

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

[In this .pdf file; THE BAO, CONCLUSION. pp.159-213].

[**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.]

THE BAO 胞

Elisabeth Rochat: Bao is the vital protection or envelope. In Su wen chapter 11 where the six extraordinary fu are presented it is not referred to just as bao, but as nu zi bao, the special bao of a woman. In this sense it is very similar to the idea of the uterus. But we will look first at the general notion of bao before going to the specific.

The character for bao has the radical for part of the body, flesh, which becomes X on the left hand side. The other part is the same as appears in the expression xin bao luo, the whole system of connection and protection wrapped around the heart. So we can see relationships between the heart and bao at this level, and bao and the kidneys at another level.

Etymologically speaking, the character on the right part of bao represents an embryo inside the mother's belly. There is the fetus and the envelope (see Wieger Lesson 54B). So bao is the way in which an embryo is wrapped, protected and contained inside the mother. It can also mean generally to wrap up and contain. Sometimes it means lush, luxuriant and dense, because in the embryo we have all the promise of life, and the dense and luxuriant development of that life. There is a special character for this too if you add vegetation on the top. This character has the specific meaning of luxuriant. If you add the arm radical on the left side the character means to surround something, to carry or embrace something. With vegetation added at the top it means to hatch eggs. It can also mean a cell or a spore, the very small beginning of life. With other radicals you can have a certain sense of violence. For example with water the character is pronounced pao and it means an electric bulb. With fire it is also pao and means crackers or cannon fire. So we not only have the idea of something wrapped up but also that inside this protection there is a great potential violence and explosion which is the violence of life at the beginning.

It can also be used to imply a place where very delicate work is done. For instance, to hatch eggs as we saw above. Or if you add the room radical it becomes a kitchen. The place where meat in particular is kept and prepared. There are many other characters with this ideogram bao inside, for instance with the skin radical it becomes pao meaning blister, or smallpox. It is all about the surging out of qi

The ancient explanation of this is that bao shows the embryo at the point at which the child begins to take shape and the original qi appears and takes life to become an individual. This is the explanation

given in a very well-known etymological dictionary, the Shuowen Jiezi, which is definitely not medical. If you look at other dictionaries you have the idea of bao as a place of work. The Shiming, another dictionary and encyclopaedia from the 2nd century AD, says the bao is like working leather to make it supple. You have to work the leather to make it hollow and void, like the skin of a goat or something. This is why the vital protection (bao) is like a void for receiving precious liquids. So the idea of being a void and receiving something is present even in a non-medical dictionary. Sometimes in medical texts bao can designate the bladder, which is also a void to receive liquids, but with a particular function of being able to transform them with the help of the kidneys. In other classical dictionaries bao is really the uterus, the place where the embryo develops. In some texts it is very well explained that both men and women have a bao. So bao alone can never be translated just as uterus.

In Chinese medical texts there are several important ways in which bao appears. One is as the inner mechanism of the bladder, another is as the uterus, and a third is as an inner protection of life.

THE BAO AS THE BLADDER

Elisabeth Rochat: An example of bao being like the bladder is found in Su wen chapter 43. This chapter presents the so-called bi diseases. The meaning of bi is something like a blockage of functions. It is often translated as rheumatism but this is not a good translation. Sometimes it can be rheumatism, but only some kinds of bi are like that and this bao bi has nothing to do with it at all.

'Bi of the bao: if one presses the lower abdomen and bladder area (shao fu pang guang) there is pain inside (nei tong). The region is saturated with fluid and it is difficult to pass water. Above there is clear mucus (qing ti).'

Bao here is something like the inner mechanism of the bladder. It is not exactly the bladder because the bladder appears in the text as well. It is as if bao designates the inner mechanism by which the bladder is able to receive the liquids coming from the body, the jin ye, into a void, store them and then expel the waste and reinject the essences into the body in the form of humid vapours coming from the lower part of the abdomen. One part of the liquids is expelled in the form of urine and the other is essences in the form of liquids which rise by the effect of the vapour created through the fire of the lower heater. This fire is the fire of the tai yang of the bladder or the fire of ming men and the yang of the kidneys. These are several aspects of the same mechanism.

Su Wen chapter 8 defines the bladder as 'responsible for regions and cities. It stores the jin ye, the body fluids. The transformations of qi then give out their power.' This is strange because the character for stores is cang, and this is the only time in chapter 8 that a normal fu has the charge of storing something.

It is obvious that the bladder expels liquids, but the important thing is to be able to store exactly like the six extraordinary fu. The bladder is not an extraordinary fu, but has the function of keeping all the liquids which are full of essences inside the body, to reintegrate them into the life process.

If this function of the bladder is blocked by bi then the symptoms are pain in the lower abdomen and bladder area, and dysuria and anuria because there is no circulation. Bi is caused by cold, wind and damp, and an effect of cold is to close and block the passage of water in the area. All this region of

the lower abdomen would then be blocked and the liquids not expelled or transformed. The region becomes 'saturated with fluid and it is difficult to pass water'. Fluid accumulates but with no access to the outside.

'Above there is clear mucus.' The explanation for this is very simple. The bladder meridian is injured by the dysfunction of the bladder and therefore transmits it to the head. As a result you have clear mucus in the nose. But why is it clear? If there was internal heat in the lower abdomen the mucus would be unclear, so I think the clear mucus comes from all the liquids present at the level of the brain, especially the ye liquids which water the brain and inner orifices of the face such as the eyes and nose. There is an effect of inner heat at the level of the lower abdomen, but it just makes trouble in the tai yang bladder meridian. There is no real inflammation or fire because the heat is really caused by cold, wind and damp.

THE BAO AS THE UTERUS

Elisabeth Rochat: In Su wen chapter 33 there is a presentation of diseases caused by heat. At the end of the chapter disease coming from the wind of the kidneys causing a lot of dysfunction and inner heat is described. One case deals with menstruation which has ceased.

There are a lot of possible ways to designate menstruation. One expression, as used here, is yue shi. Yue is the moon or month, and shi is a thing, an affair or business. Other expressions use water, shui. But there is never any mention of blood! The important thing is the water and the earthly aspect of menstruation. Interestingly menstruation can also be called jing, which is the same character as for meridian. In that context the translation would not be meridian but regulation, rule or norm. A woman's vitality is ruled and regulated by the fact that once a month a liquid comes out as the material and external sign of the good internal regulation of her life. Jing is the primitive organization of something, and for a woman this is menstruation.

Su wen chapter 33 says: 'The monthly affair, yue shi, does not come. The reason is that the vital circulation proper to the uterus (bao mai) is closed (bi).' Bi shows a door and a piece of extra wood closing it: a closed door, a secured or blocked passageway. Then the text gives an explanation of the expression bao mai:

'The vital circulation natural to the uterus (bao mai) has a relationship of dependency (shu) with the heart and a connection (luo) with the central protection of life (bao zhong).'

A depending shu relationship is to be under the authority of something, to be like the feudal vassal of a prince or sovereign. It is the relationship which each meridian has with its special viscera. A connecting luo relationship acts like a network establishing links in a particular area. For example the lung meridian takes a luo relationship with the large intestine. That is to say, the circulation of the tai yin of the hand penetrates and pervades the large intestine via a whole network.

