between the brain and the eye, and between the brain and the nose are very strong in the text of the Su wen and many commentators emphasize the role of du mai in respiration, and the descending movement from the nose down to the kidneys. This is perhaps the foundation of the function of the kidneys to attract the qi of the respiration down to the base of the trunk. So it is not only the embryonic respiration mentioned in the Daoist and alchemical texts, but also the foundation of one of the functions of the zang and fu.

The eyes are very important because they represent the yang in the upper orifices, they are like the sun in the human body. The eyes open during the day and close during the night giving a good rhythm to the appearance and disappearance of the light, the sun and the yang, which is why in the adult the rhythm of the wei qi, the defensive qi, is mastered from the eyes, and the qiao mai, which

are linked with du mai and ren mai, are in charge of these regulations at another stage of development.

The eyes are also called the place of zong mai, the ancestral vital circulations, ancestral with the meaning of gathering together in order to have a place for unified mastering or ruling. The same character is used for the zong qi, ancestral qi, and it means to be able to hold firmly and master a function of the body. Here at the eyes, there is this kind of mastering of all the network of animation, because so many meridians and luos come to the eyes, begin in the area around the eyes, or even pass through the eyes, like the liver meridian. Du mai is important for this area in order to give the first organisation of this mastering. There is also a relationship between du mai and the navel, which is an expression of the relationship with the mother, a relationship which is not only physical, but psychic too, and perhaps spiritual at the deepest level. For instance the name of the point of ren mai at the navel is shen que (Ren-8, Spirit Watchtower, or Spirit Gateway) which suggests a breach or an opening of the wall around a city which allows the movement in and out. Some commentators studying this point say that the name comes from the fact that from the umbilical cord the child first received its spirits from the mother; it is a passage for the spirits. The navel is a passage and an important area of relationship not only for the yin part of the body, but also for the penetration of the spirits and the qi. That is the reason why we find that du mai is represented in this area.

After that, the heart is also mentioned in this description of the pathway of du mai. That is because the heart is seen as the great yang, in charge of all the circulation and the networks of animation, the emperor fire and the ministerial fire. It is an expression of the yang power of the spirit inside the body through the power of circulation and animation. Of course the ren mai also has a very strong relationship with the heart because the heart is master of the blood. The pathway then reaches the throat, which is a passage for the breath in respiration. The du mai rises to the chin and finally collects under the two eyes, right in the centre below each eye.

Let us look at the meaning of this strange description. Du mai is that which is able to gather, to unify and to master all the yang qi of the whole body and at the same time to ensure the communication and relationships from the administrative centre of the yang qi in the body of the adult. This also implies the connection of the yang power of the qi in the body and the origin of the yang power in the kidneys, ming men and lower abdomen. This is why du mai is able to control, to supervise, to harmonize and regulate, and at the same time to give life and stimulate the qi and the yang of the whole body - because the influence of du mai is present in all these places.

Some commentators say that these two relationships with the kidneys, one with the ascending pathway and the other with the descending pathway, just draw attention to the double relationship with the yin and yang of the two kidneys, the left and the right, or the kidneys and ming men, as we can see in the Nan jing, particularly in difficulties 36 and 39. In this context, these commentators say that the first pathway, the rising trajectory, begins in the yin in the depths of the lower abdomen, the genitals, the mysterious hidden part of the vitality, and from that rises through the spinal column and backbone having a shu relationship with the kidneys. For this commentator it is the right kidney which corresponds to ming men, and it is from the yin, moving towards a relationship with the yang. Conversely, the descending pathway begins in the yang part of the body and at the exterior, visible as

the manifestation of the yang vitality and descending to take a luo relationship with the left kidney which is the yin kidney, the water. So this is coming from the yang and descending to have a relationship with the yin.

It is in the mind of the commentator that du mai is related to the yang of the kidneys and has a kind of associate relationship with the yin, but what is most important is to see that du mai has an influence in each of the areas where the yang power is working in the body and having a commanding point. The yang qi of the human body, the defensive qi rises from the lower abdomen and has a relationship with the eye. It is this inspiration and clarification by the yang in the lower abdomen which is the wei qi. This function of the yang qi in the body gives a relationship between wei qi and du mai.

With the circulation of the twelve meridians, all the organisation of the zang and fu and the relationships between them, the du mai through this mastery of the yang, is also like a supervisor of all the yang vitality in each of the zang fu. But even though the du mai is the master of yang it also has very strong relationships with the yin and the front of the body, and with the kidneys, because in this building of the human body there must always be a conjunction of yin and yang. Nothing on earth is pure yang or pure yin, and even du mai, which in a way is the purest expression of yang in the body, has this constant interrelationship with the yin. So du mai is the first of the extraordinary meridians, logically speaking, because its influence is seen everywhere.

Question: Could you relate the du mai to the first division of the cell after conception? There is some idea that the place in the body where that begins is the equivalent of ming men. Is there anything suggesting this in the texts?

Elisabeth Rochat: No. Not at the level of the cell, no. It is the beginning of differentiation, yes, but that is not developed and discussed in the Chinese medical texts. But I think we have a possibility of interpreting that. These eight meridians are more primitive and original than the twelve, and within the eight meridians those which are most extraordinary and unique are the du mai, ren mai, chong mai and dai mai. With these four first extraordinary meridians we have not exactly a pathway but the first organisation of yin and yang in the body; in the case of du mai, the yang power and its distribution. This is the reason why the du mai is the master of the yang and of all the yang meridians and all the yang circulation. Not only that, but also master of the yang command points. It is because of this that it is original, because it is the first organiser, able to take together all the areas of organisation of the yang. After that it is more differentiated, more particular.

