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Three Important statements in Mai Shu· Shangjing

Lai Xueyu PhD

Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Academy of Chinese Excavated Medical Literatures and Cultural Relics of Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Chengdu, 610031, China
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Abstract

Through the interpretation of three important statements in *Maishu · Shangjing* (《脉书·上经》): "People have Jiuqiao (九窍), Wuzang (五藏), and twelve Jie (十二节) are all Chao Yu Qi (教于气)", "Jin's (金) Tong Tianqi (通天气) is Tianfu (天府)", and "Bi Zhi Dayin (臂之大阴) is the Pulsating site". This paper aims to explore the principle of diagnosing the Pulsating site when the early meridians follow independently and are not coherent. The three sentences are programmatic statements of the whole text, which is of great value and significance for us to understand the connotation of the early meridian medicine and explore the evolution of its theory.

Keywords

Maishu (《脉书》); Shangjing (《上经》); Chao (教于); Tianfu (天府); Pulsating site

As a medical classic, The *Maishu · Shangjing* mainly expounds on the concept of "Qi Zhi Tongtian (气之通天)" [1]. There are three important statements: "People have nine Orifices, five Caches, and twelve sections are all Chao Yu Qi", "Jin's (金) Tong Tianqi (通天气) is Tianfu (天府)", and "Bi Zhi Da Yin (臂之大阴) is the Pulsating site". Among them, "People have Jiuqiao (九窍), Wuzang (五藏), and twelve Jie (十二节) are all Chao Yu Qi (教于气)" is the first sentence of this passage and has been given sufficient attention since its discovery. The medical theories contained in the other two sentences have not been adequately explored and interpreted. Based on the currently unearthed texts, the meridians during the Western Han period were relatively independent in their pathways and had not yet formed the cyclical flow described in *Lingshu · Jingmai* (《灵枢·经脉》). Since the twelve meridians were not interconnected, how could the Cunkou (寸口) be used to diagnose diseases of the entire body? Three key statements from *Maishu · Shangjing* (《脉书·上经》) provide insight into the reasoning behind this.

1. Statement one:

"People have nine Orifices, five Caches, and twelve sections are all Chao Yu Qi (教于气)"

This sentence appears in *Mai Shu · Shang Jing* (《脉书·上经》) Slip 1, and its content is also found in transmitted medical classics, serving as a key introductory statement for the entire text. Alongside the medical bamboo slips, a lacquered meridian figure (髹漆经脉人) was also unearthed. The markings on its body surface correspond to the content of this statement, highlighting the phrase's significance and implying its specialized connotation. The sentence is also cited in *Suwen · Shengqi Tongtian Lun* (《素问·生气通天论》) as follows: "Between heaven and earth, within the Liuhe (六合), the qi of Jiu Zhou (九州), the Jiuqiao (九窍), the Wuzang (五藏), and the twelve Jie (十二节) all communicate with the

Tianqi(天气). "The key to understanding this sentence lies in the three characters: "Chao Yu Qi(暹于气)". The character "Chao" (暹) is interchangeable with "Chao" (朝), originally interpreted as "Chao Hui" or 'gathering'; "气" (qi), influenced by *Suwen·Shengqi Tongtian Lun* (《素问·生气通天论》), is interpreted as "Tianqi"(天气)[2]. While this interpretation appears plausible at first glance, a deeper analysis of the subsequent content reveals that it does not fully capture the theoretical nuances of the passage.

The character "Chao" (暹) is interchangeable with "Chao" (朝). *Shuowen·Mian Bu* (《说文·暹部》) stated: "Du Lin(杜林) took 'Chao'(暹) to mean 'Zhao Dan' (朝旦), but this is incorrect." Duan Yucai's commentary notes: "This 'Yi Wei' (吕为) reflects an example of Jia Jie (段借). [...] In antiquity, "Chao" (暹) was borrowed for "Chao" (朝)—a usage inherently valid. Xu Shen's(许慎) dismissal is unsubstantiated." "Chao"(朝) is later translated as "Chao"(潮). Therefore, "Chaoxi"(朝夕) was later translated as "Chaoxi"(潮汐).