Bao mai is therefore presented here as a circulation with a special depending relationship with the heart, exactly as if the heart was its own viscera. And it has a connecting luo relationship with the central protection of life, bao zhong, which is not exactly the same thing as the uterus, but is the centre of what is wrapped and protected and thus designates the protection of the origin of life. In Ling shu chapter 65 ren and chong mai are said to originate in the bao zhong. In other texts du mai is

also said to originate there. So this expression central protection of life, bao zhong, refers to the origin of life in my own body, the protection of my own original life from where the extraordinary meridians which start the organization of life originate and flow. Zhong emphasizes the aspect of bao as the centre and origin of life, and that is why chong, ren and du mai all originate in this vital protection.

Chapter 33 obviously takes bao as the uterus because it is a matter of menstruation. The uterus regulates the blood of a woman. It is linked not only with the origin but also with the heart which masters the blood and controls all the circulation of the blood through the xue mai. Chong and ren mai are in charge of giving the first regulation to the movement and use of the blood in each person according to their sex.

According to Ling shu chapter 65 chong and ren mai are in charge of giving a special programme according to sex at the origin or moment of differentiation into male and female. For a man it is to have a beard and whiskers, and blood is used to nourish this area around the lips where chong and ren mai gather. But for a woman the regulation of blood is seen in menstruation and this is the reason why a woman should not have whiskers! Chong and ren mai give the rule for the organization and good distribution and circulation of blood throughout the zang in both male and female. Therefore the mechanisms by which blood accumulates in a woman's womb and is expelled through menstruation are found in the meaning of bao. It is not just the uterus itself as an anatomical entity. It is all the mechanisms of menstruation and eventually pregnancy. There is a relationship to the heart, which will be important in pathology.

After this explanation of bao mai Su wen chapter 33 continues:

'When qi rises and creates a pressure on the lungs the heart is no longer able to descend to establish a free circulation and communication, and for this reason menstruation does not come anymore.'

The context here is disease originating in the kidneys. There is a counter current coming from the kidneys and in this chapter this is an effect of wind from the kidneys. The counter current blocks the free communication of the descending movement from the upper heater. The blockage prevents the free communication of the qi of the heart with the mechanism of menstruation, and so the master of the mai and blood is blocked in the upper heater and menstrual blood cannot descend and be expelled. So normally the uterus benefits from the blood coming from the good functioning of the qi of the heart.

Su wen chapter 47 discusses dumbness in the ninth month of pregnancy:

Huang di asked: "When a pregnant woman suffers from dumbness in the ninth month why is this?"
Qi Bo answered: "It is because the connective circulation of the uterus (bao zhi luo mai) is interrupted (jue)."

Huang di: "What does this mean?"

Qi Bo: "The connective network natural to the uterus (bao luo) links to the kidneys. The circulation (mai) of shao yin passes through the kidneys and connects to the root of the tongue. This is why one cannot speak."

Huang di: "How does one treat it?"

Qi Bo: "One does not treat. In the tenth month it will be restored. The Methods of Needling says 'do not diminish insufficiency nor increase excess for fear of giving rise to long illnesses. The situation will naturally sort itself out afterwards.' Thus when it says 'do not diminish insufficiency' it is because the body is greatly weakened and therefore one must not use needles of metal or stone (chan

shi). And not to 'increase excess' is because there is another body (xing) within the abdomen and if one causes a flowing out to the exterior (xie), then the essences will go out and the illness will remain alone as master of the centre (zhong). It is also said that 'this gives rise to long illnesses'."

So this is another presentation of all the connection between the uterus (bao) and other viscera. The problem is that the pregnant woman does not speak because the connective circulation proper to the uterus, bao zhi luo mai, is interrupted. Jue, interrupted, represents the image of a broken thread of silk. This network is connected to the kidneys. Su wen chapter 33 above showed the connection with the heart and the central protection of life, zhong bao, but here it is the special relationship with the kidneys, particularly in the case of a pregnant woman. All the power and essences of the kidneys increase circulation with the whole mechanism of the uterus during pregnancy. In fact the whole mechanism of the uterus in pregnancy is in very close connection with the kidneys.

In the last month of pregnancy the embryo is really a child and its size can be so great that its body makes a pressure on the womb and blocks part of the free circulation of the qi of the kidneys. The kidney meridian goes up to the root of the tongue and the qi of the kidneys is involved in all the mechanisms of speech and particularly in the desire to speak. When delivery occurs there is no longer a problem, and if the woman is in good health she will recover her speech very soon. Therefore it would be dangerous to treat because if you use needles you risk diminishing insufficiency or increasing excess. Chapter 48, the following chapter, describes the case of someone speaking a lot, where it is a sign of injury and a problem with the authentic essences and their storage. But this is not the situation here. Here something is only temporarily blocked, and the qi of heavenly authenticity has not been injured.

So the uterus encompasses all the mechanisms by which the embryo can be correctly linked and can develop properly because it is well protected and has all the relationships necessary for its unfolding. That is its relationship with the kidneys, the heart, and the origin. We have the bao, bao luo and the bao mai, all of which mirror what we have for the heart. The heart also has a protection, xin bao, moreover it has a protection and connective network, xin bao luo, and sometimes the connection is expressed by the xin xi. At the level of the heart the vital protection, bao, is ordinarily written without the flesh radical just as, uniquely amongst the zang, the heart character itself does not contain the flesh radical, In the protection and connective network proper to the heart, xin bao luo, it is obvious that the heart, which is the very centre of the conscious life of man and which ensures the destiny of that person and is the dwelling place of the spirits, needs to be protected.

As far as the extraordinary fu are concerned then the nu zi bao is the bao specific to a woman. The uterus, being an extraordinary fu, is in charge of storing essences. The essences can be the blood, full of the power to sustain and nourish a new life, or they can be the sperm, jing, of the man, blending with the blood of the woman to start a new being. Or they can be the new being itself, as essences worked on by the qi to build up the embryo and develop the form.

SU WEN CHAPTER 37

Elisabeth Rochat: This chapter gives a good presentation of how heat and cold can be carried from one zang to another or one fu to another. In the first part of the chapter we have the transmission of

cold from the kidneys to the liver, from spleen to liver, from liver to heart, from heart to lung and from lung to kidneys. It continues with how heat moves from one zang to another, from spleen to liver, liver to heart, heart to lung, lung to kidneys and from kidneys to spleen. After this it says the following about the bao:

'When heat moves from the bao to the bladder, there is dysuria (long) and haematuria (niao xue).'

Then it describes the movement of heat from one fu to another: from the vital protection, bao, to the bladder, from bladder to small intestines, from small intestines to large intestines, from large intestines to stomach, from stomach to gallbladder and from the gall bladder to the brain, both of which are extraordinary fu. In fact the contamination by heat begins with one extraordinary fu and ends with another.

The marrow, bones and mai are everywhere in the body, the vital protection, bao, is at the level of the lower abdomen, the brain is at the top of the body and the gallbladder is in the middle. In commentaries on this chapter the question is asked as to where the heat in the bao comes from. Many commentators say that it is an effect of too great a fire of ming men, or an effect of an excess of power of ministerial fire.

THE BAO AS THE INNER PROTECTION OF LIFE

Elisabeth Rochat: Su wen Chapter 37 does not deal with gynaecology and is applicable to men as well as women, the bao cannot just be the uterus, but cannot be the bladder either since there is a transmission from the bao to the bladder. So we have to understand the bao here as this vital protection, found in men as well as women.

The heat coming from the original fire, is able to provoke heat in the bao where chong and ren mai originate. The bao is strongly linked with the kidneys and the bladder, and thus it is easy for the bladder to receive any heat coming through the bao. This is a counter current in the bao in the sense that water cannot pass, there is dysuria and even anuria. From the heat there is also a pressure on the xue mai, the great and small production and circulation of blood, in this area. So if that circulation of blood is erratic, it will flow out with urine. There is very little urine and what there is will be mixed with blood.