Claude Larre: You may build images in your own mind which are proper to your understanding, but we cannot expect the Chinese to come to such a speculation, especially at the level of the cell. They were more concerned with the general direction of life than in making an investigation into how one cell may be dividing at the very beginning. And if we make this comparison, it may help our own understanding, but it certainly has no grounding in the Chinese text. The Chinese text is concerned with the opposition - that one is for overseeing, the other is for sustaining, the one for injecting the life power, the other to make sure that it is contained somewhere. And that is the only way that we can answer the question. Other additional remarks can only be in the mind of the commentator.

Question: In some respects this frontal pathway of du mai seems to have hijacked the pathway of ren mai, can you comment on that?

Elisabeth Rochat: We will see that ren mai also has a trajectory in the back; chong mai too. And they have the same starting point. With du mai we have the expression of the yang power enveloping and animating the whole body except for the four limbs. Ren mai is in the front but also goes towards the back, as does the chong mai. The difference is not so much in the trajectory or pathway but in the fact that the du mai is more in charge of the yang aspect, the movement and the qi, and ren mai is in charge of the yin aspect, the blood and the liquids, and to support and maintain. For example, the spirits need both essences and qi the heart needs blood as well qi, and essences as well as movement. The kidneys also have these two aspects of yin and yang, water and fire, and I think that it is in the establishment of these main areas of yang influence and areas of yin influence that we see the importance of ren and du mai.

There is never absolute yang and absolute yin, and the yin and the yang, the du mai and the ren mai, have very strong connections and relationships. They are undifferentiated at the level of the origin, like chaos, and then it is a matter of function as to which areas really fall under the influence of ren mai or du mai. When we are talking of blood we are in the influence of ren mai and chong mai but if we are talking of the dynamism of qi and the ability to move and circulate the blood effectively then we are in the area of du mai. Ren mai and chong mai give the richness of the essences to the quality of the blood and define the areas where they go. The force of the circulation is given by the yang. The tai ji diagram shows the first stage of the yin within the yang, the yang within the yin, and that is the same in the human body with the interpenetration and doubling of du mai and ren mai.

In Su wen chapter 60 we have a movement of the du mai which emerges from the original breath and then rises in a repeat of part of the description of the pathway of the bladder meridian, tai yang of the foot, in order to show the other yang function in the body which is not only the ascending movement but also the power to descend as a kind of pressure. Because qi and movement is all around the body, not only for ascending but also for descending. All these movements are controlled by the yang. This description just repeats the pathway of the bladder meridian, and in a way the bladder meridian together with the du mai express this power of the vertical axis on the back. And of course all the shu points of the viscera are on the bladder meridian just as on the front there are many mu points on the ren mai.

As far as the spine is concerned, what meridians have a relationship with the spinal column? The bladder and the kidneys of course, but also the three tendino-muscular meridians of the stomach, spleen and large intestine, I am not suggesting any theories about that - just giving you the information, but there does seem to be some kind of relationship with the power of spleen and stomach and posterior heaven in their renewal of qi in the organism. In the same way the ren mai has a relationship with the spleen and stomach for the renewal of essences and blood. The chong mai also has a very strong relationship with the stomach and the kidneys, but from a different point of view, because the du mai is in relationship with all these parts in order to manifest the presence of the yang power and to master it. The ren mai does the same for the yin. Chong mai manifests the unity of all that.

Let us look at a classical text from the Yuan dynasty (13th-14th C).

The du and ren mai have one unique string, one is in the front of the body the other in the back of the body, there is the possibility of division and junction. You can divide them or you can join them. When one divides them, after a while one sees that yin and yang never leave each other. When one joins them, then after a while one sees that it is like chaos without distinction like the primitive and original mixing of everything.

We can see ren mai and du mai in differentiation or in unity. But if you are concerned with differentiation, you have to return to the unity; in the unity you have to remain in the chaotic vision of origin, or come back to the differentiation. If you make the differentiation. then you have the yin on the front and the yang on the back, but you must never forget that this is coming from the more chaotic state of unity. Ren and du mai are produced from original qi (yuan qi) and for this reason we can understand the important role of du mai and ren mai in all forms of Daoist meditation. Because this is the perfect way to remain in good health - to understand the unity and the differentiation; to be able to make a good circulation of blood and qi, while not leaving the unity of your own body, and by this kind of exercise to understand the body as part of the cosmos. But this is for those in good health!

Question: Can I ask you to clarify the direction of energy flow in the du mai ?

Elisabeth Rochat: I think that the direction, the ascending or descending movement is symbolic of the double function of both ascending and descending. This means that there is not only a descending movement in the back and an ascending movement in the front, but more that because the yin energy must rise up we have the ascending movement at the front, and to emphasise the fact that the yang also has to descend we have the movement of du mai descending at the back.

