

**THE EXTRAORDINARY FU (2003)****brain, marrow, bones, mai, gallbladder and uterus.****Monkey Press. Claude Larre, Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallée**

[In this .pdf file; BONES AND MARROW, THE MAI, THE GALL BLADDER, pp.90-158].

[**AcuCentre Editorial Note:** In all four .pdf files on The Extraordinary Fu, the content, style and presentation of Larre and Rochat's excellent book is retained virtually in its entirety. The exception is that most Chinese characters are excluded. For these and all other original and complete content, the reader is urged to refer to the original text.]

**BONES AND MARROW 骨髓 GU SUI**

Elisabeth Rochat: The character for bones is gu, and you can see that it is not a bone of a skeleton, in other words a dead bone, but a bone belonging to a living body. The character is made up of two parts, the bottom part is the character for flesh or part of the body, radical 130 of the 214 radicals of the Kang Xi system used to classify all the characters. The upper part represents the skeleton; it is a skull, which has no flesh. (See Wiegner Lesson 118A). This is not a very common character, but the meaning is to dislocate. Without flesh, muscle or sinew there is no connection between the bones. Something is broken. The junction and union which make life are no longer working. But with gu you have bones with flesh around them, the body is alive and all the junctions with muscles and sinews are working. In a newborn child, the power of these bones and sinews is very strong. Lao zi chapter 55 says that the bones of a newborn child may be weak, and the sinews and muscles are weak too, but he is able to grasp with great power. Even if the constitution of the marrow of the bones is unfinished, and even if all the forces coming through blood and qi through the muscles are not very powerful, the junction between them all is so strong that the baby can grasp something with great strength. On the other hand, according to Su wen chapter 1, when a man is getting old, one of the things which occurs is that the junction between bones and muscles unknots itself. It is a materialisation of this unknotting which is the contrary of the joining which was the beginning of life. Little by little everything unknots and the final stage is the separation of the hun and po themselves. A definition of bone, gu, in the classical Chinese dictionary is that bones are what is found in the depths of the flesh. Another definition is that bones are the framework for the human body, like the trunk of a tree, and they stick to the flesh. They are also able to protect the zang on the interior, as in the thoracic cage, which is something like the hull of a ship. Bones also have the function of enabling the movement of the body. Something which is quite interesting for osteopaths is that in classical texts the character for bones is sometimes in resonance with another ideogram hua, which is the same character only with the water radical added on the left side. This gives the idea of slippery. The bones which are strong and firm and give strength and firmness to the body are also slippery, smooth and unctuous. We already saw that bones and marrow, like the brain, need essences and liquids for their maintenance and constitution. A sentence from one of the ancient Chinese books explains this relationship. It says: 'All flowing of water on the earth needs a guide. The stones are like the bones of

the earth and are able to guide the currents of water.' In Chinese geomancy, feng shui, you have the dialectic between stones, rocks, mountains and what is called long mai, the vital circulation of the dragon, which is the network of animation for the earth. Bones, by their firmness, permit the free but guided circulation inside the body.

Question: What about the relationship between the bones and the po?

Elisabeth Rochat: I think that the relationship is made through the idea that after death the body returns to the earth, and after decomposition and decay the white bones remain in the shape of the skeleton. After death the po also return to the earth and dissolve into it. In the Book of Rites there is the sentence: 'The po are like fertilizer for the fields'. Their power returns to the earth.

Gu, bones, is a radical too, and it appears on the left hand side of the character for marrow, sui. (Wieger Lesson 46D gives an ancient form of this which means to build walls or terraces). In the character we use now, sui the flesh radical appears below on the right with the idea of walking beside it. This means to follow. The important idea is one of circulation, of following a way. The marrow, through this etymological interpretation, is something following a way inside the bones, along with the construction or building up of something.

In books of the same period there is a definition of marrow as a great liquid which flows. One of the differences between the brain and the marrow is that the brain is like a sea, immobile and fixed, and the four seas are well described and delineated in Ling shu chapter 33, but what flows into the sea is circulating and this is the marrow, the qi, the nourishment, the meridians and the blood. This is different from what constitutes a sea. One of the main functions of the marrow is to circulate and irrigate, to flow into the bones, the skull, the hollows and the orifices. This is the movement of the marrow inside the bones. The bones are like the river bed, the stones and the rocks of the earth.

The relationship between bones and marrow is that both are produced by the kidneys. Their creation relies on the kidney's essences. The kidneys store essences which then produce marrow which in its turn nourishes the bones. So there is a couple relationship between bones and marrow. They are like the soft and the hard, the yin and the yang, the interior and exterior. What is inside is always seeping its strength to what is outside. The marrow is soft and liquid and circulating, and is able to give the bones their strength. The expression 'marrow and bone', sui gu, shows the double power of the kidneys. Both yin and yang aspects of the kidneys are projected in the coupling of bones and marrow or teeth and hair. The teeth are like an exteriorization of the bones and hair is a visible sign of the good quality of blood, essences and marrow within. If the kidney essences are weak and empty, the source of the production of bones and marrow is deficient and you get weakness and fragility, a lack of bone strength, or in serious cases even hypoplasia or aplasia. In a child you might have difficulty in the closing of the fontanelle or trouble in walking.

But if the essences and qi of the kidneys are in good condition then the marrow is rich, the bones are strong, and the brain is in possession of all its power. Therefore thinking works well, all the sense organs are fine, the vigour of the body is great and there is no problem in movement. We can recall the sentence from Su wen chapter 8, the Secret Treatise of the Spiritual Orchid, that the kidneys are the basis for all skill and ability. It all passes through the marrow and the bones. But if the kidney

essences are weak and the marrow and brain are insufficient you will get a spinning head, a loss of memory, insomnia or stupidity.

### **SU WEN CHAPTER 5**

Elisabeth Rochat: In the ten first chapters of the Su wen, the relationship between kidneys, bones and marrow is repeated. For example in chapter 5 it says: 'The kidneys generate (sheng) bones and marrow'. The same thing which makes the kidneys among the zang, also makes the bones the corresponding part of the body. It also says that the marrow generates the liver. Here we have a close relationship between essences, marrow and blood. The blood which is stored by the liver has to rely on the essences of the kidneys. And the essences of the kidneys are also what produce the marrow. Because we know in Western medicine of the haematopoietic function of the marrow, this makes sense, but it was not what was implied in the Chinese classics.

Later 16th century commentators developed this further. If the essences of the kidneys, which also make the marrow, are insufficient, then the blood of the liver cannot be abundant and there is a disequilibrium at the level of the liver and you can have symptoms such as liver fire rising too strongly and causing vertigo.

### **SU WEN CHAPTER 9**

Elisabeth Rochat: Here the kidneys are presented as the place where essences are well organized and directed. Through that the flourishing aspect, hua, of the kidneys is seen in the hair, and the power of its fullness is seen in the bones. Externally you can see the soft, yin, side in the hair, while deeply buried you have the bones. The movement of the kidneys is this plunging down into the depths of the body, but because there is this idea of storing in the depths, it provides the basis from which everything can surge upward. This is also explained in the passage on the liver and gallbladder. On the other hand, in the kidneys themselves with their double power you can find the bones and marrow as well as the teeth and the hair, and as a shorthand for these two couples, they say the bones and the hair. Bones are from the essences of the kidneys and hair is an effect of the quality of the blood.

### **SU WEN CHAPTER 10**

Elisabeth Rochat: Su wen chapter 10 says the same thing. A junction, he, has a special relationship or resonance with a zang and for the kidneys the junction is the bones.

Claude Larre: The junction here is not a physical junction, but a junction of qi. Hence we are better to stick with the Chinese character!

Elisabeth Rochat: This relationship or junction between kidneys and bones is that the same aspect of the movement of life which makes the kidneys amongst the zang, also makes the bones amongst the parts of the body. The common activity is to sustain life or the structure of the body.

In another part of Su wen chapter 10 it says:

'All marrow is dependent (shu) on the brain.'

We saw this before with the brain. The character shu is used for the specific relationship between a meridian and its accompanying viscera, and it contains the idea of putting yourself in a position of dependence. In this way it is obvious that marrow is circulating, and has an ambulatory mechanism. The brain is a fixed mechanism with the radiance of its effect everywhere, but this is not exactly the same thing.

### **LING SHU CHAPTER 23**

Elisabeth Rochat: Because the constitution of the marrow is particularly vulnerable to heat and drying up, when there is heat within the mechanism of the marrow there will be very serious disease, and according to Ling shu chapter 23, it can mean death. The text of chapter 23 says:

'There is a warm disease with pain, but one is unable to localize the pain. There is deafness, one becomes unable to hold anything by oneself. The mouth dries up. The heat is intense in the yang (meridians), the yin is out of balance, and there is cold. It is a case of heat in the marrow. No cure is possible.'

Yin and yang are in complete disequilibrium, and it is so deep that they are destroying one another. First the yin disappears, but after that the yang disappears too. In the last stage of this kind of disease, the person is cold. It is a long and progressive illness.

### **SU WEN CHAPTER 81**

Elisabeth Rochat: This chapter has a presentation of the brain as yin and a definition of the marrow as that which assures the full power of the bones. The commentators said that the marrow circulates following the hollows inside the bones, and thus rises up to be in free communication with the brain. So here again is the triad of bones, brain and marrow.

### **SU WEN CHAPTER 17**

'The bones are the fu of the marrow. When one cannot remain standing for long and one walks unsteadily, the bones are exhausted.'