There is another connection here between the bao and a good regulation of blood. In a woman the bao as the uterus is called the chamber of blood, which is intimately linked with chong and ren mai, ming men and the bladder. If there is erratic circulation of blood it is also because of the disturbance to the bao by the heat which is a perverse effect of the ministerial fire. So we can see relationships between the mechanism of primitive life and the mechanism of spiritual life because we also have ministerial fire at the level of the heart.

SU WEN CHAPTER 44

Elisabeth Rochat: This chapter deals with flaccid paralysis, or impotence, wei. We saw previously this specific symptom of paralysis related to the vital circulation, mai. In the first part of this chapter we have a section about impotence as linked with each of the five zang, and through the five zang

with the five parts of the body. For instance, impotence coming from heat in the qi of the heart gives impotence in the mai. In the second part of the chapter we have impotence due to five different causes. For instance, if there is a slow impregnation of the body by damp because the control of water is impaired, then slowly flaccid paralysis will pervade the flesh.

There is one kind of wei syndrome related to the vital circulation (mai) which is due to very intense grief and sadness, bei ai. These emotions cause a disturbance and an interruption of all the connections (luo) of the vital protection, bao, and cause leakage of blood and finally impotence in the mai. The presentation in this chapter is similar to the text of chapter 47 which we saw previously.

'In the case of intense sadness and affliction, bei ai, the protective envelope and connective network (of the heart: bao luo) are interrupted (jue). Hence the yang qi starts to move in the interior (nei). When the illness is set off, the heart causes haemorrhages below (metorrhagia) and there is frequent blood in the urine (haematuria).'

First we have sadness and grief, and we know from Su wen chapter 39 that the natural movement of qi in sadness is a contracting movement. As an effect of this there is a pressure caused by the concentration of qi at the sea of qi in the middle of the chest. This pressure blocks the free diffusion of the qi through the lung and induces a counter current there as if there is a rising up in the lung which can be like a cough or a sigh. Because the lung controls the downward movement of liquids you can also have tears because the liquids are flowing upwards in counter current. This is one of the explanations of tears in sadness. But here we have this pressure, and very often there is an inner heat too because the compression of qi and its lack of circulation disrupt the connective system natural to the heart, xin xi.

We saw earlier the way by which the heart is in connection with the other zang via this connective system. The connection becomes restricted and tight to the point of interruption. This is like Su wen chapter 47, with the fetus inside the womb of the woman creating a pressure on the free circulation of kidneys which was called the connective system (xi) of the kidneys. Here at this level there is not a form or a shape but a feeling or emotion which induces this movement of qi and which has the same effect. The connections inside the heart are interrupted.

We saw previously that the relationships between the heart and bao allow menstruation and a good regulation of blood inside the body of the woman. If the connective system of the heart, xin xi, is interrupted there is no free communication and no mastering of the blood's circulation. This blockage at the level of the chest causes friction generating heat, and sometimes this heat can cause a pressure on the blood and the qi is unable to circulate. Therefore you can have the transmission of heat to the chamber of blood, the uterus (bao), and blood circulates erratically and flows out as haemorrhagia or haematuria. But is the bao luo which is interrupted at the level of the heart or the lower abdomen? In Chinese this is not a problem, because both are the way by which the heart rules the circulation of blood.

Remember that the small intestine is linked to the heart in the fire element so that the heat of the heart is easily transmitted to the small intestine. And also remember that at the level of the heart the xin bao luo is a jue yin meridian, connected with the liver which is also the sea of blood, the chamber and storer of blood.

Because of the leakage of blood in these ways there is not enough left to circulate through the meridians and mai. Therefore the great meridians are completely empty, and due to this lack of blood and the lack of essences of the blood there is a lessening of qi. Thus you get bi, a blockage of functioning. There is nothing to circulate in the crevices and intervals of the flesh, and there is impotence (wei) in the mai.

SU WEN CHAPTER 48

'The mai (pulse) is like a bowstring and thready. The essences of the vital protections, bao, are insufficient when one has this sort of illness, but one talks (too much). One dies when the frost descends. But if one is able not to talk, then one can recover.'

Elisabeth Rochat: We have the other side of what we saw earlier about the dumbness of a woman in the ninth month of pregnancy. Here it is no longer a pregnant woman, it can occur in a man as well. The pulse is exactly like a bowstring, very fine, like a thread. This means that there is an emptiness of essences and consequently of blood. The yin is insufficient. But in this case it is an attack on the kidney yin which is also the authentic, original yin or essences. Remember the link between the vital protections, bao, and the kidneys. We can see from the emptiness that the real essences of the body are lacking.

So why are the essences of the vital protections, bao jing, said to be lacking and not the kidney essences? Perhaps the authentic and original essences have to be kept, protected and stored in the depths of the vitality, and that is a sign of bao. Bao as the chamber of blood is also a reservoir for essences and connected with the kidneys. So if there is a man without blood, essences or yin then his vital protection, bao, is insufficient in essences, and the whole body will have the deterioration described here. In this case if the patient talks a lot and is incapable of not talking, it is a bad sign. It shows that the remaining qi is without root. There is no more yin in the shape of blood or essences or liquids to capture and retain it within the body. Qi just flows out in the shape of this flow of words. This is what the text means when it says that there are no more mechanisms to keep the essences of life within the body, and therefore they die 'when the frost descends'. This is a period of the year (October 23 - November 16) when the yang qi returns inside to the yin to be in correspondence with the qi of autumn, as it says in Su wen chapter 2. This is the time of gathering in, harvesting and storing of qi. If in this period you have the opposite behaviour, and the scattering or dispersing, and spreading out of qi, then this is a crucially dangerous time, and the person will die. But if the patient is able not to talk, then he can recover because if he does not talk then he is capable of retaining something inside.

Commentators such as Zhang Jiebin say that bao in this case can be a woman's uterus but also the reservoir of sperm for a man. He recalls the connection of chong and ren mai with the bao and with all their diffusion, especially in the middle of the chest. The vital protection which is bao, is here like the inner mechanism of the storage of the original, authentic essences of life.

Ling shu chapter 65 describes chong and ren mai as originating in the middle of the bao, the bao zhong.

'Chongmai and renmai both arise in the middle of the intimate envelope (bao zhong). They rise running up the back on the inside to make the sea of meridians and connective circulations (jing luo). Their pathway, emerged and external, runs along the abdomen by the right and rises. They meet together at the pharynx, and a detachment (bie) takes a connecting (luo) relationship with the lips and the mouth.'

What this means is that they have a relationship with the yin and the blood. It does not mean that they are physically on the right side, but that they are responsible for the blood and yin of the person rising up from the centre of the central vital protection, bao zhong. At the level of the pharynx they meet with each other. Afterwards they separate and surround the mouth and lips in a network. In Su wen chapter 44 chong mai is said to soak or impregnate essences and blood inside the flesh right up to the skin. This is another effect of chong mai to master the regulation of blood.

THE BAO AND MING MEN

Elisabeth Rochat: The relationship between the vital protection, bao, and ming men, the gate of personal life or destiny, is also very well presented in Nan Jing difficulties 36 and 39.

'Ming men is the dwelling place for spirits and essences (shen jing, the essences supporting the spirits). It is a place where original qi is connected. It is so that man can store sperm (jing) and woman connects with her uterus (bao).' Nan Jing 36

In difficulty 39 a sentence is added to this:

'This qi is in free communication with the kidneys.'