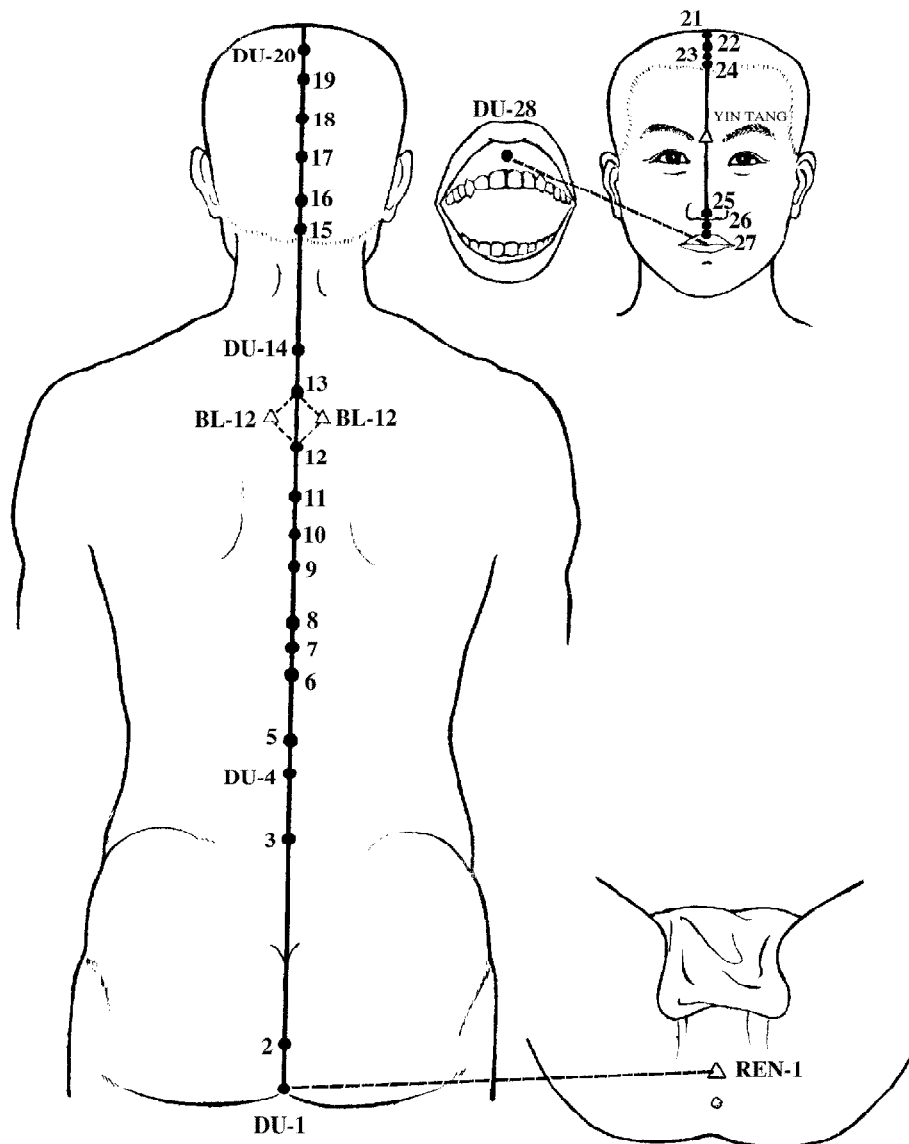
But according to the Nei jing and a lot of other texts, the ascending movement from the perineum to the top of the head and to the eyes and mouth is the most usual way to describe the du mai. Because here we have a symbolic representation of the yang power, giving vertical strength to the body and acting as the axis of the yang exchange, I do not know if it is more strange for you to think of ren mai and du mai with this kind of doubling, or to imagine a body, with a common origin, suddenly making a complete division in the area of the perineum into yin and yang. Which is the most strange? Both are true at their own level. But you must complete the picture to understand that this is not a separation, just an expression of the duality of the way in which du mai and ren mai control yin and yang, blood and qi, fire and water within this first division of vitality. It is the same as the kidneys, they are double or they are one. It depends.

AN ACUPUNCTURE COMPENDIUM: Du Mai (from Davis, 2000)

Du Mai has four pathways:

1. The main pathway commences in the pelvic cavity. It emerges in the perineum at REN-1 (Hui Yin), and passes posteriorly to DU-1 (Chang Qiang) at the caudal tip of the coccyx. It then ascends along the middle of the spinal column to DU-16 (Feng Fu) at the nape of the neck. It enters the brain and ascends to the vertex, emerging at DU-20 (Bai Hui). It continues forward along the midline to the

forehead (DU-24, Shen Ting), runs down across the bridge of the nose, and across the philtrum (DU-26, Shui Gou). It terminates in the maxillary gum (DU-28, Yin Jiao).



Du Mai

(modified from Shandong, 1982, p. 57)

2. The second pathway begins in the lower abdomen, and runs down through the genitals into the perineal region. It then travels through the tip of the coccyx and continues into the gluteal region. It intersects the Kidney Channel of foot Shao Yin and the Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang, then returns to the spinal column. It then travels up the spine and links with the Kidneys.

3. The third pathway begins at the same point on both Urinary Bladder Channels of foot Tai Yang, at the inner canthus of each eye (BL-1, Jing Ming). A branch from each inner canthus rises up over the forehead to meet at the vertex. The pathway then enters the brain. It emerges at the nape of the neck and divides into two branches that descend along each side of the spine to the waist. There they join with the Kidneys Organ.

4. The fourth pathway begins in the lower abdomen. It ascends across the umbilicus, and continues upward to join (pass through) the Heart. It then enters the trachea, crosses the floor of the mouth, splits into two and encircles the lips. It continues up the cheeks to the centre of each infraorbital region.

There are 28 points on this Meridian: DU-1 to DU-28.

Other points on this Meridian may include: on Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang, BL-1 (Jing Ming), BL-12 (Feng Men); on Ren Mai, REN-1 (Hui Yin), [REN-24 (Cheng Jiang)]; on Stomach Channel of foot Yang Ming, ST-30 (Qi Chong) (Matsumoto and Birch, 1986).