The ancients compared the meridians of the human body to rivers. The *Suwen·Lihezhenxie Lun* (《素问·离合真邪论》) stated: "The degree of the sage's rise must correspond to heaven and earth. Therefore, heaven has constellations, earth has meridians and water, and man has meridians." The principles formulated by the sages must abide by the law of the heavens and the earth. That is why the heavens has Su Du(宿度), the earth has rivers and man has meridians. In *"Lunheng·Shu Xu"* (《论衡·书虚》), it is stated: "Just as the earth has a hundred rivers, so does human beings have blood vessels. When the blood flows, the movement and stillness are restrained. The same is true of all rivers: their constant flow day and night is like the breath of a person." Wang Chong compared the tidal phenomenon to the ebb and flow of human blood and the rhythmic breathing[3]. In *"Wen Xuan·Jiang Fu"* (《文选·江赋》), it is stated: "Breathe for thousands of miles, breathe in the spiritual tide." Nature repeats itself, sometimes day and sometimes night." In the *"Wen Re Jing Wei·Zhao Xu"* (《温病经纬·赵序》), it is stated: "Life and death are judged by breathing, gains and losses are determined by Yi Chao(一朝)." It is evident that breathing is the key for the blood vessels to achieve the ebb and flow of tides. In the *"Ling Shu·Dong Shu"* (《灵枢·动输》), it is stated: "The lung qi travels through the Taiyin(太阴). Its movement is through breathing. Therefore, when a person exhales, the pulse moves again; when they inhale, the pulse moves again. Breathing never stops, so it moves but does not cease." The lung governs qi and is in charge of respiration. Through the flow of breath, it regulates the circulation of qi and blood throughout the body like a tide.

Therefore, "Chao" (暹) means "Chao" (朝), and if the Chao Yu Qi(暹于气) is used to describe weather, it lacks medical significance. The "qi" should refer to the qi of Tianfu(天府). For more details, see sentence two.

2. Statement two: "Jin's(金)Tong Tianqi(通天气)is Tianfu(天府)"

"Jin's(金) Tong Tianqi(通天气)is Tian Fu", it is found in *Maishu · Shangjing* (《脉书·上经》) slip twelve. The lung is the repository of metal, and metal is the lung. In *Ling Shu· Re Bing* (《灵枢·热病》), it is stated: "Metal refers to the lungs." The *Shuowen· Roubu* (《说文·肉部》) stated: "The lung is the repository of metal. Tianfu, originally described as the location for diagnosing lung qi[3]. The basis is *Ling Shu· Ben Shu* (《灵枢·本输》): "The axillary artery, which is the Taiyin(太阴) of the hand, is called Tianfu." This theory holds that Tianfu is the acupoint of the Shou Taiyin(手太阴). However, when it comes to acupoints, the context does not make sense. Tianfu should refer to the chest, which is a part of the human body. The *Shuowen· Guangbu* (《说文·肉部》) stated: "Fu(府) is a repository of official documents." The "Yu Pian· Guangbu" stated: "Fu means gathering." So "Tianfu(天府)" refers to the place where the weather gathers. The *"Suwen· Yinyang Yinxing Dalun"* (《素问·阴阳应象大论》) stated: "The weather is connected to the lungs." The *"Linsu· Wuwei"* stated: "When the atmosphere is vigorous and unable to move, it accumulates in the chest and is called the Qi Hai(气海). It originates from the lungs and follows the throat. Therefore, it is exhaled and inhaled." In

the *Lingshu·Xieke* (《灵枢·邪客》), it is stated: "Therefore, the Zong Qi(宗气) accumulates in the chest, originates from the throat, and flows through the heart meridian to carry out the breathing." In *Guangya·Shi Gu* (《广雅·释诂》), it is stated: "Zong(宗) means Ju(聚)." It can be known that the place where the weather gathers is in the chest. The lungs govern qi and are in charge of respiration. Through the exchange of breath, they store the weather, that is, the natural energy, in the chest. The chest is the place where the lungs connect with the weather, so it is said that "'Jin's(金) Tong Tianqi(通天气) is Tianfu(天府)".