Ming men is like the unique origin of man between the two kidneys, and the dwelling place of spirits and essences. Because it is the origin of life it is also the way by which life can give life. For a man it is through sperm (jing, essences) and for a woman it is through the function of the bao as a uterus, and the richness in the essences of the blood of the uterus. When the blood is no longer rich enough in essences, it is expelled by menstruation.

There are many later texts, by commentators in the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, on this question of ming men, bao, kidneys and so forth. One example is from Zhang Jiebin in the Leijing tuyi where it says:

'The kidneys can be called the gate for the uterus (bao men), or the small door for the child (zi hu).'

Zi hu is one name for the points Kidney 13 and Ren 4. It is also a name for the vagina.

'The door of the child is the uterus, it is the centre of the jade chamber. It is located between Ren 4 and Ren 6. The essences of the man (sperm, jing) and the blood of woman dwell inside.'

In the daoist school the bao as vital protection stores the qi of the authentic person of anterior heaven, and is the cinnabar field, dan tian. Jade is like a heavenly form inside the earth, the fertile essences. The embryo is similarly a heavenly form inside the woman, coming from the man. The penis is commonly called the jade stem. In later Qing dynasty texts we have the sentence:

'A man is first produced by ming men and afterwards is produced by the heart.'

First comes ming men and then the heart. This reflects ancient texts, in order to clarify them. Another text from the Qing dynasty describes how a man like a woman displays and makes life blossom from this area of ming men and bao. The reason why there are so many doors and gates in this area is because of all this unfolding of life. Later the connections proper to the heart, bao lu, may simply be another name for ming men. When we are speaking of xin zhu, ming men, bao lu or just bao, it is all the same thing just with different names. But this is a late text, 18th or 19th century.

FEMALE PHYSIOLOGY

Elisabeth Rochat: All the following is based on Chinese texts and commentators and it covers the relationships of the uterus with each of the five zang and with the particular extraordinary meridians chong, du and ren mai. Afterwards we will look at menstruation, pregnancy and gynaecological pathology.

In the human body the zang and fu along with the meridians and luo are like the fundamental basic structure of life. They are how essences are contained and how qi is released. In pathology blood and qi are just the effect of all the work of the five zang and six fu inside the unity of the human body. In a woman menstruation and pregnancy are a complete whole where zang and fu and all the circulations are involved, and where a good state of blood and qi is very important.

The bao as uterus is also called the palace of the child, zi gong, or less commonly zi zang, the place where the child is kept preciously. Sometimes in Chinese texts you can also find the expression bao zang designate the uterus.

A text from the Yuan dynasty of the 13th century AD said that yin and yang, which in this context designate male and female, exchange and form a couple. An embryo is made by the condensation which is the natural movement of the yin. The place where this condensation is preciously stored is called the zi gong, the palace of the child. There is a connection going down and another connection going up. There is an extending communication to the left and another to the right. The palace of the child, the uterus, is seen as a centre with blood and qi coming from the four directions and from all the zang.

THE UTERUS AND THE KIDNEYS

Elisabeth Rochat: There is a special relationship between the uterus and the kidneys. There is a relationship through the meridian and the other circulations proper to the kidneys which are certainly in the area of the bao. We saw previously in Su wen chapter 47 that there is a direct relationship between the bao and the kidneys. There are also intimate relationships between the kidney meridian and chong mai. For instance this is mentioned in Su wen chapter 60. We know that chong mai originates in the central vital protection, the bao zhong. The kidneys are said to be the root of the qi of anterior heaven, and the root of original qi. The kidneys consequently have the function of storing essences and qi coming from the origin, and therefore they are the basis for the growing, development and unfolding of the individual, and in reproduction for the same process of development of the embryo. Essences are the very deep source of the transformation which makes blood. Blood comes from the liquids and grains at the level of the stomach and spleen, but it is also

based on the essences coming from the function of the kidneys. Therefore the kidneys are also involved in the process of making blood and menstruation. At the age of seven years the kidneys in a woman are powerful, and at twice seven years the power of reproductive fertility is complete because at that age the uterus is entirely achieved, chong and ren mai have completed their programme and she is able to reproduce. This is discussed in Su wen chapter 1 and in the Monkey Press book The Way of Heaven.

THE UTERUS AND THE LIVER

Elisabeth Rochat: There is a connection between the ren mai meridian and the liver meridian, particularly at the level of Ren 2, qu gu. This is just at the base of the lower abdomen and the liver meridian has another connection with du mai at the top of the head at Du 20, bai hui. This is interesting to note because the liver meridian therefore connects with these extraordinary meridians at the top and bottom of the body. We know that ren and du mai originate in the central vital protection (bao zhong). As a result the liver meridian has relationships with the uterus and bao through this double connection with ren and du mai.

The liver stores blood and masters its flow throughout the body. It regulates the quantity of blood which is at the disposal of the muscles for their activity. It is also responsible for complete and free circulation at the level of the lower heater. Therefore it has a great influence on the regulation of menstruation, the good functioning of the uterus and all the process of gestation. The characteristic of the liver, according with its belonging to the wood element, is to give the impulse to things, to start the movement, to master the appearance from the hidden to the full light. So, the liver will carefully keep and release with good timing the blood for muscular effort or for menstruation. Irregularities in menstruation often have something to do with the liver. Emotions easily disturb the liver and lead to gynaecological problems. On the other hand, the loss of blood by the liver through menstruation may bring a psychological instability or irritability. This is the reason why anger, resentment and hysteria are so easily related to women and are said to belong to the female nature.

THE UTERUS AND THE SPLEEN

Elisabeth Rochat: The spleen and ren mai have a meeting and exchange particularly at the level of Ren 3. These two meridians also have a kind of connection at the level of the root of the tongue and the throat. The spleen masters transportation and transformation, and along with the stomach is the source of the whole process of making qi and blood. The spleen is the root of posterior heaven.

At the same time the spleen masters the centre and the middle heater. We saw earlier the importance of the relationship between the lower and upper heaters in the circulation of blood. If the heart in the upper heater is no longer in relationship with the uterus at the level of the kidneys and lower heater, then you have an erratic circulation of blood. The middle heater is the crossing place for these exchanges. The spleen qi masters their ascending and the stomach qi masters their descending. We also know that the spleen masters the gathering of the blood, it presides over blood. The spleen gives it shape and retains it within the vessels. Through all these functions the spleen is in relationship with the uterus. It is one of the sources for the production of blood. You know that

amenorrhoea can occur from lack of nourishment. On the other hand the spleen masters the shape of the blood and also gives blood its correct density, and this connects it to the uterus as the chamber of blood. The stomach is in an outward/inward (biao/li) relationship with the spleen. Its meridian is the yang ming of the foot, which is in relationship with the chong mai, according to Nan jing difficulty 28 for example:

'The chong mai and the yang ming of the foot go up together.'

Su wen chapter 44 also makes a strong relationship between chong mai and yang ming, as well as with the whole area of the lower abdomen. The stomach meridian has a special meeting with ren mai at Ren 24. Ling shu chapter 33 says the stomach is the sea of liquids and grains. It masters all the reception and introduction of nourishment inside the body, and also the decomposition and digestion of food. Therefore when the stomach is in its full power blood and qi and chong and ren mai are also at their full power. In this case the physiological function of the uterus is normally fulfilled.