DU MAI SPECIAL POINTS/ COMMAND POINTS

SI-3 (Hou Xi): Master point
 BL-62 (Shen Mai): Coupling point
 DU-1 (Chang Qiang): Luo-Connecting point

FLOW OF QI/ DISTRIBUTION OF POINTS:

Lower Jiao (Perineum, Posterior Pelvis): REN-1 (Hui Yin), DU-1 (Chang Qiang), DU-2 (Yao Shu), DU-3 (Yao Yang Guan)

Middle Jiao (Lumbar, Lower Thoracic Spine): DU-4 (Ming Men), DU-5 (Xuan Shu), DU-6 (Ji Zhong), DU-7 (Zhong Shu), DU-8 (Jin Suo)

Upper Jiao:

Upper Thoracic Spine, Posterior Neck: DU-9 (Zhi Yang), DU-10 (Ling Tai), DU-11 (Shen Dao), DU-12 (Shen Zhu), [BL-12 (Feng Men)], DU-13 (Tao Dao), DU-14 (Da Zhui), DU-15 (Ya Men), DU-16 (Feng Fu)

Head: DU-17 (Nao Hu), DU-18 (Qiang Jian), DU-19 (Huo Ding), DU-20 (Bai Hui), DU-21 (Qian Ding), DU-22 (Xin Hui), DU-23 (Shang Xing), DU-24 (Shen Ting)

Face: DU-25 (Su Liao), DU-26 (Shui Gou), DU-27 (Dui Duan), DU-28 (Yin Jiao), [REN-24 (Cheng Jiang)].

MERIDIANS INTERSECTED BY DU MAI:

Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang: BL-1 (Jing Ming), BL-12 (Feng Men)
 Ren Mai (Conception Vessel): REN-1 (Hui Yin), [REN-24 (Cheng Jiang)]
 Stomach Channel of foot Yang Ming: ST-30 (Qi Chong)

MERIDIANS INTERSECTING ON DU MAI:

DU-1 (Chang Qiang): Kidney Channel of foot Shao Yin
 DU-13 (Tao Dao): Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang
 DU-14 (Da Zhui): Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang
 Stomach Channel of foot Yang Ming
 Gall Bladder Channel of foot Shao Yang
 Large Intestine Channel of hand Yang Ming

	San Jiao Channel of hand Shao Yang
	Small Intestine Channel of hand Tai Yang
DU-15 (Ya Men):	Yang Wei Mai (Yang linking Vessel)
DU-16 (Feng Fu):	Yang Qiao Mai (Yang heel/motility Vessel)
	Yang Wei Mai (Yang linking Vessel)
DU-17 (Nao Hu):	Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang
DU-20 (Bai Hui):	Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang
	Liver Channel of foot Jue Yin
DU-24 (Shen Ting):	Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang
	Stomach Channel of foot Yang Ming
DU-26 (Shui Gou):	Stomach Channel of foot Yang Ming
	Large Intestine Channel of hand Yang Ming
DU-28 (Yin Jiao):	Ren Mai (Conception Vessel)

Functions:

(O'Connor & Bensky, 1981; Ellis et al, 1988): Du Mai is the sea of the Yang Channels. All six primary Yang Channels converge at DU-14 (Da Zhui). Du Mai has a regulating effect on all the Yang Channels, so it is said that it 'governs' all the Yang Channels of the body.

Du Mai homes to the brain and connects to the Kidneys. The Kidneys engender Marrow. The brain is known as the "Sea of Marrow" (Ellis et al., 1988). Du Mai reflects the physiology and pathology of the brain, spinal cord, and reproductive system. Pain and stiffness of the spinal column and febrile diseases are also commonly associated with Du Mai. It meets the Liver Channel at the vertex of the head.

(Ross, 1995): Tonifies Yang - tonifies Kidney and Heart Yang, helps the Spleen hold up Organs, disperses Interior Cold and Damp; tonifies the Kidneys, brain and spine - tonifies Kidney Jing, strengthens the spine and the mind; Expels Exterior Wind; moves stagnation of Qi and Blood in the back, neck and head; calms irregularity and disperses Excess - calms hyperactive Yang, Interior Wind, the Shen, and disperses Interior Fire.

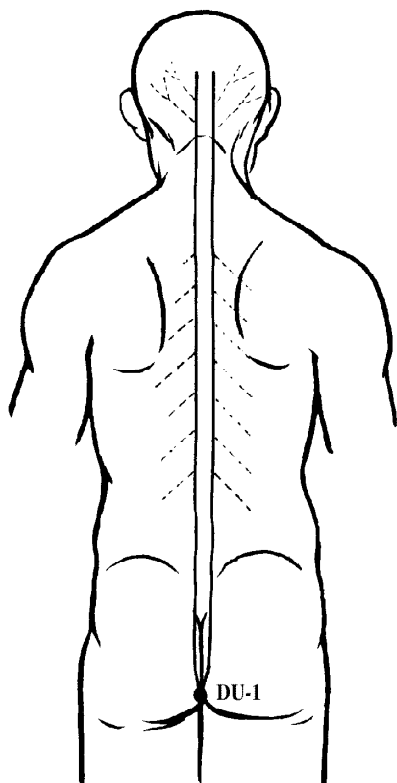
Indications:

(Ellis et al, 1988; O'Connor & Bensky, 1981; Shandong, 1982): Opisthotonos, pain and stiffness in the back and along the spinal column, malaria, heavy sensation of the head, vertigo, shaking, haemorrhoids, sterility, Jing-Shen disorders, Internal Wind resulting from fright particularly in children, colic, constipation, enuresis, convulsion, febrile diseases, night sweating.

Note:

The paravertebral points of Hua Tuo, (Hua Tuo Jia Ji, M-BW-35, Lining the Spine), located 0.5-1 cun lateral to Du Mai along the length of the spine - on both sides, are not infrequently substituted for Du Mai points. Their Functions and Indications vary with the region of the spine, but are similar to other points located in the immediate proximity - Du Mai, Urinary Bladder, or other Extra points.

DU MAI LUO (CONNECTING) MERIDIAN



The Du Mai Luo Meridian separates from Du Mai at DU-1 (Chang Qiang), at the tip of the coccyx. It forms two branches that ascend and spread on either side of the spine to the nape of the neck. These branches disperse over the top of the head.

In the region of the scapulae, branches of this Luo Vessel connect to the Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang, penetrate into the paravertebral connective tissues (Sinews), and disperse through the spine.