3. Statement three: "Bi Zhi Dayin(臂之大阴) is the Pulsating site"

This sentence appears in *Mai Shu·Shang Jing* Slip 13. "Bi Zhi Dayin(臂之大阴)" refers to the artery on the inner side of the arm near the radial side. The "Bi Zhi Dayin(臂之大阴)" also known as the Shou Taiyin Feijing(手太阴肺经). "Mai Kou(脉口)" is also known as "Cunkou(寸口)" or "Qikou(气口)".

The Cunkou point is where the Shou Taiyin Feijing(手太阴肺经) pulsates. The *Lingshu·Jingmai* (《灵枢·经脉》) stated: "Meridians are often invisible. Their deficiency or excess can be known through the Qikou(气口)". Taking a pulse at the cunkou point can diagnose the basic condition of the meridians and qi and blood throughout the body. The theoretical basis of this diagnostic method originates from the twelve meridians in the Inner Classic, which are described as "Yin and Yang interconnecting, like a loop without end." This theory is closely related to the creation of the Yingwei(营卫) theory in the Inner Classic and emerged relatively late. In recent years, with the continuous discovery of unearthed medical books, we have come to know that in the early days, there were still ten meridians and eleven meridian systems. These meridian systems are mostly centripetal, with relatively independent meridians running through them, which is different from the continuous circulation and flow from beginning to end in "*Lingshu·Jingmai* (《灵枢·经脉》)". In this way, one can't help but wonder how the early meridian system was able to diagnose diseases throughout the body through the Cunkou, that is, the pulse point of the Shou Taiyin Feijing(手太阴肺经)? The reason lies precisely in what is stated in sentence two: "Jin's(金) Tong Tianqi(通天气) is Tianfu(天府)".

The lung connects with the qi in the chest, and the Shou Taiyin Feijing(手太阴肺经) Lung Meridian connects with the qi in the chest. The chest is a sea of qi. The qi of the entire body flows like the tide to the sea and then manifests at the pulse points. Therefore, even when the twelve meridians are not connected, one can still diagnose the changes in qi and blood throughout the body through the pulse orifice of the "'Bi Zhi Dayin(臂之大阴)".

4. Conclusion

In the early days, meridians ran independently and had not yet formed the circulation and flow as described in the *Lingshu·Jingmai* (《灵枢·经脉》). When the twelve meridians are not connected, how can only the Cunkou point be selected for diagnosis? From the three programmatic statements in *Maishu·Shangjing* (《脉书·上经》), we can know that: ①The "Jiuqiao(九窍), Wuzang(五藏), and twelve Jie(十二节)" of a person all flow rhythmically and regularly like the tides, connecting with the Tianfu Zhi Qi(天府之气), that is, the qi within the chest. ②The lungs are located in the chest and govern the breathing of the entire body. Through the comings and glows of breathing, the weather, that is, the natural energy, is gathered and stored in the chest. The chest is the place where "Jin's(金) Tong Tianqi(通天气)". ③The chest is a sea of qi. All the qi in the body flows like the tide to the sea and then manifests at the pulse points. Therefore, even when the twelve meridians are not connected, one can still diagnose the changes in qi and blood throughout the body through the pulse orifice of the "Bi Zhi Dayin(臂之大阴)".

These three statements are interlinked and progressive, jointly revealing the principle of diagnosing the Cunkou pulse in the Western Han Dynasty. They are of great value and significance for us to understand the connotation of early meridian medicine and explore the origin and evolution of its theory. A thorough understanding of it plays a significant role in our interpretation of the *Maishu · Shangjing* (《脉书·上经》), analysis and sorting out its origin and development relationship with the medical classics passed down through the ages, restoring the early appearance of medicine, and inspiring the current development of medicine.

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