THE UTERUS AND THE HEART

Elisabeth Rochat: Remember that in Su wen chapter 33 it says that the heart masters the blood and its circulation, and all the other vital circulations, mai. It is also in relationship with the good propagation of qi through the sea of qi, through its servants and messengers, as well as through the lung. The heart masters the luminous radiance of the spirits, shen ming. We saw in Su wen chapter 44 that grief can cause a disturbance at the level of the uterus, for instance uterine haemorrhage. This is an attack on the spirits at the level of the emotions because the spirits of the heart are unable to ignite the person enough to soften the attack.

THE UTERUS AND THE LUNG

Elisabeth Rochat: The lung masters the life of the whole body, and has the function of receiving the one hundred mai at the morning audience. According to Su wen chapter 21 for instance, the lung also regulates and invigorates the free communication of the waterways, the passages of liquids inside the body, especially through the downward movement of pressure made by the lung. In this way it is able to stimulate the liquids to descend to the lower heater and the blood to the uterus (bao). In case of a dysfunction in the lung, problems with menstruation can occur due to a counter current of qi. The lung mastering the qi is able to participate in the diffusion and distribution of all the nutritive elements inside the body. There is a very close connection between lung and spleen at this level. This is the tai yin aspect of qi among the meridians. The uterus needs all this nutritional support to function well.

THE UTERUS AND CHONG MAI

Elisabeth Rochat: Ling shu chapter 65 says that chong mai appears in the centre of the vital protection, bao zhong. Chong mai has a special meeting with the yang ming of the foot, the stomach meridian, at Stomach 30, Qi chong. This is the same chong character as in chong mai, the powerful impetuosity and thrust of life. Chong mai maintains a very close relationship with the stomach and with the renewal of blood and qi through the stomach. The downward pathway of chong mai goes with the

kidney meridian around the leg and has a special relationship with the other yin meridians of the foot, the liver and spleen. The relationship with the stomach is the root of the renewal of blood through nourishment, the relationship with the kidneys is the basis for the essences, with the liver which is the keeper of blood, and with the spleen which masters the production of blood and gives it its power to be contained.

We know that chong mai is also called the sea of blood, the sea of the twelve meridians and the sea of meridians and luo. Therefore chong mai has a crucial part of the functioning of all the circulation and movement of blood and qi inside the whole body. If the chong mai is disturbed, serious disorder in the uterus may occur. It is in this way that the chong mai is responsible for good menstruation, gestation and so on.

THE UTERUS AND REN MAI

Elisabeth Rochat: Ren mai originates from the middle of the vital protection, bao zhong, just like chong mai. It also has a special relationship with the other three yin meridians of the foot, the liver, kidneys and spleen, especially at the points Ren mai 2, 3 and 4. The meaning of this relationship is the association of essences and blood between these four meridians. We can say that ren mai, in order to fulfil its function, needs the essences and blood of the three yin meridians. But in another way we can see that ren mai is also the prototype of these three yin meridians. The constant interchange between ren mai and these three yin meridians explains a lot of disease and dysfunction of ren mai. If the liver, kidneys or spleen are weakened then ren mai cannot function properly either, and consequently the uterus cannot fulfil all its functions.

The relationship between ren mai and the stomach is also important. Ren mai receives nourishment and liquids from the stomach, but also the first construction of the stomach is partly due to ren mai. Ren mai is the first master and prototype of all the yin in the body. This is why ren mai is sometimes called the sea of all yin mai. Ren mai is like the unification of all the yin aspects of the body, and is essential for feeding the embryo inside the uterus.

THE UTERUS AND DU MAI

Elisabeth Rochat: According to many commentators and later texts, du mai also originates in the middle of the vital protection, bao zhong. A sentence in one text says:

'Chong mai, ren mai and du mai have a single source and three ramifications.'

Du mai has a strong relationship with the kidneys especially at ming men, Du mai 4. Between the fire of ming men and the power of du mai mastering all the yang side of the body there is a very strong relationship and connection. The yang is necessary to ensure a good circulation without which all the yin is unable to nourish and rebuild the body, particularly the uterus and menstrual blood.

THE UTERUS AND DAI MAI

Elisabeth Rochat: Dai mai has a special relationship with chong, ren and du mai but it also has a connection with all the meridians of the body because all the meridians pass through the dai mai

which has the function of holding and containing them. Therefore dai mai regulates the circulation of blood and qi, vertically speaking. Dai mai also has a specific connection with the kidneys at the level of ming men, Du mai 4, which is stated in Ling shu chapter 11. So dai mai has a strong relationship with the power to retain liquids in the lower abdomen, particularly through the fire of ming men. Therefore it plays a particular role in the matter of vaginal discharges.

THE UTERUS AND TIAN GUI

Elisabeth Rochat: The translation of tian gui is something like fertility or the possibility of having a child. It is made with heaven, tian and gui, which is the tenth celestial stem connected with the yin of the winter, the hidden power of the water inside the depths of the earth. The image of this character is the secret meeting in the earth of all waters. Wiegner gives several explanations (see Lesson 112). One explanation which is found in several ancient Chinese texts is the confluence of water at the bottom of the earth in winter when nothing appears on the surface and all the activity is in the depths. In the Yueling, Monthly Commands, which is a chapter of the Book of Rites, the middle of the winter is the time when the tiger mates. The tiger represents the power of life.

Another interpretation for the character gui according to the Shuowen Jiezi as given in Wiegner, is the nicely disposed grass on which the ancients poured the libations offered to the manes, the deified souls of departed ancestors. The libations penetrated the earth right down to the Yellow Sources, residence of the manes. So this is really not very different from the first interpretation.

The lower part of the character for gui looks like heaven, tian, but I am pretty sure it is not heaven but an arrow. This arrow gives us the idea of something liquid and sacred streaming out, through confluence and compenetration. This is the secret meeting in the depths of the earth and of winter between the water of earth and the authenticity of heaven, making this expression which in ancient texts meant fecundity. The same expression is used in Su wen chapter 1 for the fecundity of man and woman. Gui shui, water gui has the meaning of menstruation. It is the flow of liquids which shows that the woman is able to have children.

Fecundity is the conjunction or the reunion, between heaven and earth, male and female and in each person between anterior heaven and posterior heaven. In a way it is the complete achievement of the programme given through anterior heaven and taking form through posterior heaven. Anterior heaven could be seen as a programme of growing up and development. This gradual development is under the authority of the kidneys because they are the reservoir of this power. The embryo develops and then the child continues to grow and at the age of seven, for a woman, the super-abundant power of the kidney is manifested by the renewal of the teeth and growing of the hair. At fourteen years fecundity (tian gui) is said to arrive:

'Ren mai assures free circulation and the powerful chong mai rises in power. Menstruation occurs and she has children.'

We have here the conjunction between anterior and posterior heaven. The ren mai in free communication and powerful chong mai rising in power are just the acknowledgement that this programme for a woman is now completely fulfilled, the uterus is achieved and all the organs of gestation are finished. The form is complete and the mechanism is made and this is the reason why

she has menstruation for the first time. Until this time something from anterior heaven was not completely expressed.

At three times seven years the qi is in a good equilibrium and at the height of its power. This is the reason why the wisdom teeth appear. At four times seven years the hair reaches its greatest length.

Everything is good at the level of the kidneys, ren, du and chong mai and in all the five zang.

At seven times seven years ren mai is empty, chong mai decreases and fecundity (tian gui) diminishes until it dries up. The way of the earth (the circulations and connections natural to the uterus and assuring menstruation as well as fertility) no longer ensures free communication. The woman's body is decrepit and she can no longer have children. The life of the woman is not finished but the power to make another life is over because ren and chong mai no longer have enough super-abundance. The temporary ability to give life comes to an end. Ren and chong mai continue to fulfil their function in the body of a woman, but cannot allow the loss of blood and the spending of qi by menstruation and gestation to continue since they can no longer be replenished.