Elisabeth Rochat: Ling shu chapters 30 and 36 present the important function of the bodily liquids and essences in producing the marrow in the hollows of the bones, and describe all the pathological aspects of disturbance in this distribution and irrigation.

### **SU WEN CHAPTER 62**

Elisabeth Rochat: In this chapter the couple of bones and marrow represents the most internal transformation allowing the completion of the bodily form. The chapter shows the composition of the bodily form.

'The heart stores the spirits. The lung stores the qi. The liver stores the blood. The spleen stores the flesh. The kidneys store the will. This is what completes the composition of the bodily form (cheng xing). Will and intent (zhi yi) are in free communication. They are connected on the inside with the bones and marrow and that is what constitutes the individual from the bodily form to the five zang.'

Another way to present the construction of the bodily form of a person is the five zang storing the spirits, qi, blood, flesh and will. All this permits the starting point for the construction of the human body. Afterwards comes the couple zhi and yi, will and intent, or kidneys and spleen, anterior and posterior heaven if you like. The least materialized and most internal aspects of what constitutes a human being are connected with the bones and marrow. So at this level bones and marrow represent the first strength of the construction of the body. An example of this is found in Ling shu chapter 6.

## LING SHU CHAPTER 6

Elisabeth Rochat: In this chapter a way of diagnosing not only disease but also the deep constitution of the patient is given. For instance, looking at the size and fullness of the bones, the fragility or solidity of the flesh and the density of the structures in the skin, you can see if the person has a good constitution or not, or if he will have a long life. Another important thing is to have balance between all the different parts of the body. It is better to be small all over rather than half small and half big. If the bodily form is strong, full of power, and if, looking at the person very carefully, you see that the zygomatic bone is not jutting out it is a sign that the bones are small.

If we take the couple of flesh and bones, according to one commentator the bones are the sovereign and the flesh is the servant. If the sovereign is stronger than the servant that is normal, but in the case of the contrary, then it is in counter current to life, and it is impossible to live a long time with that structure or constitution.

But why the zygomatic bone? I think it must be because it is the highest bone in the body before you reach the skull. It is also the one which sustains the eye. The ideogram which indicates this bone is quan. It is in the area of the cheek bones and is the place where redness appears in the case of internal heat or disease in the heart. In Ling shu chapter 49 it is also the place where disease of the kidneys is visible. In such a case this part of the face becomes dark. It says in this chapter that if redness appears at the cheek bones the size of an inch, even if the disease appears to be cured, sudden death can occur. This is because the water of the kidneys is not sufficient, and the yang takes advantage of the emptiness and causes an inflammation which is visible at this level. And there is no absolute cure.

Ling shu chapter 46 says that the zygomatic bone is the root of all bones. When this bone is large all the bones of the body are large, and when it is small, all the bones are small. A commentator on this chapter says that the zygomatic bone is the place where that which comes from anterior heaven is rooted. The natural constitution of the person is visible at this level.

The character quan is quite interesting. The head is on the right and another part on the left. If you add wood, which is also the idea of a mechanism for wood, to the left hand part it becomes an ideogram meaning balance and a profound authority. If you add the radical meaning to see on the right side, you have a character, guan, meaning to look very carefully, to observe life or nature. This is the name of a daoist temple, a place where you can observe life, such as the Bai Yun Guan, the White Cloud Temple in Beijing. So the zygomatic bone is the bone where the power of the deep authority of life manifests and the place where you can appreciate or judge the deep, original force of life. The character quan is part of Small Intestine 18, quan liao. Small Intestine 18 is a great point of mastering,

especially for the muscular meridian of the foot. It is also a meeting point for tai yang and shao yang of the hand.

So the important point of chapter Ling shu 6 is that, like brain and marrow, the bones are also linked through the essences and kidneys to the origin of the person and the manifestation of their original nature and constitution. Brain, marrow and bones embody this manifestation because they are also in charge of achieving the construction of the body following the original pattern. Everything which injures the kidneys, especially the cold, will have repercussions on the marrow and bones.

Everything which dries up the waters of the kidney will cause cramps and pain, especially at the joints. There can also be deep pains which are said to be at the level of the bones, which come from an insufficiency of marrow to irrigate and lubricate the bones, which is necessary to conserve the living texture of the bones, the hua.

Su wen chapter 24 gives examples of this kind of symptomatology, and for all problems of the bones and marrow the treatment is to help the kidneys.

A text of Sun Simiao, a very famous doctor in the Tang dynasty and the author of the Qianjinfang, describes the fullness and emptiness of bones and marrow and their main symptoms:

'In the case of emptiness of the bones there are continuous aches and pains. The person is really tired and stiff. In the case of perverse fullness of the bones there is pain with uneasiness (fan).'

This is a sort of agitated disturbance and unease with heat in the chest. This heat often takes advantage of the insufficiency of the yin.

'With emptiness of marrow, the bones are painful and there is no rest. In the case of fullness of the marrow there is fearlessness'.

For Sun simiao, emptiness or fullness of bones and marrow each have physiological symptoms of pain or heat and so on, but heat or perverse fullness of the marrow is explained by symptoms on a psychological level. You have such a strong capacity for life that you are dauntless! For treatment you work on the kidneys for heat and the bladder for cold.

Bones and marrow are a good example of the yinyang relationship: yin arousing the power of the yang, as the marrow empowers the bone; yang keeping and protecting the yin, as bones do the marrow. The couple of bones and marrow represents the hard and the soft, an image of yin and yang which is used in order to show the construction of something. For instance in the Book of Change the lines composing each hexagram are called soft or hard. Soft if they are broken lines and hard if they are unbroken. This is a way of seeing all the situations in the universe presented in the 64 hexagrams. Each hexagram is represented in a form built up from the movement of qi. As far as this 'building up' movement is concerned it is better to use the vocabulary of hard and soft, and the example of a couple to explain it. At the level of the body the hard and the soft are represented by several other couples, for example bones and flesh, bones and marrow, or bones and mai. This implies a connection with the origin and having a real relationship with the original structure and the construction and development of the body in conformity with the power of the kidneys, which is different in each individual. The hard and the soft determine the structure of the body, the natural length of life and the conjunction of yin and yang.

# THE MAI 脈

Elisabeth Rochat: Why are the mai called a fu? A fu can be like a warehouse, a place where goods or things are accumulated and put into order, and then sent on to other places where they are received.

The image we have of the mai is sometimes of a vessel, sometimes a pulse, sometimes a vital circulation, but none of those fit exactly with the idea of a fu, or even an extraordinary fu.

In an alternative character for mai, the part on the left is radical 130, a part of the body. It indicates that what is represented by the character is within a human body. With this old character for mai, the right hand part is yong. The etymological explanation for this is found in Wieger Lessons 125D and E, with the ancient graph depicting a current of water, the unceasing flow of water in the veins of the earth. The traditional Chinese interpretation of this character is not water flowing on the surface of the earth, but in the profound depths of the earth, like the vital circulation of the earth. In classical Chinese, this character is not usually used to mean flowing water, but duration and perpetuity. It does not have the meaning of eternity, but rather how life is deeply and intimately structured, organized and animated, and how the flux of life inside the earth can flow permanently, to ensure the continuity of life and living beings.

The more common way of writing mai is X, with a different part on the right hand side which gives the idea of the ramifications of a stream. There is a main current of water, which is a metaphor for all kinds of vital circulation, but there are also a lot of small currents of water which join the main current before it finally reaches the sea. Chinese commentators said that this ancient drawing represented the way in which one source of water can divide itself into a lot of ramifications covering the whole territory.

There is another ancient character in which the character for blood (xue) is in the place of the part of the body on the left hand side. The meaning of this character is the flow of the blood inside the body, the circulation. (See Wieger Lesson 157D.) It is very difficult to know exactly which character was used in the ancient texts, because after a while this character was no longer used, only the other two. What is interesting is the impression of an underground network sustaining all the vital circulation and beginning the organization of life through that circulation. There is not only the idea of ramifications everywhere from this one source or starting point, but that they also join together in main streams to make the hydrographic landscape. If we place these ramifications and streams in a valley we have what we call the mai in Chinese medicine, which is a network for animation and circulation of what is vital. Blood is carried through the mai but blood is completely inseparable from qi. We can have all kinds of size within the mai too, small and large, great currents and little rivulets, and inside the body they extend from the depths to the surface. The entire space is covered by the network of vital circulation and there is the idea of one unique source of life and its expression through many tributaries.

Mai and jing, though both have been translated as 'meridian', are not the same thing. Mai gives the idea of a network of circulation, something in movement and something carried through this movement. It is the idea of a whole network occupying space in the body. In jing, meridian, you have

the idea of regulation, of the norm for the circulation, and the celestial organization for qi and blood and life within a human body.

### LING SHU CHAPTER 30

Elisabeth Rochat: The first definition of mai appears in Ling shu chapter 30. The context of this chapter is a discussion of essences and qi body fluids jin and ye, blood and mai making one unique qi but with six distinct names. Qi in Chinese can therefore be one of the six qi or just qi itself. The problem is determining what level is being discussed. In this text all is qi and if we are talking from the point of view of the origin, or of the unity of the world or universe, everything is qi. In chapter 30 of Ling shu, because we are dealing with the organization and maintenance of the body, there is a distinction between six different aspects of the natural maintenance of life: essences, qi, jin, ye, blood and mai. The mai are therefore one of the six qi in charge of the maintenance of the body. We find here again the theory of six entities which reflects the qualitative meaning of the number and level of six. The extraordinary fu are also six in number to mark that they are for the organization of the maintenance of life.