Signs/ Symptoms:

Shi: stiffness of the spine, stiff neck

Xu: heaviness of the head, dizziness

Du Mai Luo Meridian

(from Cheng 1987, p. 94)

MATSUMOTO & BIRCH

Du Mai Symptomology

Many commentators have offered treatment points for the du mai. The Jinkui Yaolue Fanglun of approximately 200 AD says, "For diseases of the du mai, put moxa on da zhui {GV-14} and tao dao {GV-13}". In the Su Wen, in the same chapter that speaks of the trajectory of the du mai, it says:

Rebellious qi comes up from the small hara causing heart pain, with inability to pass urine or faeces. Women have an inability to become pregnant, protruding hemorrhoids, incontinence of urine and a dry throat. To treat these symptoms, treat a point on the bone {spine}. If the symptoms are terrible, treat the lower hara.

Li Shi Zhen explains that the point on the bone might be CV-1 and the point on the hara might be CV-7. The Nan Jing tells us, "The spine is tight and rebellious". Wang Shu He explains this by giving a treatment for these symptoms:

If the du mai is attacked by evil, the spine will become tight and rebellious; treat with moxa on shenzhu {GV-12}.

Some commentators translate "tightness and rebelliousness" as epilepsy; however, it may be simply rigidity of the spine or back muscles.

The du mai pulse is a pulse where the first and third positions are floating, yet rise and fall "perpendicularly" {suddenly}, with symptoms of lumbar and back pulling pain with an inability to lay down. In adults, there will be epilepsy, in children, wind spasms. If the middle pulse is floating

with sudden pain in the upper and lower parts of the body, this too is a du mai pulse. Symptoms will be movement causing pain, coldness of the lumbar, back and knees. In adults there will be epilepsy, in children wind spasms. Wang Shu He recommends treating these last two symptoms with moxa on the "top of the head".

LARRE & ROCHAT

PATHOLOGY OF DU MAI

In Su wen chapter 60 we have the presentation of several pathologies of du mai. One main pathology is given just before the presentation of the trajectory, the other just after.

When du mai gives rise to illnesses the spinal column stiffens and is as if broken, (against the flow).

This is very similar to the description given in Nan jing difficulty 29:

When du mai gives rise to illnesses, the spinal column stiffens and there is withdrawal, jue.

Jue is a kind of weakness from withdrawal. There is not enough correct qi to rule the whole body and for this reason a perversion, a bad transformation or an aggression from the exterior can penetrate and gain ground either little by little, or suddenly, it depends on the conditions. This is the meaning of the character jue. These kinds of illnesses concern the pathway of du mai in the back but also the way in which du mai is able to ensure the correct circulation and good balance in the strength of the yang qi. For example, 'the spinal column stiffens, and is as if broken', describes an illness due to the bad regulation of the yang qi in the back. And there are two types. One is a perverse fullness which creates a kind of over-tension in the bones and particularly in the muscular attachments on the spine. This is because the pressure of the perverse qi creates a kind of swelling, which creates pressure causing stiffness and pain as if the back is broken.

Sometimes you can have the same symptoms due to an emptiness of yang qi. If the yang qi is empty the back is very vulnerable, especially to all kinds of attack from the wind and the cold. In this case, if the yang qi is weakened and empty it is unable to warm the spinal column and the bones and marrow inside. There is a lack of defensive qi and penetration by perverse energies of cold or wind could also create stiffness. Of course we must make the distinction whether the cause of the pain is fullness or emptiness. It may be a general emptiness of yang in the body or due to blockage, obstruction and congestion.

Later in Su wen 60 it says:

When illnesses are produced (in connection with this pathway) from the lower abdomen it rises to rush (chong) at the heart and cause pain there; one cannot go either in front or behind (neither urine or stool). This is shan syndrome with an impetuous current (chong shan). In women there is sterility, dysuria, haemorrhoids, urinary incontinence, dry throat.

When du mai produces its illnesses, one treats du mai; one treats above the bone, when it is serious, one treats at the power of the constitution, which is under the navel.

'Above the bone' refers to Ren-2 (qu gu) and the other indication below the navel is for Ren-7 (yin qiao) which according to the Nan jing is the special command point of the lower heater.

These illnesses are not specially linked with du mai, but with the joint pathways of ren mai du mai and chong mai, which control the lower abdomen and ensure good circulation below the navel and good balance between the ascending and descending movement of the blood and qi and liquids. Blood and liquids must circulate well in order to ensure the correct functioning of the lower orifices, and all the elements of vitality in the depths of the abdomen, especially for reproduction. Du mai governs the ability to raise the vitality from the lower part of the body up to the upper abdomen and the upper part of the thorax, to the heart and the throat, and so on.

All this pathology is a kind of countercurrent, meaning that the qi the yang, is too strong, and unable to remain in correct balance with the yin in the lower abdomen; the rising up movement is too strong. This is the reason for this rush at the heart, causing a kind of cardialgia or pains in the heart. We must remember from the earlier descriptions that du mai and of course ren mai and chong mai too, have a relationship with the heart and the upper heater, and if there is a countercurrent, the circulation of the blood and the liquids is disturbed. For instance, sterility for women may be because the blood, under the authority of the heart, is unable to descend and enrich the inner abdomen, where the fertility of a woman resides. So in this kind of disturbance there can be sterility in women.

The lower orifices, which are under the authority of du mai and ren mai, may also have a lack of the power necessary to contain and to hold, because the yang is rising too much. This would cause urinary incontinence and haemorrhoids due to bad circulation and stagnation. At the throat, where du mai, ren mai and chong mai pass, there would be dryness, because the liquids are not carried up to the throat, and by the same movement of the yang, they are dried up. The movement and agitation of the yang which harms the heart, also dries up all the liquids in the brain and upper orifices. We can see this in the name and function of the points on the ren mai for example Ren-22 (tian tu) and Ren-23 (lian quan) are very strong points for the circulation of liquids in the upper parts of the body.