MENSTRUATION

Elisabeth Rochat: Menstruation reveals the good coordination between zang and fu, meridians, and all the qi and blood allowing fecundity and the normal functioning of the uterus in menstruation itself.

The rising power of the kidneys is necessary to make fecundity appear and to allow ren and chong mai to achieve their given programme or role. It also needs the good regulation of du mai without which the qi of the kidneys cannot rise in power. And dai mai needs to contain well, because without it there is a leakage of vitality. When ren mai is fully functioning and chong mai is at the height of its power they are in a dual relationship in which ren mai is like the yin side furnishing all the elements necessary for life and bringing them to the organ of gestation, and chong mai is like the arrow or the spring allowing the emission of something, which is menstruation or gestation.

As a result the sea of blood is completely full and at this time the blood overflows in the uterus and you finally have menstruation. For this we have to have a good equilibrium between zang and fu and blood and qi coming from the zang and fu, because if one zang is disturbed it disrupts the harmony between blood and qi and there is something wrong in the functioning of the meridians and eventually of the uterus.

The only point to add is that after delivery the normal regulation of the woman's body is to transform the elements by which she feeds the embryo through blood and so on, into milk. And of course the ren mai and chong mai are involved in this by virtue of the upward movement following the abdomen and the chest and all the extensions of chong mai at the level of the chest to generate lactation. This is why when a woman is lactating there is very little menstruation.

PATHOLOGY OF THE BAO

AMENORRHOEA

Elisabeth Rochat: Amenorrhoea is jing bi. Bi means closing, blockage. The door is shut, and jing is not a meridian here but the regulation of the period. So the meaning is that regular periods are blocked. Amenorrhoea can be caused by different things. Often it comes from worries and

obsessions, or from a general weakness of the organism, or sometimes after a long illness.

Exhaustion diminishes the ability of the spleen and stomach to transform and produce all the elements needed for the rebuilding and renewing of the body. In this case the source of blood in posterior heaven has dried up. There is no more blood to go down and accumulate to make a period. This is what is called amenorrhoea from a drying up of the blood, xue ku. The character ku shows the image of a dead branch of wood. This comes mainly from emptiness of yin.

Amenorrhoea can also be caused by blockage of blood, xue zhi. There are many reasons why this can occur, for instance an attack by cold. Or perverse qi in the organism can disturb the mechanism of the bao, or emotions can block the circulation of qi. In all cases qi is prevented from moving freely and the blood does not circulate well. So you get stagnation and blockage and this type of amenorrhoea is caused by blockage of blood.

The main points for treatment of the drying up of blood which is a symptom of emptiness, are on ren mai and also the shu back points, particularly of spleen and kidneys. One needles with tonification, and sometimes uses moxa. For amenorrhoea from blockage of blood you need points also on ren mai but with needle dispersion, and also on the liver meridian, particularly if the blockage of qi comes from emotions. Points on the spleen meridian can also be useful.

In the first case the main point of the treatment is to tonify and increase the spleen and kidneys, the roots of posterior and anterior heaven in the body. To correct the general weakness of the organism and to raise the free communication of the periods. In amenorrhoea from drying up of blood the main symptoms are that the quantity of blood in menstruation diminishes little by little, and finally you have amenorrhoea. At the same time there will be difficulty in the digestion, diarrhoea with undigested food. There may also be vertigo or some kind of difficulty in seeing clearly. In addition there might be palpitations, with a kind of tiredness of the spirits and mental attitude.

The points which are often given are the shu back points of the spleen and kidneys, Bladder 20 and 23, and Ren mai 6 and Stomach 36. Spleen and stomach are the root of posterior heaven and master digestion, and from the essences of digestion comes the liquid which forms the basis for blood. The kidneys are the root of anterior heaven so Bladder 23 reinforces the power of the kidney qi and of the essences of the kidneys and the power of the blood and its circulation. Ren mai 6 also reinforces this qi. If the patient also presents with anaemia then you can add Bladder 17, which in Nan jing difficulty 45 is given as the special meeting point for blood. Or you could add Spleen 10, xue hai, sea of blood, which has a special relationship with the production and quantity of blood. In case of diarrhoea and undigested food in the faeces you would add Stomach 25 or Bladder 25, the shu point of the large intestines. If the patient has palpitations and vertigo then you could use Du mai 20 or Heart Master 6. Obviously there are a lot of other points which can be used to regulate the distribution of blood as well. Points related to the liver could be used, such as Bladder 18. Other points on ren mai, such as Ren mai 4 and 5 could also be used.

For amenorrhoea due to a blockage of blood where the symptoms also include a swollen or painful abdomen and when the patient has some kind of agitation and heat in the chest area or a sense of oppression (men) there, or has constipation because the heat has extended to the lower heater,

dryness of the skin and nails, and a dry mouth with a dark tongue, treatment must diminish the heat, remove the blockage and stimulate the circulation of blood.

Points to use would include Ren mai 3, Large Intestine 4, Spleen 10, Spleen 6 and Liver 2. Ren mai 3 has a particular relationship with chong mai and the liver meridian. Therefore it can be used to reinforce the regulation of chong and ren mai. Spleen 10 regulates blood and Liver 2 is the rong, fire, point. Taken together these two points stimulate the free circulation of the liver and disperse. They regulate the blood linked to the spleen, and reduce the heat. Large Intestine 4 is a very good point to use for obstruction due to heat and to regulate the qi. Spleen 6 regulates the blood and works well in combination with Large Intestine 4. Because blockage of blood and stagnation are important in the body of a woman a point like Stomach 30 in the relationship with chong mai is also useful. Other points such as Spleen 8, the xi cleft point, or Liver 8 are also helpful. If the oppression and sensation of heat and malaise in the chest are very strong then you can use Heart Master 6 or Kidney 6, which is also the point for the yin qiao mai. Yin qiao mai has an important function in this area of the body, and a strong connection with the kidneys and the circulation of blood.

EARLY PERIODS

Early periods are often caused by a disturbance in the emotions, worry, preoccupations and so on. A knot develops in the qi and this can cause fire, which injures the function of the uterus and can result in early periods.

LATE PERIODS

Late periods are mainly caused by cold, coming either from internal or external causes. The circulation of qi becomes blocked and its transformation and circulation lack strength resulting in late periods.

IRREGULAR PERIODS

Irregular periods could mean early periods, often with dark, deep red blood and often with a malaise or feeling of heat and dryness in the mouth, late periods coming about once every three months, also with dark blood and often with symptoms of cold, or periods which are sometimes early and sometimes late.

Irregular periods can come from too many pregnancies or exhaustion, or as a result of long and serious disease with a large loss of blood, or a continual weakness in the middle heater. All those chronic situations have repercussions particularly on the liver and kidneys, and also on the mechanism of chong and ren mai and cause a definite weakness in blood and qi. The treatment is generally on ren mai and the three yin foot meridians.

TREATMENT

For early periods with inner heat, the blood is lost in great quantities because heat disturbs the regulation of blood, and the circulation becomes erratic. Ren mai 6 may be used if you have this kind of heat, because it can help to hold and retain the blood and restore a good rhythm of circulation. Of

course in this case you would not use moxa on this point. Other possible points include Spleen 6 or Liver 3 or Kidney 3. The spleen is the root of the production of blood and has the power to master the shape of the blood and to keep the blood in good circulation. Liver 3 disperses heat, clarifies and reduces the heat which is particularly in the liver. The source point on the kidney meridian would be chosen to reinforce the water of the kidneys. These four points are used together to restore the free circulation and communication to chong and ren mai. Other points which might be used are Spleen 10 or Spleen 8, di ji. Di ji means the subtle mechanism which is linked to the power of the earth, and the power of the earth is particularly important in the body of a woman.