Each of the six aspects is elaborated and finally it says:

'What embanks (yong) the nutritive (ying) qi and contains it is called the mai.'

Yong is the idea of some kind of earth bank. It gives us the image of a very large material thing like a rampart or of a mechanical thing like an adjustable screw which stops something. It ensures that whatever needs to remain in a particular place will not go outside. It contains. Thus the mai are like a vessel containing something. In this text the Chinese did not use more common or usual characters for the vessel or conduit pipe, but mai. The important thing with mai is not the materiality of a structure like a blood vessel, but the movement itself and its strength in maintaining the circulation. Zhang Jiebin said that all ways have their borders, and all streams have their banks. Nutritive qi is not permitted to escape, but must circulate and flow in the middle of the mai. There is a famous text in the Nei Jing which says that nutritive qi circulates inside the mai and defensive qi outside the mai. It adds that the mai are not qi or blood, but are the free communication and circulation of qi and blood. Nutritive qi is linked with blood and with all the material for the construction and rebuilding of each part of the body. The mai not only carry the ying qi but also have to maintain it through the compenetration of blood and qi. The mai direct the circulation and whatever is carried by it. There is a strong relationship between the mai and the heart because the heart is the master of the mai. For this reason a lot of commentators point out that the most precious thing in the mai could be essences in the shape of blood. But what is even more precious is the presence of the spirits coming from the heart through the blood and the mai.

The second part of Ling shu chapter 30 presents one kind of pathology of the six qi. For the blood and mai the pathology is in the same. When the blood is impoverished the complexion is pale and there is insufficient irrigation of the layers of the skin. The mai, especially in this area of the skin, are completely empty. Blood can circulate through the activity of the qi but only because the mai are functioning and giving good direction. At the exterior it is not only a question of the quantity and

quality of blood, but also of the way in which the spirits are able to manifest through the eyes and complexion and so on. Later we will see the important relationship between the mai and the eyes as linked to the heart and the spirits of the heart. So in this text we can begin to understand why the mai are an extraordinary fu. They are in charge of avoiding the leakage of essences, and of containing the nutritive qi and the blood and qi inside the body.

## SU WEN CHAPTER 17

Elisabeth Rochat: In this chapter there is another presentation of blood.

'Mai are the depot (fu) of blood (xue).'

Here there is no longer any question of nutritive qi, but just of the blood itself. However, blood, even through the mai, cannot circulate without qi. The direction of the blood and qi through the mai is also infused with the presence of the spirits of the heart. The mai by the 'mastering of the heart', are like a network which displays blood and qi everywhere inside the body just like fire. Fire has this same movement of displaying and distributing everywhere. Fire is the sovereign because the master is the one who has to be felt everywhere, his presence has to be felt in each place. It is the same for the heart and the spirits. So we can understand why this character mai also means pulse. There is no other Chinese character used to indicate pulse. We can take the pulse anywhere on the body where the main stream or current of animation can be felt. This is the effect of the substantial blood, the blood in motion. The circulation of blood is the visible, perceptible side of all vital circulation. Certain anatomical particularities in an area of the body mean that the meridian or current is unable to circulate in the depths of the flesh, for example in the area of the wrist or ankle. So the main stream carrying qi and blood is not hidden but is palpable by the fingers. This is the reason why we translate this by 'pulse' in English because we have separate notions of pulse and of the general vital circulation. But this is not the case in Chinese. There is no reason to take the pulse if the pulse is not the expression of the situation, the relationships and the state of blood and qi circulating everywhere.

Question: When you mention the heart, is it just the heart or more the yang aspect of the heart? There is all this action and movement with the mai and perhaps that should be more connected with the xin zhu, the sovereign aspect of the heart?

Elisabeth Rochat: The quotation is 'the heart masters the mai', xin zhu mai. It speaks of the heart in a certain activity, expressing the power of the fire as one of the five aspects of life. But at the same time, it is not separable from the yin of the heart, which is the blood itself, the dwelling place of the spirits and the inner void of the human being. The yang aspect may simply be the fire. It is the heart rendering an account of the fire element because it is the fire element inside the body. I think the differentiation of the yin and yang of the heart is only useful in pathology, but even in pathology there are limits.

Question: Is there a chapter which names the locations of the pulses?

Elisabeth Rochat: There are several. One of them is Su wen chapter 17 which is quite interesting because there is a special location of a pulse between the wrist and the elbow.

Question: Why do the extraordinary meridians have this name mai?

Elisabeth Rochat: Because they are currents of life. All circulation inside the body which has a current and which has a direction is a mai.

Question: Can you clarify the distinction between mai and jing?

Elisabeth Rochat: One thing is that in mai there is no notion of the 'norm' or 'rule' of organization. The mai have the strength to send things off in a good direction but they do not give the organization. If you read the map of a territory you can see the main stream and all the organization of the tributaries which depend on that main stream. In a meridian, jing, there is the idea of what is able to organize and rule a territory or an aspect of vitality.

### SU WEN CHAPTER 53

Elisabeth Rochat: There are a lot of texts dealing with the relationship between mai and blood, and qi carrying and giving strength to the blood. Su wen chapter 53 stresses the relationship between mai and blood in pathology.

'When mai are full and the blood is full too, or when mai are empty and the blood is also empty, this is a normal situation. The contrary is a serious disease.'

This is the same as we saw in Su wen chapter 17, that the mai are the fu of the blood. For this reason, normally speaking, if the blood is diminished the feeling of the pulse and the flux inside and through the mai will also be diminished. This is natural, since the mai are the blood in motion, and the xue mai the circulation of the blood everywhere. If there is a dis-equilibrium that would be a dangerous illness. For example, when the mai are too powerful and there is deficient blood, then that is a fullness of yang and an emptiness of yin. If the mai are empty and the blood is full and abundant then it is a fullness of yin and an emptiness of yang.

The text continues to describe the situation when the mai are empty and the blood is full which means that there is heat in the fluids. Fluids will stagnate, particularly in the middle heater between the spleen and stomach. Therefore there is a kind of concentration, and heat will appear because of this accumulation of liquids. Blockage of qi or lack of qi causes the circulation to weaken, and liquids cannot be transformed and distributed, so there will be stagnation. If there is a dis-equilibrium between what we feel on the pulse and the presence of the yin in the body, the blood and liquids and so forth, we can be sure that there will be stagnation and inner heat everywhere.

'When the mai are full and the blood diminished, then the mai are filled with the (pathogenic) qi of the wind and food cannot enter.'

The explanation is quite simple. The strength that we can feel inside the mai in this case is not real strength but just the perverse strength of the wind which makes an artificial power in the circulation. It is not real power it is just a false strength and an effect of the perverse fullness of the liver. The natural movement of wind is to rise upwards, and this blocks the opposite movement which is to descend. Therefore food cannot enter and descend though the stomach.

**SU WEN CHAPTER 5**

Elisabeth Rochat: This chapter shows the special relationship between heart and mai again. There are three statements in the presentation of the southern direction, the fire and so on:

'The heart produces blood.'

'Of the parts of the body it is the mai.'

'In a pathological state the injury is to the qi'

This is a way of showing how mai, blood and qi are quite inseparable. Qi gives the mai the strength to make the circulation and animation, and blood gives the mai the possibility of being an extraordinary fu, blood being the essential substance to be kept and circulated. The mai are not only a force or a strength, but also the way by which this strength allows the circulation which gives and maintains life. This is why, as the pulse, the mai are the compenetration of blood and qi, and as the vital circulation are the good direction and distribution of that blood and qi. If the mai are, in parts of the body, the equivalent of the fire element, then the mai are the expression of the whole circulation and network of animation, all the circulation pulsating through the effect of the fire and the heat. There are not only blood and qi circulating through the mai but also everything which has to circulate such as nutritive and defensive qi. Through the relationship with the heart and the blood we also have the presence of the spirits giving correctness to the circulation and the upright inspiration. There is the Chinese expression xin zhu mai, the heart masters the mai, and there is another sentence xin zhu xue mai, the heart masters blood and mai or the blood circulation. So this is the heart mastering or governing as the expression of the fire inside the body. This expression of the heart as the fire of the body is just the displaying of the network of animation. Blood is made from the rich liquids coming from the spleen and the essences from the kidneys, but only after passing through the heart does it become blood. Thus the blood is red and carries and expresses the power of the spirits everywhere.

**SU WEN CHAPTERS 9 AND 10**

Elisabeth Rochat: These chapters present the same relationship between the mai and the heart. In Su wen chapter 9 the heart is the root of life and the place of all change coming through the spirits. Its blossoming aspect is seen on the face in the complexion, which shows the effect of the blood. The full power of the heart is in the xue mai, all the vital circulation carrying the blood.

Su wen chapter 10 has the same thing:

'The junction (he) of the heart is the mai.'

The junction of the lung is the skin and body hair, so with the character he, junction, we have to understand that it is not only a relationship but actually the same movement which appears in the zang and in the structure of the body, it is the same kind of qi. The qi of the fire, which the heart is making among the zang, is also making mai in the structures of the body. The mai are nothing other than this expression of life displaying, blossoming and freely circulating everywhere.

A good classical commentator on the Su wen, Wu kun, said:

'The heart produces blood and stores the spirits. When we speak of mai, the substance, ti, is in the blood and the effects, yong, are in the spirits. Hence the junction of the heart is the mai.'