We can see that this is not exactly a pathology of du mai or a pathology of ren mai it is a pathology of the proper balance between them - between blood and qi and the circulation of blood and qi in this part of the body where all the vitality is hidden, reproduction is centred, and the nutrition of the heart and all the viscera is maintained. Treatment is on the ren mai, with the two points which balance the lower heater, the meeting place of the yin and yang at the level of the origin.

Question: What is shan?

Elisabeth Rochat: It can refer to all kinds of hernia, but it is not only that. The character is made with the radical for illness and the phonetic for mountain. There are two meanings for this mountain, it can be a protuberance, which, like a mountain is visible externally, but it can also be a kind of accumulation of stones or of earth piled up. Many diseases of the lower heater linked to bad circulation can also be shan, whether lack of defensive qi, congestion or blockage or any kind of accumulation. Hernia is just one of the interpretations. Generally we have another character before

shan to give the precise meaning. Chong shan is a kind of stagnation, blockage and cold in the lower abdomen caused by an aggressive rising of qi also giving symptoms in the upper heater and the throat; a kind of separation of yin and yang, which is the main point of this pathology.

Headaches

There are also other classical pathologies of du mai, including headaches or the feeling of something heavy in the head. There may be heaviness in the head due to an emptiness of the yang or due to an emptiness of the yin creating a false power of the yang. In the first instance of the emptiness and weakness of the yang qi, the deficiency is in the ability of the clear yang (qing yang) to rise up through the du mai. This clear yang is pure and clear enough to invigorate the brain and the upper orifices, which is one of the main functions of du mai to enable the clear yang qi to reach its goal in the upper part of the body. If the du mai is too weak to do that, if the yang qi is too weak, the qi is not clear and does not have enough strength to reach the brain and animate this mass of yin in the head. This is why there is the feeling of heaviness in the head.

If, on the contrary, the yang is too strong, it may cause imbalance between the yin and the yang, and there will be a kind of upward countercurrent. In this case the yang will cause agitation and movement. Because it is not stabilised by the yin, the yang makes trouble in the upper areas of the body, not exactly a heavy head, but a headache with agitation, and pain. Both of these headaches may be connected with du mai.

Mania and Dementia

According to many texts, du mai pathology includes dementia and mania, dian kuang. In this context dian is a kind of yin madness, kuang a yang kind of madness. This lack or weakness of yang and qi causes an abundance of yin and phlegm, but without inflammation, just a congestion due to occupation of the inner areas of the trunk by dampness and liquids, which are not being transformed. As a result, when this reaches the level of the upper heater, because of the lack of yang qi and the lack of the support of the du mai to the heart, there is a lack in the spirits and in the consciousness: they are not animated by the yang. At the same time there is this blockage and heaviness due to the untransformed liquids. This is the cause of dementia (dian) and the main symptoms are that the conduct and ideas are not clear but very disordered and without regularity. The person may laugh and cry alternatively.

Mania, kuang, is quite the contrary. It is the superabundance of perverse yang, fire and heat. The phlegm in this case is with inflammation, it is very dense and thick, and congests the orifices of the heart. The agitation in the upper heater and of the heart creates a disturbance in the expression of the spirits; there is agitation and anger, like a bolting horse.

Question: Can this be related to epilepsy?

Elisabeth Rochat: Epilepsy could come from this same process, and in some texts it says that this pathology of du mai applies to adults, whereas for children it may be convulsions and epilepsy. The reason for this is that the function of du mai is to regulate the yang and the qi. Here we have both sides of the disturbance of that - either too weak or too strong. But the du mai is not only for the yang and the qi, but also for the effectiveness of the spirits, as we can see in the names of the points on the du mai at the level of the heart such as shen dao, Du-11, The Way of the Spirits.

The presence of the spirits is necessary in the upper orifices and the brain, and du mai plays its part in the expression of the spirits by regulating the yang in the body. This pathology is given for adults, because the most serious injury is an injury to the expression of the spirits. But for a child, who is not yet in complete possession of the spirits, the symptoms may be more physical and manifest as convulsions and epilepsy. Of course there are many kinds of convulsions in the classical texts, but for example, when the pulse is very weak and empty the treatment may be easier than when there is a kind of large, swollen pulse indicating perverse energy. In this case it is a sign that the perverse wind is very strong and treatment can be difficult.

With convulsions and epilepsy, there may be other symptoms such as episthotonos, which is an excess of tension and countercurrent. Du-20 (bai hui) is one of the points used in this case because of its relationship with the brain. Nan jing 28 mentions penetration from feng fu, Du-16, into the brain, and also through the pathway of the bladder meridian at Bladder-7 (tong tian) and into the brain. Deficiency of du mai can lead to lack of defence and a perversion of wind in the head. Nao feng, 'wind in the brain', is a name for headaches or vertigo and sometimes dementia and so on. Bai hui can be used in all these cases of tension, episthotonos and stiffness of the muscular attachments along the spine, as it is also the meeting point between the du mai and the liver meridian which is of course the master of the muscles.

Question: When would you decide to use the extraordinary meridians in treatment rather than the twelve ordinary meridians?

Elisabeth Rochat: If there is a lack of the power of the qi and the yang it may be very similar to the symptoms of the decreasing of the fire of ming men, and also of the qi and yang of posterior heaven. These are very general symptoms, for example this kind of withdrawal and lack of defensive qi coming from the origin. In the case of fullness it is like an overflow, with congestion and blockage of this yang pressure.