For late periods which often come with symptoms of cold you might also want to use Ren mai 6, Spleen 10, or Stomach 25. Another very important point in gynaecology is Stomach 29, gui lai. In this point name there is the idea of a return, and good functioning. Lai is to come, and gui is to return to your native place, or to go where you have your natural dwelling place. For instance when a woman marries a man she 'returns' to the family of her husband. It may be the first time that she is there, but the family of the man is now considered her natural place of life. It is a movement to a natural place of unfolding and development, and the point's location is very interesting because it is at the level of a woman's own natural place for another life, the uterus. So all these ideas are behind the name of this point. If there is cold you would use these points with moxa and tonification. Another thing to remember is that the yang ming of the foot is the only meridian which has a great quantity of blood and qi. This is the reason why in the case of cold and blockage due to cold the stomach meridian is very important to reinforce and warm all the jing. The yang ming is the sea of the twelve meridians, the sea of the qi and so on. But also regulation and normality are established through the stomach meridian, and therefore it helps regulate menstruation.

In the third case of complete disorder in the periods, it is almost always linked with a general weakness in qi and blood, and an emptiness in the body. So you have to tonify and moxa important points such as Ren mai 6, Spleen 6, the shu points of the kidneys and spleen, Bladder 23 and 20, and Stomach 36. You can also add other kidney meridian points, for instance Kidney 8, which is another point by which the kidney meridian has a relationship with the spleen meridian. The aim of the treatment here is to reinforce the origin and the original qi and essences, and to prevent the leakage of these original forces which are in danger. The image which is given in some Chinese texts is of making an earthen bank to contain essences, blood and qi. Little by little you can reinforce yin and yang and re-establish the defences as firm and solid and able to contain the vitality. After that symptoms of disorder in menstruation should disappear. If the weakness of kidneys and essences is particularly bad you can also add Du mai 4, ming men. If the liver which is the spring of life is deficient you can add Liver 3 to help it. Essentially all these points deal with the lower and middle heaters.

In the case of painful periods there are two main patterns: fullness or emptiness. Symptoms of fullness are often caused by blockage and stagnation of blood. If there has been a blockage in the circulation of qi so the blood of the period is blocked in the womb, the abdomen will be painful and you cannot touch the area. Sometimes blood clots flow out with menstruation and the pain is released. This blockage can be due to a lot of different circumstances, for instance cold blocking the circulation,

or the seven emotions causing a blockage. With symptoms of emptiness of blood and qi in which the pain is continual, it is possible to relieve it with massage. Very often the quantity of blood is small and there is lumbar pain, a weakness in the limbs and a lessening of appetite. In serious cases the patient could also have vertigo and palpitations. Sometimes this can be due to a constitutional weakness or to a poor lifestyle. Little by little the sea of blood is unable to control menstruation.

With symptoms of fullness with acute pain you might want to use Ren mai 3, Bladder 32, ci liao, or Spleen 8. Ren mai 3 is one of the points on ren mai which is in connection with the function of chong mai, and it is also a junction point with the liver meridian, the other sea of blood. So this point is very useful for re-establishing free communication through chong and ren mai and with the liver to break the blockage and stagnation and as a result to stop the pain. Ci liao, Bladder 32, is at the level of the sacral foremen, and originally and constitutionally at this level there has to be a current of qi able to make the foremen, or hole. This is why these points are used in a lot of cases to re-establish communication or reinvigorate something. In the case of gynaecological disorders ci liao is particularly indicated to aid circulation.

In cases of great weakness you could use the back shu point of the kidneys, Bladder 23, Stomach 36 or Ren mai 4, guan yuan. Guan yuan has a special relationship with the origin, and it should be used to warm and tonify the original qi of the lower heater and through that at the same time to invigorate the natural disposition and original programme of chong and ren mai. Another possible point is Kidney 12, da he, which is a good point to invigorate the yang of the kidneys.

CONCLUSION

Elisabeth Rochat: Su wen chapter 11 gave the great definition of the qi heng zhi fu, as fu which carefully store essences, cang jing. Only the essences have to be kept so preciously.

Claude Larre: We are concerned with life, so whatever we say is not on the same level as the zang, although it is very close. But life is life, and the life of the zang and the life of the fu are something quite different. Storing and keeping for the zang and transforming for the fu are different activities. The Chinese mind is such that they are very clear what is transformed and makes life at the highest level. Distinction is made in order to classify heaven and earth, and that is why when they speak of the zang they are talking of the highest storing of life, and earth is not just the companion of heaven, but is equally important too. If something is extraordinary it must be very different, and must have something to do with the origin.

Elisabeth Rochat: We have a unique origin of life coming from heaven and earth, through male and female. The conjunction makes a new composition of essences, and the starting point of a new life, the name of which might be ming men, the creation of a new destiny.

Right after that, in the primitive chaos of one's own being, which is in the likeness of the primitive chaos which existed before heaven and earth, life can exist only because a differentiation, a distinction, occurs between heaven and earth, yin and yang, water and fire. Therefore immediately afterwards, life unfolds itself through numerology: two kidneys (yin and yang), three heaters (for the vital qi), four directions and limbs, five zang, six fu, seven orifices, eight winds or extraordinary meridians, nine orifices or seas, up to the twelve meridians. All of these contain a mixing of yin and

yang, of essences and qi and contain many possibilities for the unfolding of life in the body or in the universe, it is the same thing. These divisions always have a lot of relationships within them, especially through the vital circulations which maintain the unity of the body, for instance in the form of the harmony between qi and blood.

This is all a reflection of the complexity of the administration of a kingdom. For example we have twelve meridians which have jurisdiction over twelve local areas, but they also have to act with what is behind and beyond them. The extraordinary fu have some kind of function between the origin in its unity and the more detailed expression of the living organization by the twelve meridians. They are closer to the original formation of the body, and they are also more ancient, primitive and deep and more able to ensure the continuity of life than the detailed organization which can easily change.

Claude Larre: We have to be clear about the numerology, and that numbers for the Chinese express the reality of life. Numerology is seen as the reflection in our mind of how we perceive life. The Chinese perceive life in this way, the unity of ming men, the six extraordinary fu and so on. But this has a foundation, because if life is reflected in our minds this way it must be because life is organized in this way.

Elisabeth Rochat: We can now understand in which ways each of the extraordinary fu store essences. The uterus stores essences in the shape of blood for the regulated overflowing of menstruation, or to feed the embryo. In the body of the woman we are closer to the earth and earth's power, and that is why something can take shape there during gestation (pregnancy).

Within the brain, in the sea of marrow, the receptacle of essences and the yin at the top of the body, we have the brilliant radiance of the essences. The finest, clearest and purist essences are necessary at the level of the brain for its formation and function. In the brain exist the compenetration of essences and spirits with their manifestation at a very subtle level, for example through thought or the activity of the upper orifices which are the sense organs.

The marrow is an expression of the essences of the kidneys, and it is the way by which essences can form at the deepest level inside the body. The marrow is the foundation of all forces which can be brought out. One of the best expressions of this power is in the bones, because they are straight and strong due to the quality of the marrow.

The bones are like the solid and firm expression of the essences coming from the kidneys, and they also keep and store essences in the shape of marrow inside their hollows.