We can see that for this classical commentator the mai, the blood, and through them the presence of the spirits, are always linked.

## LING SHU CHAPTER 8

Elisabeth Rochat: This text has the same idea:

'The heart stores (cang) the mai. The mai are the dwelling place of the spirits. When the qi of the heart is empty there is sadness (bei). When it is full, then one laughs without stopping.'

To store, cang, is not to keep something hidden in one place, because we say in Chinese that the heart stores the mai but the mai are not inside the heart. The potential of the mai is found inside the heart, and the power in the heart, the fire, is always creating this network of animation which you can feel through the pulse. We know that the spirits are safeguarded in the void of the heart, but here in this chapter we have the mai as the dwelling place of the spirits. This is because through this belonging of the mai to the heart, and through the ability of the mai to be the fu of the blood, and all the power of the heart and its expression by the spirits, the mai are the dwelling place of the spirits. Even in the Nei jing and very old classical texts, this kind of reverse position is found. The difficulty is to understand it in translation. This is why we have to understand the Chinese characters.

There is sadness when the qi of the heart is empty because sadness is a kind of restrictive movement, a concentration and a tightening. This is easy to understand if we refer to our own physical experience. We know that sadness has a restrictive effect in the chest. The main discussion in Ling shu chapter 8 is of the emotions, hence we have sadness mentioned here. In other texts the same mechanism could be discussed as causing stasis in the blood, or inner heat in the upper heater or something even more physical. When the heart qi is full, on the other hand, one laughs without ceasing.

Remember the definition of the extraordinary fu in Su wen chapter 11. They are fu which store. They store what is essential for life, essences in every shape and form we can imagine. The mai store the blood, ying qi, and spirits. The ability of the heart to master and create the mai is continually renewed through nourishment and essences coming from that nourishment. Chapter 21 of Su wen explains this:

'Qi from solid foods enters the stomach. The unclear qi (in this context, the clear qi from food) returns to the heart. The essences pervade and impregnate the mai.'

The yang aspect of nutrition, and the qi and essences coming from this aspect, have a way of directing themselves to the heart to feed and renew it and to rebuild the power of the fire. From the heart this power of renewed life pervades the mai. It is because of this passage to and through the heart that the mai are reinvigorated by nutriment.

**SU WEN CHAPTER 43**

Elisabeth Rochat: You find the expression of nutritive qi inside the mai and defensive qi outside the mai in Su wen chapter 43.

'The ying qi is essences and qi coming from grains and liquids. It harmonizes and regulates the five zang. It irrigates and displays itself through the six fu. This is the reason why it can enter the mai. It follows the mai going up and down, passing through the five zang and having a relationship with the six fu.'

The explanation of this is that what we call nutrition or nutritive qi goes into the depths of the body with the yin function of irrigating, harmonizing and distributing all the elements for rebuilding. There is nothing in the nutrition to resist the current and direction of the mai, because it belongs to the substantial aspect of nourishment, which circulates following the current of the mai. There follows a presentation of the defensive qi coming from liquids and grains:

'The wei qi is lively and quick, it is able to edge its way into every crack and crevice, thus it is not able to enter the mai. It follows the space between the layers of the skin and all the splits where the flesh divides and separates one from the other. It vaporizes like smoke through all the tissues and pervades the thorax and abdomen.'

If we have something which is animated by itself there is no reason for it to enter the main current and be carried along by it. This is not the way of defence, rather it needs to enter each crack and split and penetrate right to the most superficial level of the body. Between each fibre of flesh there is a void and that is where the defensive qi is found. So it does not enter the mai but perhaps it follows the general passage of the mai. It is not anarchic! It is mastered and controlled. In another chapter of the Ling shu we have the circulation of the defensive qi described. It obeys laws. It is just a question of nature. So the nutritive qi is more substantial, and follows the current of the mai, which create a kind of natural embankment. The defensive qi is less substantial, it is more like a pervading vapour which does not have the need for banks, but follows the movement of the mai as a mist may be seen to follow the river valley.

Question: Where does perverse qi flow?

Elisabeth Rochat: Most often through the normal pathways. If one kingdom is invaded by another, the enemy army uses the routes and paths of the kingdom.

Question: What makes it perverse?

Elisabeth Rochat: It depends if the perversion is coming from the inside or outside. If it comes from the exterior the wei qi should act as a control at each opening and closing into the body. If the essences and qi are in a good state and the spirits can control the vitality well, then this opening and closing is done effectively everywhere, and disease cannot penetrate. But if there is a distraction and the spirits are not fully present, then the perfect state of balance in the body is changed and the wei qi can open too much and a draft can enter for example, and you can catch a cold. Or you could eat too much or eat something bad, or you are worried or tired, and then the defensive qi can no longer ensure the correct opening and closing of all apertures and orifices and perverse qi can begin to penetrate.

Coming from inside the process is different. Pathogenic qi is nothing other than regular qi which is perverted. It is like a revolution within a country and is very dangerous. Coming from inside disturbed qi is always more serious. Recovery is being able to restore control of vitality and to make it circulate properly.

## **THE MAI AND THE EYES**

### **SU WEN CHAPTER 10**

'All the mai depend on (shu) the eye.'

Elisabeth Rochat: First we should remember the relationship between the eye and the heart. We know that the eye is the special orifice of the liver, but it also has a very strong relationship with the heart. It is the agent and messenger of the heart.

### **SU WEN CHAPTER 81**

'The heart captures the specially concentrated essences coming from the five zang.'

Elisabeth Rochat: This is a way of saying that the spirits of the heart need the best essences of the body to express themselves, and these essences come from the kidneys. Here the text focuses on the heart and just says that the unique gathering of essences from the five zang are captured by the heart. And the orifice of the heart is the eye.

### **LING SHU CHAPTER 80**

Elisabeth Rochat: In this chapter there is a direct expression of the connection of the eyes with the essences coming from the five zang and six fu.

'Eyes are made with essences coming from the five zang and six fu.'

In the Ling shu, ming men, the gate of life or destiny, is nothing other than a name for the eyes. It is not located at the level of the kidneys in the Nei Jing, only in the Nan Jing. There is no mention of ming men at all in the Su wen.

If the eye is the messenger of the heart, it needs essences from the zang and fu in order to be able to emit the shining radiance of the spirits. The spirits are present at the level of the heart as well as at the level of the brain, as we saw before. But because of the special link between eyes and heart, the effect of the shen is visible through the eyes. The spirits are sent to make the quality of the seeing, not the strength or quality of the eyes themselves, which are the responsibility of the liver. This is the spiritual quality which we can see in the eyes of another, and it comes from the heart. The eyes are often called the sun within the human body because like the sun the eyes radiate light and the effect of the spirits pass through the look.

If we look at all the vital circulation and meridians, we can obviously see that all the yang meridians begin or end in the area of the eye. In addition, the liver meridian passes into the depths of the eyes and comes up to the top of the head, and a branch of the heart meridian comes directly from the heart,

passes through the tongue and finishes at the inner system of the eyes which is connected to the brain. We can now understand the sentence from Ling shu chapter 28: The eye is a place where the zong mai gather together.'

Zong is the same as in zong qi and zong jin, ancestral qi and ancestral muscular force. In Chinese 'ancestor' is not the same as in English or French. It is rather like a 'pater-familias', the great father who has authority to gather all the members of the family or to take decisions for the destiny of the family, and all the members obey him because they come from him. This is filial piety. In zong there is the notion of gathering together, but the meeting is made by the principle which is at the origin of what is gathered together. Zong also means the man in the family who is in charge of the ancestor worship. That is not the ancestor but the person with authority to lead the family members in the important worship upon which the destiny of the family is dependent. When zong designates the ancestor, it is used only for the succession of ancestors in the lineage, but never for the first ancestor. It is the vehicle for the transmission of the inheritance from the origin.

Zong qi is located in the sea of qi in the centre of the chest. It is the origin of qi as it circulates inside the body. It is the conjunction of the qi of respiration and nourishment, which means that something appears, so it is like an 'ancestor' or a gathering for all the qi which circulates from this place throughout the body as defensive or nutritive qi. Zong qi has the power of control and mastering of qi because this is the place where these functions are expressed together, following the original pattern. Zong jin is the same idea at the level of the lower abdomen, and particularly in the area of the perineum. It is the place where the liver meridian and several other meridians including the stomach meridian and the extraordinary meridians, circulate. It is also where the power in the body which is known as muscular force is expressed. A man's erect penis is a good illustration that this power originates here, because the most powerful expression of the muscular forces is seen in an erection. Just as the expression of the power of the zong qi is seen in the beating of the heart and the movement of respiration. But zong qi itself never circulates, it is a mechanism of control and animation.

The zong mai is not simply a circulation of mai either, it is the power controlling all of the circulation and direction of qi and blood inside the body from the place where they gather. Zong mai is found around the eyes or behind the ears, according to chapter 28 of Ling shu. This is because of the relationship between the heart and the eye, and the ability of the eye to be the heart's messenger. The heart masters the mai through the xin zhu, and through the eye when it is taken as the messenger of the heart. Practically speaking, the eye is the sign of a good rhythm in the circulation of qi. Defensive qi with a good rhythm knows the difference between night and day. Insomnia and so on are very serious symptoms because they show improper circulation and functioning of defensive qi. Our pulses are not the same when we are asleep as when we are awake. Vitality should be outside during the day and inside during the night, with the opening and closing of the eyes and a good rhythm of defensive qi. The eye is therefore the place where a control over all the network of circulation of the body can exist.