It is not a question of one specific aspect - as for example if one zang is concerned, but rather just one aspect of the movement which is disturbed, either the ascending or descending movement. In the case of du mai there may be all kinds of disturbance of the general mastering of the yang. But of course there are also a lot of very specific clinical uses of the eight extraordinary meridians which can be seen as a kind of general framework for the whole body and the whole pathology. It is always a question of technical application, and not a question of being true or false. Some schools may say that the eight extraordinary meridians are for inner meditation and the twelve are for treatment. Of course in China there will be several different approaches.

Point Names of Du Mai

Elisabeth Rochat: Let us consider the movement and function of du mai through the names of the points. This is not intended as a complete study of the point names of the du mai, I have just chosen for each point the interpretation which helps us to understand this great axis of du mai. [Refer to specific information on individual points - EHD].

DEADMAN'S MERIDIAN COMMENTARY

The Governing vessel is one of the eight extraordinary vessels, but along with the Conception vessel is exceptional among these eight in that it has its own acupuncture points. For this reason the Governing and Conception vessels are often included with the twelve primary channels (and together known as the fourteen [main] channels). The other six extraordinary vessels have no points of their own, passing instead through points of the fourteen channels.

The Governing vessel is principally understood to be the channel that ascends through the spine to the brain. As the above description shows, however, its (fourth) pathway ascends the front of the body, whilst a branch of the Conception vessel arises in the pelvic cavity, enters the spine and ascends along the back. Li Shi-zhen, therefore, said "The Conception and Governing vessels are like midnight and midday, they are the polar axis of the body ... there is one source and two branches, one goes to the front and the other to the back of the body ... When we try to divide these, we see that yin and yang are inseparable. When we try to see them as one, we see that it is an indivisible whole".

As far as the pathway of the Governing vessel is concerned, it is important to note that:

- the primary channel ascends both inside the spine and alongside the spine.
- the primary channel enters the brain at Fengfu DU-16 and at the vertex (Baihui DU-20).
- the primary channel enters the Kidneys.
- the primary channel passes through the Heart.
- the primary channel winds around the anus.
- the primary channel winds around the external genitals.
- the luo-connecting channel spreads through the occiput.

As a consequence of the various pathways of the Governing vessel and its relationship with the Kidneys, Heart and brain, we can summarise the actions of the points of the Governing vessel as follows:

- Treating diseases of the anus, rectum, and intestines. The Governing vessel winds around the anal region and the lower points of this channel (Changqiang DU-1 to Xuanshu DU-5) as well as Renzhong DU-26 above, treat diseases such as haemorrhoids, prolapse of the rectum and intestinal disorders.
- Treating diseases of the genitals, urinary system and uterus. The anterior pathway of the Governing vessel winds around the genitals, and points Changqiang DU-1 to Mingmen DU-4 treat diseases such as painful urinary dysfunction, urinary retention or difficulty, seminal emission, leucorrhoea and menstrual disturbance.
- Treating disorders of the spine. The Governing vessel ascends through the spinal column, and its points treat disorders of the spine, predominantly at their corresponding level.
- Treating febrile diseases and reducing heat in the body. The Governing vessel is the 'sea of the yang channels' and its points are effective to reduce yang heat manifesting as heat of the body, fever and especially malaria.
- Treating diseases of the zangfu. As the Governing vessel ascends along the spine, its points have the ability to treat diseases of the zangfu roughly corresponding to their location. This correspondence does not exactly mirror the back-shu points. For example Jinsuo DU-8 (which lies level with Ganshu

BL-18, the back-shu point of the Liver) treats disharmony of the Liver, and points Shendao DU-11 (level with Xinshu BL-15 the back-shu point of the Heart) and Shenzhu DU-12 (level with Feishu BL-13 the back-shu point of the Lung) treat diseases of the Heart and Lung respectively. Zhiyang DU-9, however which lies beneath the seventh thoracic vertebra level with Geshu BL-17, treats diseases of the Stomach and Spleen. There is also a system of correspondence mentioned in the Essential Questions which was discontinued in later texts, whereby for example Zhiyang DU-9 was said to treat heat in the Kidney, Lingtai DU-10 heat in the Spleen, Shendao DU-11 heat in the Liver etc.

- Treating disorders of exterior or interior wind. Wind is a yang pathogen, and the Governing vessel is the 'sea of the yang channels'. Many of its points are of vital importance in the treatment of exterior wind (especially Dazhui DU-14 and Fengfu DU-16), whilst from Jinsuo DU-8 upwards most points have a strong action on pacifying interior wind giving rise to such disorders as upward staring eyes, opisthotonos, lockjaw, dizziness, head wind, windstroke, spasm and especially epilepsy.

- Treating disorders of the sense organs. From Yamen DU-15 upwards, the points of the Governing vessel treat disorders of the tongue, eyes, face and especially the nose, through which the central portion of the channel descends.

- Treating disorders of the Heart zang, primarily pain and palpitations. This may be explained by the passage of the anterior portion of the Governing vessel through the Heart.

- Treating disorders of the brain and spirit. It is striking how many points of the Governing vessel are indicated for the kind of disharmony usually associated with the Heart and spirit, for example mania-depression, manic behaviour, agitation, poor memory, disorientation, palpitations, insomnia, loss of consciousness and epilepsy. (see especially Baihui DU-20 and Shenting DU-24). There is indeed an apparent contradiction here within Chinese medicine theory. The concept that the spirit is stored in the Heart is of course an axiom of Chinese medicine and is attested to in various classics. The Spiritual Pivot says "The Heart controls the vessels; the vessels are the residence of the spirit", "When the blood and qi are already in harmony, the nutritive qi and defensive qi already communicating, the five zang already formed, the spirit will reside in the Heart", and "The Heart is the great master of the five zang and six fu and the residence of the essence spirit", whilst the Essential Questions says "The Heart stores the spirit". At the same time, there are many classical references to the idea that the spirit concentrates in the head and brain, for example the Essential Questions says "the head is the residence of the intelligence", the Ten Works on Practice Toward the Attainment of Truth says "The brain is the ancestor of the body's form and the meeting place of the hundred spirits", the Daoist Internal Mirror says "The brain is the ancestral portal of the body, the capital where the ten thousand spirits meet", Sun Si-miao, in the Thousand Ducat Formulas says "The head is the supreme leader, the place where man's spirit concentrates", Li Shi-zhen says "The brain is the residence of the original spirit", and the Essentials of Materia Medica says "All of a person's memory resides in the brain".