The mai also store essences because the strength of the circulation, which is the mai gives essences in the form of blood, qi or ying qi a good direction with regular circulation.

The gallbladder stores pure and clear essences in the form of bile. It is sometimes called the 'fu for clear and pure essences'.

So essences are not only a form, but also the keeper of authenticity, the control of a correct quality in the living substance. They are the basis for the shape or form, but also they are like a programme for the building and rebuilding of every form in the body. Sometimes, for example in Su wen chapter 5, essences are linked with the power of heaven in that they give the right direction of life. Thus the uterus gives correct direction and normality to the life of a woman creating a good equilibrium and circulation of blood and directing pregnancy. The brain gives a good regulation to thought and the

sense organs. The marrow, like an expression of the essences of the kidneys, gives a good direction and strength to the body's whole vitality. Bones also give a good direction to life because they are the deep framework and skeleton of the body. In Ling shu chapter 14 Huangdi asks Qi Bo if it is possible to give the measure of the jing mai. The answer Qi Bo gives only concerns the bones:

Huangdi: "Through measurement of the vital circulations (mai), one understands the relative length of the meridians jing mai. How is this established?"

Qi Bo: "First one measures the size of the bones from their articulations (gu jie), their width and length. Then one can establish the measure of the mai."

The structure of the body is given by bones and a lot of anatomical locations follow the bones. The mai, obviously, give good direction and rhythm and distribution of vital elements. And for the gallbladder we should remember that its charge in Su wen chapter 8 is to be responsible for what is just and correct, and to take good decisions physically and mentally. The gallbladder is able to manage and help the heart in the running of the body and to keep it going in a good direction. A patient whose gallbladder is in good condition generally recovers faster than others. This is partly because of the good and deep orientation of the vital forces which are under the control of the gallbladder.

Because they are storing and in charge of preventing leakages of essences, the six extraordinary fu are in charge of the inner space of life. Here we have the special reason for the number six. Six is a number which presents the dynamic exchange of qi between heaven and earth within the median space. We have six dynamic junctions, liu he, between the qi of heaven and earth which are at the level of the universe, the four directions plus height and depth. But we have to conceive of these junctions not only as a point of anchorage, but also as all the possible exchanges between these junctions. Life, in the likeness of heaven and earth, organizes and closes the inner space for all living beings through the six junctions. There is no life possible outside the six junctions, as is said in a lot of classical texts, because qi is only organized inside the six junctions.

Claude Larre: The upper part of the character liu has the value of representing heaven, while the lower part represents the division which is natural to earth. The division can be made by four, or eight or sixteen. Playing with four you have the directions, with eight you have the eight winds which are the way to propagate life and are at the surface of the earth. Earth in motion is seen through the winds which we feel and which divide themselves at the surface. So it is quite natural that the higher heavenly and lower earthly parts would be represented in the character which in medical texts is the most powerful expression of relationships. This is the basis of the twelve meridians. The six junctions are the outstanding expression of what we may explore.

Elisabeth Rochat: Six is the natural number for relationships and organization, which we see also in the six ordinary fu. But these are in a dual relationship with the five zang, and in this organization zang take the yin side and fu the yang side. The five zang are in charge of the storing of essences and the six yang fu are the expression of the transformation and circulation of the substantial elements of life, for instance through the digestive system. But if we are at the level of the six extraordinary fu, we do not have the same distinction between yin and yang. It is very difficult to say if they are yin or yang as a group. It is never said in any classical Chinese text. This is because their purpose is the

junction and conjunction of heaven and earth on and inside earth. And perhaps they are also a junction between anterior and posterior heaven. If they store essences they are the guardians of the right direction of life, the model for composition and recomposition of life, and they always need the support of essences coming from posterior heaven to fulfil their function. They are between ming men or the origin and the making of life by the essences.

Within the six extraordinary fu (qi heng zhi fu) different relationships may be seen. Brain and marrow are associated. The brain is the sea of marrow, and the marrow is under the authority of the brain. The brain is at the top of the body while the marrow is in the deepest part of the body descending and following its structure. Both are yin in a way, although perhaps in this relationship we could say that the brain is yang and the marrow yin, but I think this is unclear and unhelpful. Both are in round hollows, the skull and the bones. Perhaps this is a reflection of the power of heaven because the qi of heaven is also contained in a kind of round hollow which is the heavenly vault.

Bones and mai are also in a dual relationship because they give a direction to all circulation and structuration. We saw this at the start of Ling shu chapter 14. They present the strength necessary for the materialized and non-materialized aspects of the body to go in a good direction. Bones are more materialized than mai. They are full of strength and present throughout the body. In texts on techniques of painting, bones and mai can represent the relationships of hard and soft in the strokes of the brush.

A third couple is the gallbladder and uterus. These are like water and fire. The uterus is on the side of water and yin while the gallbladder is on the side of fire and yang, and is linked to the fire of ming men. Certainly it has something to do with the sexuality and fecundity of man and woman, with the initial spring given by the gallbladder and the recollection and nourishing proper to the uterus.

There are also other relationships between these six extraordinary fu. For example bones and marrow are a couple. They are both under the authority of the kidneys and are the expression of the double aspect (yin and yang) of the kidneys in the depths of the body. Just as teeth and hair are their external expression. The bones and marrow also represent yin and yang and hard and soft. Another associated couple could be the mai and the uterus. The mai are the fu of the blood and the uterus is the sea of the blood, a place where a regular amount of blood is channelled. Bones and gallbladder could also be linked because the gallbladder meridian is responsible for disease of the bones, as is said in Su wen chapter 10. The reason for this is that the qi of the gallbladder is full of the power of each individual, able to give a good direction to life, and bones are the material expression of that direction. The gallbladder qi gives the bones their strength and straightness.

In Ling shu chapter 10 there is a presentation of the embryo's development, and just after the appearance of the essences, the primitive model of composition for the being, the brain, marrow and bones and then the mai are mentioned. These are four of the six extraordinary fu. The first three are under the direct authority of the kidneys and the other one under the authority of the heart. That is also a way to signify the ascending responsibility of life from the kidneys to the heart. In other words, we have first the building of a human body as the manifestation of the natural and proper original nature, the power of the kidneys. From the top of the head to the bottom of the feet, bones and marrow build the structure for a human body and its ability to communicate with the heart and with the exterior

world by the brain. Then we have the mai, the vital circulation perceptible at the pulse, the movement of the blood.

The mai directly reflect the state of the heart, physically, psychologically, mentally and spiritually speaking. The mai are the essences expressing what I am doing with my own life, the life given to me through the working of the essences of the kidneys. If brain, bones and marrow represent the given life, the mai represent the constant renewal of life. The gallbladder and the uterus represent the use of the essences to make a new life. In certain modern Chinese books the gallbladder represents the testes. It is not exactly that, as there is a special Chinese character for testes, but the power to give the strength to produce and emit sperm is easily linked with the gallbladder. Do not forget the importance of the wood element (liver and gallbladder) in the mechanism of the lower abdomen and of the muscles, including the erection. The wood element also represents the spring, the strength of the launching, the force of gushing and thriving. The link with man's sexuality is easy to make, especially with the gallbladder as the yang aspect of the wood. So gallbladder and uterus are for the reproduction of life.

The six extraordinary fu manifest the way in which the essences create one's life and body (brain, bone and marrow), the possibility of expressing this life for oneself through time (mai), and finally in the making of a new life through sexuality and fertility (gallbladder and bao). They trace and guide the essences from beginning to end, passing on through the continuation given by creating other lives. They really are extraordinary, and assure the constancy and continuity of life.