Question: Is this in the eye or around the eye?

Elisabeth Rochat: I think that it is through the functioning of the eye. If the eyes are in a good relationship with the heart, and if the eyes can receive the essences coming from the stomach and

spleen well, then they can function properly and be open and closed at the right times. The circulation of blood and qi and pulses and mai are not exactly the same if we are sleeping as if we are awake. Like zong qi and zong jin there is no precise location, it is the good functioning of an area. In this case the eyes and the impulse given to all the circulation gathered around the eye.

Question: You said that the opening and closing of the eyes is regulated by the heart and the mai. Can you make a differentiation between those two?

Elisabeth Rochat: The opening and closing of the eyes is sometimes under the authority of the circulation and alternating between yin and yang. At the deepest and original level, the qiao mai (of the eight extraordinary meridians) are in charge of this exchange between yin and yang. We saw this when we looked at the brain. The defensive qi, which depends on the qiao mai, is the expression in the circulation of this good alternating conduct of life. This circulation of defensive qi is also made through the direction of the mai. If the defensive qi does not actually enter the mai it does follow the way of the mai. In the Ling shu chapter which explains the circulation of defensive qi, particularly during the day, it follows the meridians. But obviously defensive qi is not only in the deep pathways of the meridians but is everywhere up to the surface of the body. Of course it follows the direction of the mai even if it is just following the general flow.

The point is that when this exchange between yin and yang functions well, there is no problem and the external area of the body is pervaded by defensive qi during the day and the inner area at night when we are at rest. The quantity of blood and qi circulating through the mai is not exactly the same in the day as in the night. For example we know that the blood returns to the liver during rest at night, so there cannot be as much blood circulating through the mai. Through the mai there is either more in the inner, central area or more in the external area. For the eyes, therefore, all their opening and closing is just an effect of the good exchange between yin and yang.

To put it another way, the heart mastering mai and the eyes being the messenger of the heart, there is this power of expansion like the sun. It is not possible to say that the heart masters the opening and closing of the eyes exactly. But indirectly the heart masters everything in the body. If you have worries or concerns you may be unable to close your eyes and sleep because there is a dis-equilibrium between yin and yang in your body. So the yin and yang qiao mai do not have a good exchange and the eyes remain open.

Question: You said that the eyes were called ming men in the Ling shu. Could you expand on that?

Elisabeth Rochat: Ordinarily speaking ming men is situated between the two kidneys. It is the tension and unity of life which expresses itself in a duality through the yin and yang of the kidneys. We have two kidneys to express this first division of the primitive unity of the being. Ming men at this level is the expression of the very beginning of a human being. It is the passage to a personal destiny. We are each a very special composition of essences, a particular knitting together of essences coming from mother and father, with the addition of the spirits. We are all unique beings and have unique ways of making the life within us blossom in the best possible way. That is our destiny. Destiny is not a fate in the way of some predetermined future. The best way of fulfilling our destiny is that we can reveal our proper nature, and realise it fully. This is the mandate of heaven, what we are to do in life and how to be in the best possible harmony between heaven and earth. Ming men with this meaning is at

the level of the origin, the kidneys and so on. It often takes the meaning of yang qi and represents the original yang of the kidneys. Many texts speak of the fire of ming men. This definition is found in the Nan jing, especially difficulties 36 and 39, but also 8 and 66.

But in some texts ming men can be at the navel, where the point shen que, Ren mai 8, is located.

Perhaps because the navel is the link with the mother and the last remaining trace of the origin on the front of the body. But this appears in very few texts.

In the Ling shu ming men is the eye. I think this is because we have a human destiny which is not just to be subjected to nature having an instinctive conduct of life like an animal. Mankind has to be responsible for his own life through the heart. That is the real meaning of Ling shu chapter 8. After the essences and spirits coming from heaven and earth, and after the appearance of hun and po, one takes possession of oneself through the heart. This is the reason why we have two fires, the sovereign and the ministerial. The sovereign fire designates this absolute control over all aspects of life. This is the heart as a void. Ministerial fire designates all the special activities of the fire aspect of life. Thus in texts from the subsequent dynasties it is common to find ministerial fire as ming men. This is interesting because even if it is the origin, ming men is not the master of human life, it is the minister of it. The fire of ming men is present in every organism and mechanism of life. So at the level of the eye you have the perception of the man's spirit, of the life which is controlled and made through the heart. His destiny and the gate of destiny is not that which is given at the origin, but what he is doing with his destiny. You have your natural disposition, your proper nature, and this mandate to do the best with it. That is in the depths of the kidneys, but in the highest part of the body we have the manifestation of what you are doing with that. This is also the passage from the kidneys and ming men to the heart. The kidneys are the origin but they remain at the lower part, but they are not the supreme master of life. That responsibility is the heart's and the spirits of the heart's. Through the eye we see some kind of manifestation of this. So in ancient texts ming men designated the eye.

## **PATHOLOGY OF THE MAI**

Elisabeth Rochat: If there is a counter current originating in the heart, then all the vital circulation in the lower part of the body can be reduced. In this case you may have weakness, or a flaccid kind of paralysis, (wei), in the legs, especially in the ankles and the knees, because all the animation of qi and blood and all the nutritive elements irrigating the area are in counter-current and are insufficient in the lower half of the body. Bones and articulations are dried up and without force, and the flesh is flaccid. This is described in Su wen chapter 44 as mai wei, impotence of the mai.

The mai are the way for the qi and blood to freely circulate and communicate, and they are under the authority of the heart. They contain the circulation and the direction of circulation for blood and qi.

The mai are able to spread the influence of qi and blood everywhere, and they can carry ying qi everywhere in the body.

**THE MAI AND THE LUNG**

Elisabeth Rochat: Of course we must also remember the relationship between the mai with the lung. There is the well-known statement in Su wen chapter 21 that the lung receives the one hundred mai in the morning audience. This means the lung is able to re-establish a good rhythm of circulation. The morning audience is the articulation between night and day. At dawn it is the proper time to re-establish the correct rhythm of procession. This time, at around three o'clock in the morning, is a very good example of the passages and articulations, which are under the authority of the lung. The lung masters qi, and because of that we find another couple, qi and blood. The compenetration of these two is achieved through the mai and through the relationship of the heart and the lung, the heart mastering mai and the lung giving the mai a good rhythm. As an expression of metal, the lung gives the control and limit. Of course the radial pulse is also on the lung meridian. The mai are the fu of the blood and the mai cannot exist without the force and presence of qi. There cannot be a current without qi. The circulation is only of blood and qi and the mai gives them direction, animation and rhythm. Hence the beating of the arterial pulse can be the external reflection of the inner physiology, the state of blood and qi.

**JIN MAI**

Jin mai is a very common expression in the Nei jing and medical texts. It expresses all the circulation carrying elements for rebuilding and maintenance which give the muscles their tone, force and power. This is not the same thing as jing jin, the twelve tendino-muscular meridians. The Jin mai contain all the necessary elements to give the muscles their force, while jing jin is the idea of the norm of circulation, which is a meridian for muscular animation. We have an idea of the pathways for the jing jin, but with jin mai there are no pathways, but rather the ability to carry all that is necessary, and to make sure blood and qi, and ying qi and wei qi and so on are taken to the right place with the right rhythm.

# GALLBLADDER 膽 DAN

Elisabeth Rochat: The gallbladder is represented by the character dan. The radical, on the left, is 130, the flesh or part of the body. There is also an abbreviated form of the character which has a different graph on the right hand side which is the image of the sun above the line of the horizon, the dawn. It also forms part of the character for yang.

Claude Larre: In the more complicated form of the character the part on the very top is a man on a steep rocky place who is bent over. He is not comfortable and is afraid of falling. Inside the rest of the right hand side is yan, speech. So the general meaning of the phonetic might be of a man in a hazardous position, who does not know how to make a decision. This phonetic is seen in many other compounds, which often have the same meaning of something which is not easy to describe. There is some sort of hesitation. So we feel that the character of the gallbladder is expressed by the fact that it has to make a decision in a difficult situation. If you are facing difficulty, in order that life be preserved in its true direction, someone or something must provide a way out of danger and choose the right way to do things.

Elisabeth Rochat: The phonetic part changes its meaning or orientation according to the radical which is added. Without any radical at all you have the idea of chattering, discussing this way or that, zhan. If you add the speech radical again it means wild, delirious talking. If you add an eye the meaning is not so bad, because it is the idea of looking up at something, and to consider respectfully or venerate something. With the heart it is dan, quiet, tranquil, easy. With the water radical it becomes something flat and dull, without taste or colour, insipid, or sometimes in other contexts it can mean agitation. If you add the stone radical you have vitriol, the opposite of something insipid. Finally, if you add a hand it becomes a character which is sometimes given in explanations of the gallbladder by Chinese commentators, with the meaning of to carry on, to sustain, to be able to assure something. Through all of these various ideograms we can see the idea of considering something, and which sometimes is more on the side of agitation or violence, and sometimes more tranquil and peaceful. The character dan, which we translate as gallbladder, means courage in ordinary classical Chinese.