Three main factors may help to illuminate this theoretical difficulty:

- i. different traditions within Chinese medicine,
- ii. the influence of modern medicine, and

iii. the interrelationship of the Heart, blood, essence, brain and spirit.

Different traditions within Chinese Medicine

Both before and after the appearance of the Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic, different traditions are apparent within the broad fields of Chinese medicine, spiritual practice and health preservation. In pre- Inner Classic times, a more structural perception of the human body placed the brain as the main organ in charge of mental activity. After the Inner Classic, when the study of medicine diverged and grew more independent of its Daoist roots, a more functional view of the body developed, based on the predominance of the five zang and six fu and their correspondences (especially five phase correspondences), the brain being 'relegated' to the status of an extra fu, and the Heart becoming the sovereign of the body and the residence of the spirit. This divergence is reflected in the Essential Questions which says "I understand that there are some Daoists who have a completely different understanding of the nature of a zang and a fu. Some say the brain and the marrow are zang ... whereas others think of them as fu. If presented with a view other than their own, they insist that only their own interpretation is right". Later esoteric Daoist texts strongly influenced certain great doctors of the Tang, Yuan and Ming dynasties such as Sun Si-miao, Zhang Jing-yue and Li Shi-zhen. Their understanding of the role of the brain, and the principal acupuncture channel which influences it, the Governing vessel, again entered the corpus of Chinese medicine theory. At the same time, none of these doctors challenged the theory of the Heart and spirit as being essentially contradictory to the brain spirit theory.

The influence of modern medicine

During the Qing dynasty and the Republican era, knowledge of Western anatomy began to infiltrate China. One author who is considered to have been influenced by these developments was Wang Qing-ren who in the chapter 'On the Brain' (in Correcting the Errors of Medicine 1830) stated "intelligence and memory rely on the brain". Wang's book was published and distributed along with A New Treatise on Anatomy, a translation of basic Western medicine texts by an English medical missionary Benjamin Hobson and his assistant Chen Xiu-tang.

The inter-relationship of the Heart, Kidneys, essence, brain and spirit.

The Spiritual Pivot states "The brain is the sea of marrow", and it is a basic tenet of Chinese medicine that the Kidneys produce marrow to fill up the brain. The Kidneys' relationship to marrow is intimately tied up with the Kidney function of storing essence, which nourishes the brain and spinal cord. All aspects of the human organism derive from the coming together of the essence of the parents. The Spiritual Pivot says "Essence is the source of life, when the two essences unite [literally: struggle against each other] the spirit is formed", and the Classic of Categories says "The two essences, one yin and one yang, unite ... to form life; the essence of mother and father unite to form the spirit". In other words the pre-natal essence, derived from the parents, is intimately related to the Kidneys and brain and is the origin of the existence of the human being and the original source of the spirit. This is the meaning of the statements by Li Shi-zhen "The brain is the residence of the original

spirit", and found in A Record of Nourishing Xing and Extending Ming - "Spirit, that is essence. If we can preserve essence, then the spirit will be bright; if spirit is bright, there will be long life". At the same time, various authors have stressed the relationship between the brain and the Heart, which is a reflection of the vital relationship between the Kidneys and Heart, water and fire. The Differentiation and Treatment of Disease stated "The spirit of the human being resides in the Heart, and the Heart's essence relies entirely on the Kidneys. Thus, the brain is the store house of the original spirit, the sea of essence marrow, and this is where memory comes from", and the Daoist classic Collected Wisdom by Master Magic Sword states "The qi of the Heart is connected with the Niwan Palace above". Niwan ('Sticky Pellet' or 'Mud Ball Palace') in the Daoist tradition is the central one of the nine palaces of the brain where all the various spirits meet, and is considered to be the location of the material basis of the spirit. Niwan is discussed in various Daoist classics, for example "The origin of essence-spirit in the brain is also called Niwan" and "The entire spirit that expresses in the face has its origin in Niwan", and "At the top of the human body, there is Tiangu Niwan, this is where the spirit is stored ... Tiangu, that is the Original Palace, the residence of the original spirit, where mental and spiritual brightness exists, the most important aspect of spirit".

The Governing vessel in its anterior pathway passes through the Heart, and in its posterior pathway penetrates the brain. This linkage between the brain and Heart was discussed by Cheng Xing-gan who said "When marrow is full, thinking is clear. Too much thinking leads to Heart fire which burns the brain ... the marrow is rooted in the essence and connects downwards with the Governing vessel; when the ming men warms and nourishes, the marrow is full".

In conclusion, the Governing vessel is the channel that mediates between the brain and the Heart. Clinically many of its points may be used to treat a variety of psycho-emotional disorders, in much the same way that points of the twelve principal channels may be used, especially those of the Heart and Pericardium. If we try to be more precise about the use of the Governing vessel points, we can suggest that:

- i. their indications generally reflect excess patterns of spirit disharmony such as mania-depression, and
- ii. they are especially indicated when psycho-emotional disorders are accompanied by fullness and discomfort of the head, dizziness, disturbance of consciousness and epilepsy.