Claude Larre: All these various meanings which change by the addition of a different radical have something in common. The situation is in itself dangerous. The hesitation is built into the situation. If you do not control it, then you may speak too much. If it is with the eye, since you are afraid of the person you are looking at, you look with some kind of veneration and anxiety, and you compose your attitude as you would if you are received for an audience at court. There is no business as dangerous as being at court because even if you have the favour of the king, tomorrow that might change, so the situation of all the officials is that they have to show respect. We must remember that at this time life was very dangerous from every point, so the position of a man not knowing exactly what to do perched on the top of the cliff was very relevant. But sometimes there is also something to calm him. If you take the character with the water radical, all the inner agitation is calmed down. So never be surprised that with a different radical there can be some sort of opposite meaning. This agitation is exaggerated or normal, is inside or outside, or is dealt with because there is something to placate it.

Elisabeth Rochat: Some commentators say that because the gallbladder is in charge of carrying a great responsibility, it has to be quiet and at ease, tranquil and unshakable. We find all these ideas in our study of the gallbladder. It is the fu of the clear, the pure and the essences. It has a stable position.

## SU WEN CHAPTER 8

Elisabeth Rochat: Of course the relationship with rectitude and exactitude is defined in Su wen chapter 8:

'The gallbladder is responsible for what is just (zhong) and exact (zheng). Determination (jue) and decision (duan) stem from it.'

These are the responsibilities of the gallbladder: zhong and zheng. We can understand that if the gallbladder has this strength of the shao yang it is able to push away, to open and clear the way, or even to stride out and dash with great violence, but it also can remain very quiet. If you have this kind of strength but do not have the ability to consider the situation with calmness and clarity as well, then there is enormous danger. We see all that in the quality of the qi of the gallbladder. Remember that the number of shao yang is seven, and we have seven emotions and seven orifices. Seven is the number of the strength of life which has to be very well directed and handled. If not, the disturbance will have the same violence. For this reason it is very important for the gallbladder to keep the correct way of the centre and not to go awry. This is to direct life correctly between heaven and earth with quiet and calm and without excess or exaggeration or the disruption of the equilibrium, to take the middle way. Claude Larre: The middle way is not just a separation into two, it is the place where all the energy will meet. It is very important in our own personal way of life to be sure that we achieve and keep the middle way. The gallbladder will always be good for making decisions when you have to be responsible for your actions. Health is always the ability to use your energy, and illness is the state in which you are deprived of any personal energy. It is the opposite of making decisions where life is concerned.

Usually we take the gallbladder's function as being to give the right decision. When they say zhong and zheng it is not exactly the geometrical aspect of being in the centre or even being straightforward, it is to have that sort of mental power, that sort of spiritual life which due to good decisions is able to be at the centre of things and to behave properly. Zhong and zheng combine together for just decisions, and they have to be complementary.

Sometimes zheng is also used to mean rectification. The rectification of names (zheng ming) means rectification of your conduct according to what is inscribed in your name which is a division of the dao. What exists is perceived through its own constitution and in order to keep alive with the spirit of the dao, it is better for you to make your personal conduct the same as the dao. Rectification of names is not rectification of the order of the universe in order to satisfy your low desires. Quite the contrary! There were also special people who were able to rectify your dreams because dreams are the part of your life which is under the direct authority of the liver.

Elisabeth Rochat: The ideogram for determination, jue, also has the meaning of forcing one's way through something, to clear a path. I think we have here the idea of shao yang, young yang, or the ideas linked with the numerology of seven, which is to burst out with a violence which has to be well

controlled. If the control is good, all the ways are open and clear and then you have good determination and do something or make a decision in the right way. In the ideogram for decision, duan, you find the axe (jin). This is the idea of cutting through something.

We also have to see that this kind of justice and exactitude is very important at a beginning, because it is the very first moment of the bursting out of something. If the direction is not right everything goes the wrong way. For this reason the first month of the year in China is called the month of zheng, the month which has to be set in a good direction to give the inspiration for all the following months of the year. We have the same idea in the gallbladder.

We know that the gallbladder is linked with the origin. It is like an expression of the fire coming from the depths of life in the body, from the kidneys and liver, and we know that the other shao yang of the hand, the triple heater, has a special link with the fire of ming men. The triple heater is the special agent for the expression and distribution of original qi according to the Nan jing. The power and deep strength of the shao yang come from the abyss of water, and if the shao yang is the very first moment of the appearance of something, like the first plant of spring, we can understand the importance of the roots of the shao yang and the importance of the concentrated strength and necessity of being exact and just, and of keeping the centre.

## SU WEN CHAPTER 9

ELisabeth Rochat: For this reason in Su wen chapter 9 it says that the eleven zang go to the gallbladder to take decisions from it. The eleven zang are the twelve organs minus the gallbladder. But why do they go there and not to the heart? It is because of this power of the beginning. You know that the gallbladder is in correspondence with the first heavenly stem and therefore for each cycle the gallbladder is at the beginning of the distribution of the influx of qi and so on.

We saw that the first month of the year has the same ideogram as the charge of the gallbladder, zheng. The gallbladder has the same movement as the spring and the beginning of spring is an awakening of things. It is the beginning of all the transformations of life, when all the little insects and animals awake after the winter. If the qi of the gallbladder is zhong and zheng, correct and righteous, at this time of spring, or in every situation which is a beginning of something, all the other zang in the body can follow the direction of this movement. It is in this sense that the eleven zang go to the gallbladder to take decisions and determination. The eleven zang draw from the gallbladder the kind of strength which is determination and courage.

The shao yang of the foot is also a meridian which is half outward, biao, and half inward, li. It has the function of a pivot, to be a turning place and the centre of movement going towards the outside or the inside. The extraordinary fu are in charge of storing essences, and for this reason, the gallbladder is also like a pivot between the zang and the fu. It is 'the fu of what is clear (qing) and in the middle (zhong)', or of what is just and exact. It works from the interior, and unlike the other digestive fu it does not have contact with the exterior. Nor is it in direct contact with food like the other ordinary fu. So we can understand how it is both an ordinary and extraordinary fu. It is one of the six ordinary fu, and has a hollow containing juices which it is able to make flow and disperse. But on the other hand, according to Nan jing difficulty 49, these juices are full of essences and therefore when they leave the

gallbladder they do not leave the body but remain within, particularly in the stomach, to help digestion and so on. Essences must not leave the body, they have to be used within the body. So the gallbladder can be part of the zang, the fu and the extraordinary fu because it belongs to all of them. It works on essences but it is a fu. It is like a pivot and can join both the yin and yang powers. It has the spreading out quality of shao yang but also the necessity of being quiet and tranquil in order to store the essential juices. All this is why one commentator said the gallbladder has the ability to make yin and yang circulate and communicate, and therefore the eleven zang can take determination and decision from it. The character for determination and decision is jue, which is also to clear or to open a way.

The gallbladder, by being at the beginning of things, unifies all the qi coming from the other eleven zang, each of which is composed of a particular qi, and releases particular emotions. The emotions have to be regulated and conducted by the power of the gallbladder. The gallbladder is full of essences and therefore it can help the spirits and the spirit of the heart to follow the right way of life by the power of its decisions and determination. The gallbladder stores essences and in so doing participates in the process which brings the essences to the heart. The essences provide a place for the shen, a means of anchoring them and allowing them to penetrate the being. The gallbladder is not at the same level as the heart. The heart is and remains the absolute master of the living being, but it needs help in order to maintain good order and movement. This is where the gallbladder comes in. Some later texts emphasize this connection between the heart and gallbladder and link them in a dual relationship. In this case we can see the influence on treatment. For instance if the heart is ill with violent and unceasing palpitations and if the patient has symptoms of weakness you can warm the gallbladder. If there are symptoms of weakness and emptiness in the gallbladder, and there is trembling and fear and some kind of madness then you can tonify the heart. In this particular presentation of the zangfu by a commentator of the 18th or 19th century the liver is coupled with the large intestine, the spleen with the small intestine, the lung with the bladder and the kidneys with the triple heater. We can understand these relationships quite well I think, but they are particularly for application in treatment.

Sometimes we find the gallbladder presented like the liver, as the general of the armed forces, because of its courage, impetuosity, and at the same time its clear vision of things. When someone has a good circulation of qi and has no fear without good reason, we can see that the gallbladder is in a good state. Thinking and decisions are clear and neat, and one is able to act accurately and without hesitation once the decision is taken. You can have hesitation before the decision, but not after. If the gallbladder is weak then you have more hesitation.

The gallbladder also has a function at the level of the spirits. Remember how Father Larre said you can catch a cold simply by being distracted. A late Chinese text says that if you expose yourself to strong wind but have no fear, the wind is unable to injure you. You can expose yourself to great cold or warmth without fear, and you might suffer no injury. It is the same with digestion. If you eat something which might upset you knowing what you are doing, you might suffer no indigestion. All this qi draws its power from the gallbladder and the perverse qi cannot attack. I think this commentator is quite right because if you expose yourself to something without bravado but because

you have made a decision and have to do it, then you are clear and determined inside and there is no problem. But if you do not know why you exposed yourself to a great wind then the perverse qi will enter. It is a level of consciousness and clarity.

Claude Larre: We can understand this from another point of view. Since, in the Chinese mind, there is always the possibility of comparing our position with the position of an army, then we can see that if the stronghold has been seriously constructed, if you expose just a short section of the defending line, you may withstand an enormous number of adversities. The enemy does not have enough base to enter. If all the zangfu are united by the heart and in strict order, then you may withstand the force of the pressure of the attack. In your mind you make a presentation of what the enemy might have as its forces, and what you have as your defence, and you make a decision. To rule an empire or to rule a body is the same thing.

Elisabeth Rochat: If the eleven zang go to the gallbladder to take decisions and determination from it, the gallbladder is in charge of a sort of coordination and unification of the strength of the body. We can therefore understand another aspect of the shao yang, which is as the coordinator. It is the role of the pivot, because if you are a pivot you can coordinate. If the gallbladder qi is firm, robust and resolute then even if you are attacked and injured by perverse qi or by an emotion, the situation can be restored to normal quite easily and quickly. But if the gallbladder qi is weak this will lead to illness. If the qi of the gallbladder is courageous and robust, resolute and firm, even if the jing shen receives undue agitation which causes repercussions, and disturbs the organism, these repercussions will be of little importance and the return to normality is made relatively quickly. But if the qi of the gallbladder is weakened and decreasing in strength, this will often lead to illness.

Very often symptoms of fear with shaking and twitching, or insomnia with a lot of dreams, which is internal agitation disrupting the peace of the spirits, can be linked to an emptiness or weakness of the gallbladder as well as to a weakness of the jing shen. The spirits, especially those of the heart, need these essences in order to express themselves, and the conjunction of both can ensure the firmness and solidity of good health.

## LING SHU CHAPTER 2

'The gallbladder is the fu of the central essences (zhong jing zhi fu).'

Elisabeth Rochat: Of course 'central essences' is not a translation exactly, it is just two English words for the two Chinese characters, zhong jing. These are essences which are central, but also exact and just, and which act like a pivot.

Claude Larre: This is if you take zhong as an adjective. But you may take almost any character in old classical texts as an adjective or a verb, active or passive. So this enlarges the understanding of the function. It is a simple sentence, but there can be different angles of interpretation. We know that zhong is to hit the mark, it makes things come together. So when we say 'central' we must also provide for other associations of the word.

Elisabeth Rochat: We can translate zhong jing as the essences which are in a central position, or we can say that the gallbladder is the fu in charge of what is median and exact, and in charge of storing essences, or that the gallbladder is keeping essences in the innermost part of the being.

Two other common names for the gallbladder are zhong qing zhi fu, and qing jing zhi fu. Qing means clarity and jing means unstained and pure. These express the special quality of the gallbladder as an extraordinary fu because the five ordinary fu for transmission and transformation are working directly on the unclear, on food and substances. But the gallbladder, which does not belong to these five fu, just works on what is pure and clear. As was said before, the gallbladder is not directly in touch with food, but receives essential juices and forms the special bile. So the gallbladder is this special clarity which is in the position of the median, inside, in the innermost. Or the gallbladder has the responsibility for what is central, what is exact, and for what is clear. This emphasizes the great tranquillity and purity of the liquids and qi of the gallbladder. The characters qing and jing both have the water radical on the left hand side. If water is pure and quiet you can have a good reflection in it, but if the water is disturbed by wind or waves the image is broken.

Claude Larre: This interpretation does not come from Elisabeth's imagination, it is found in many texts. For me the gallbladder gives a unity through its purity because in the Chinese approach when something is pure it is necessarily at the centre. With zhong yong it is impossible that actions can be strong if the mind is not clear.

Since the presentation of Chinese medicine is made through function, it is absolutely necessary that there would be one system in charge of that. If the liver was alone it would have too much to do expending its strength so that it would have no control, and the opposition would be able to enter. If there is a centre and unification, which is the responsibility of the gallbladder as much as decision making and being just and correct, then what is the function of the heart which has the same role as the centre? Here we see the real distinction between roles, because so many functions are found in the centre. The question is what is the difference between being the king and being the arbiter or judge who is clear enough and strong enough in his own mind to speak the truth and ask people to comply with it?

Elisabeth Rochat: I think the difference is the same as in anger and joy. Anger is like an impetuous force, a bursting out, while joy is like the radiance of a deep feeling of wellbeing. Another point is that the hun of the liver are the followers of the shen of the heart, and between liver and gallbladder the difference is not so great. The liver has the charge of being the general of the armed forces in Su wen chapter 8; elsewhere in the Nei jing and in commentators we find the gallbladder with the same function. We also see the compenetration of liver and gallbladder anatomically speaking. If the liver is in charge of making plans and assessments that is the yin side, while the gallbladder is in charge of decision and determination and acting accordingly, which is more yang. Both have the benefit of the presence of the hun. The hun just follow the inspiration of the shen, and it is not the role of a follower to be both the coordinator and the judge at the same time.

The heart is the living unity of the body, but this is not the same thing as acting as a coordinator. This living unity is not only a symbol, but is something very real. It is like the triple heater in a way, which deals with qi and waterways and their right direction. The gallbladder works with the good

direction of conscience and emotions and all the very subtle levels of the life of a human being. Older Chinese commentators did not hesitate to call the gallbladder 'minister fire' as well.

Question: Can you say a little more about the gallbladder and the number seven?

Elisabeth Rochat: The problem is that it is not exactly the gallbladder and seven, it is shao yang and seven. Seven is also the proper number for the heart and fire in chapter 4 of the Su wen, because it is five plus two. According to the Hong Fan, part of the Book of History, water is number one because all life on earth takes its origin from water. Fire is number two because it is the expression and visibility of life rising up from the depths. Wood is three, metal is four and earth is five. This is the first movement of the elaboration of life, but if you are in a living body you have the zang which are the achievement of this movement. They are not exactly fire and water and wood, but they are heart and kidneys and liver. For this reason you take the number five, the centre, the earth, and you add the number of the natural element to act as a presentation of how this element has taken a form inside a living body. Therefore the number for heart, which corresponds with fire, is five plus two which is seven. The number for liver is five plus three (for the wood), which is eight.

Claude Larre: The more invisible levels stop at five. Then when the organization takes place after the consideration of this invisible set of forces, there will always be similarities from five to ten. We could justify any number, but to stay inside the Chinese tradition we have to refer to one book only, the Hong Fan. This is the primary reference for the complete consideration of numbers.

They took pains to explain how one, two, three, four and five had to be considered, so it would be ridiculous on our part not to follow the pattern they have provided.

Elisabeth Rochat: Seven is the number linked with the shao yang and not with the gallbladder because the gallbladder is with the liver and the number of the liver is eight. In the Book of Change, we have the four positions or diagrams of the yin and yang permutations of shao yang, tai yang, shao yin and tai yin. The first line is the bottom line because the movement comes from the bottom. Shao yang has a broken the upper line which is yin, but beneath it is the ascending power of the yang. These four also represent the four movements of the day, or the four movements of the year in the form of the four seasons. When you throw yarrow stalks to determine the hexagram, you need to symbolize them with numbers. Number six is for tai yin (old yin), seven for shao yang (young yang), eight for shao yin (young yin), and nine for tai yang (old yang). I think there are two couples with the six and the nine between tai yin and tai yang. And another couple between seven and eight between shao yin and shao yang. The bursting out of life is represented by seven and the regulated distribution of influx and qi in all directions with eight.

According to Su wen chapter 1, the proper number for the rhythms of a woman's life and fecundity is seven and for a man is eight. This is because the quality of a woman's fertility appears with the crossing of the yin and yang, and when the yang power reveals itself in the power of the woman's yin. At that time a woman can pass a stage and is either able or unable to have children. The reverse is true for a man. The shao yang is yang with a concentrating power, not the expansion or the luminosity of the sun at noon. It is the rising sun, full of promise and momentum. At noon the sun is at the highest point. The momentum is finished and it is really the end of the yang. Afterwards there is a descending movement towards sunset. In medical books we have seven upper orifices and seven

emotions. We have seen the link between these emotions and the upper orifices, and through the number seven the strength of the uprising and bursting out. So we have to control what is passing through the orifices, we have to control our passions and keep quiet and serene. All of this is control of jing shen. For this reason books like Lao zi or Zhuang zi say that we have to close our orifices in order to preserve our heart and its tranquillity.

Claude Larre: It might be that to make a decision, some sort of light and movement, like the rising sun, are necessary. If we think of the association of liver and gallbladder we are reminded of Zhuang zi chapter 2, where it says that when looking for similarity, nothing is more similar than gallbladder and liver, but looking for difference, nothing is more different than gallbladder and liver. This is to say that in any association at first you might think they are very similar, but if you go deeper you will see that similarity implies a difference in role. So in spiritual life the closer you come to people, the more wise and prudent you have to be. It is dangerous to associate too closely with people because the movement of one towards the other can lead eventually to an explosion. The difficulty between people, friends, or any sort of couple, is that the closer people come the more trouble they can have, because there is as much difference as there is similarity. And the image used to express that is the liver and gallbladder.

Elisabeth Rochat: Su wen chapter 8 gives the gallbladder the fourth place before tan zhong (the centre of the chest) and the spleen and stomach. The heart comes first, followed by the lung and then the liver. For the other fu the 'responsibility' is transformation and transmission, but for the gallbladder the charge is zhong zheng, and the determination and decision which stem from it.

### SU WEN CHAPTER 23

Elisabeth Rochat: There is something similar in chapter 23 of the Su wen. This chapter is a summary of correspondences between the five zang and qi, passions and diseases and so on. At the beginning of the chapter we have a presentation of diseases of the five qi inside the zang and by extension inside the fu. There are diseases like eructations, coughing and yawning linked with the zang, and a sort of uncontrolled speech linked with the liver. As far as the fu are concerned there are counter currents, eructations, diarrhoea, anuria and so on. And just at the end, in the last position, the gallbladder appears with anger. So here we find an instance of illness in the gallbladder appearing in the emotions, in something linked with the jing shen and with the highest level of vital circulation and not just with conduction through the lower orifices or with counter currents through the upper orifices as for the other fu. The gallbladder takes the natural emotion of the liver, which is not usual for a fu. For instance the bladder is never in charge of fear, but here and in other texts too, the gallbladder is in charge of anger. This is because anger, when it is impetuosity rather than a real pathological anger, is nothing other than the first impetuous movement given to the springing up of life. It is the starting point and the power of momentum. It becomes anger if you are unable to control and give the right direction to these forces. Remember that fear is linked with the kidneys, and the gallbladder is hesitating between courage and fear. If you lack courage you have fear. This is another link between the gallbladder and kidneys.

If you recall from our study of the brain in Su wen chapter 52 the author explains how a clumsy acupuncturist can kill people by putting needles into a zang. The injured person dies a certain number of days after the treatment. Of course these numbers are symbolic of the vital importance of the organ which is injured. The shortest time is for the heart. If you put a needle into the heart, after one day the person will die. For the lung it is three days, for the liver it is five, six for the kidneys and ten for the spleen. But within the five zang the gallbladder appears, and it says that if you needle through the gallbladder it will take just one and a half days for the person to die. This is important because it is just a little longer than with the heart. You have to take the numbers symbolically, but without the gallbladder there is no longer any momentum for life, and if there is no momentum then there is just a collapse.

## **PATHOLOGY OF THE GALLBLADDER**

Elisabeth Rochat: We saw earlier one aspect of weakness in the gallbladder, which was the control of emotion, and also the effect on the whole state of body and mind, and in the ability to defend against disease and attack. Normally in the pathology of the gallbladder we find abnormalities in the secretion of bile. Consequently disturbance and trouble appear in the digestion, and jaundice can also occur. One symptom of the gallbladder is very often a bitter taste in the mouth. This is because a counter current in the qi of the gallbladder, perhaps through the stomach, conveys the bitter taste up to the mouth. Sometimes you also have vomiting and particularly vomiting of bitter liquids. This is like a flood of bile out of the gallbladder and out of the body, which is exactly the contrary of the normal use of the bile.

Another characteristic of disease of the gallbladder is fire. The gallbladder is very sensitive to warmth and fire because fire can cause problems in the clarity, purity and tranquillity which is necessary for the gallbladder. In this case clinical symptoms could be a bitter taste in the mouth, dryness in the throat, or vertigo. The gallbladder meridian has a very important trajectory across the head, past the eyes and connecting with the inner part of the eyes and perhaps the brain. Trouble and disturbance in the gallbladder can bring warmth or fire up to the top of the body, and therefore you get this type of vertigo, pain in the area of the ribs and so on.

In Su wen chapters 44 and 47 we can find this symptom of a bitter taste in the mouth linked with the gallbladder. This is quite interesting because bitter, ku, is not the taste naturally related to the liver and gallbladder, but to the heart. This is another link between the heart and gallbladder. In chapter 47 Huangdi asks what the disease called kou ku is. The Yellow Emperor already knows that certain kinds of bitter taste in the mouth come from a perverse fullness of the gallbladder where the heat or fire causes a flood of bile into the mouth. But he says that there is also some kind of bitter taste which is the result of weakness or emptiness of the gallbladder. The gallbladder is unable to retain and keep its juices and for this reason you can have a bitter taste in the mouth. The treatment is very different. In the case of fullness it is more on points like Gallbladder 34, but in case of weakness it is on the mu and shu points, Gallbladder 24 and Bladder 19.

During the explanation Qi Bo says that the liver is the general who is in the centre, and he takes determination and decision from the gallbladder. The pharynx is their messenger. If you remember

some kinds of delirium are linked to the liver in pathology, and I think we have the link with the pharynx through the relationships with the earth element. We saw that bile, the juice of the gallbladder, through the counter current of the gallbladder qi, comes through the pharynx and into the mouth. Qi Bo continues:

'When a man is lost in multiple and various circumstances, and in analysing the situation is unable to make a decision, this is a sign that the gallbladder is empty. For this reason qi goes upwards and flows to the throat and you get a bitter taste in the mouth.'

Here the relationship between the liver and gallbladder is very well explained. The liver can be functioning well, but if the gallbladder is weak and empty, then there may be good ideas and plans and conceptions but the inability to have what is called determination and to act accordingly. We also find the mastering of diseases of the bones in the gallbladder meridian. As we saw previously, bones are the deepest level of the bodily structure. They come from the kidneys, and the richness and formation of the bones depends on the good quality of kidney essences, the essences which are stored by the gallbladder as an extraordinary fu. Bones are one of the six extraordinary fu too, and it is obvious that they have to be solid, firm, robust and straight. They have to go in the right direction because they are the conductor and leader of all circulation and sustain the form of the muscles. Bones are also in the most intimate part of the body and for this reason they are in the middle, so we find this notion of centre, zhong again.

In Su wen chapter 25 it says you have to put your hun in order. For this reason hun and dreams and liver and gallbladder are linked quite closely. A lot of uncontrolled dreams are a symptom of the gallbladder. These are dreams which are not really a meeting with the deep reality of your body or your life and the life of the universe. The function of dreams during the night is this meeting. If you felt that your dreams were not exactly this meeting with reality, you were able to go to a special temple and put yourself to sleep there. At the first level dreams can be a manifestation of your own reality, for instance if you are at the beginning of a disease but notice no symptoms during the day, you may have a dream about it. In the Ling shu it says that if you dream of this or that it is a sign of a weakness or disease in the related zangfu. There are a lot of texts on the relationship between dreams and particular diseases which are not in medical books but which belong to popular knowledge. They include the interpretation of dreams and relationships with spirits and demons. If you have no disease, and if you are a saint, then a dream can be a meeting with the reality of your being and at the same time with the reality of the universe.

This is the meaning of a sentence in Zhuang zi chapter 2: 'During sleep the hun meet.' All this has something to do with the gallbladder. With the liver and heart too of course.

Shao yang has the qi of the beginning, with a strong force contained like a seed. During spring the buds are harder than the flowers of summer. The shao yang is harder in this way than tai yang. Shao yang has a kind of pushing out movement like a geyser, it is something very hard. This is a metaphor for the strength of the shao yang. Therefore the qi of the gallbladder is said to be male, hard and full of this kind of courage. It also has a relationship with sexuality and especially male sexuality. The liver is more concerned with the sexuality of women through the menstrual cycle for example. The gallbladder has more animation and the liver has more blood. Control of the ancestral muscle is very

important in sexuality, particularly in a man's erection, and all of that is connected with the gallbladder.

These qualities of hardness in the leg shao yang are exactly what bones need to be, hard and strong. Therefore if the gallbladder is too weak it loses this hardness, and if there is a general loss of hardness in the body then the bones suffer. Bones need hardness. Another point is that according to some commentaries and also in Su wen chapter 22, the bitter taste has the capacity to give firmness. We know that bitter is the special taste for the heart, but we also know that there is a link between bitter and the gallbladder.

In Ling shu chapter 10 we see that three of the yang meridians master diseases concerning liquids. The large intestine masters the jin fluids, the small intestine masters the ye fluids and the stomach masters the blood. The other three yang meridians master something which is more yang. The triple heater masters diseases of the qi, the bladder masters diseases of the musculature, jin, and the gallbladder masters diseases of the bones. The yang ming is entirely on the side of liquids, jin and blood, and the shao yang is entirely on the side of qi and bones.

Ling shu chapter 4 says:

'Disorders of the gallbladder: one is inclined to take deep breaths, the mouth is bitter, one vomits juices (zhi). There is agitation (dan) under the heart. One feels afraid like a man about to be arrested. There are obstructions (doubtless accompanied by hoarse noises) in the middle of the throat and one spits frequently. One treats where there are trunks and branches (ben mo) of the foot shao yang. One also looks at where the mai has collapsed and one uses moxa. In case of cold and heat one takes yang ling quan (Gallbladder 34).'

Agitation, dan, can be written in two ways. One is with water and the fire radical twice, and the other is water and the phonetic of the gallbladder. Both mean agitation. Zhi is made with the water radical and the number ten. Ten is the crossing of a vertical and horizontal line, and therefore is the number of a perfect whole. These liquids, zhi are perfect, and contain all the richness of the essences. If the gallbladder is ill, qi can no longer rise up. Therefore one is inclined to take deep breaths in order to restore the correct movement of qi and to make it circulate normally again. The juices of the gallbladder are no longer kept inside the gallbladder, they overflow and you get a bitter taste in the mouth and you vomit bitter liquid. This is all an effect of a counter current of the gallbladder injuring the stomach. The gallbladder is too weak, and for this reason the spirits of the heart and the heart itself are unable to be calm. The spirits are not at peace and consequently you have this kind of agitation. This weakness has repercussions in a lack of courage and one is afraid. One is always on guard and on the look out. The counter current of qi of the gallbladder rises up to the throat and you have a blockage of the passage to the throat. Respiration is made with a hoarse sound and is difficult. This counter current of liquids reaches the mouth, so you spit frequently. The trunks and branches of the foot shao yang are the beginning and end of the gallbladder meridian. We can moxa where we observe the pathway of the foot shao yang is weak in order to re-establish a free circulation of yang qi. The coming and going of shao yang heat is a characteristic symptom of the shao yang as a pivot.