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Point Specifics

築賓 Kidney 9 (Kd9)

Considering an acupuncture point in some detail is like looking down a microscope to see the granular nature of the meridian being considered. Another world reveals itself in the microcosm; a startling and fascinating world of terrain, language and philosophy. At this level of concentration, we can develop and deepen our understanding and curiosity for the body and the way in which we treat, close up. And in accordance to the Buddhist concept of interpenetrationⁱ we can see through one point; a jewel in the net, a way of viewing the macrocosm. Just because we go deep and small doesn't mean that the broader experience of existence is not also apparent, indeed it is all caught in the point; as its web of connections, the meanings and story of the point, the imagination and metaphor of its location and terrain are identified and considered.

Broad brushstrokes of ideas are helpful to give us a sense of orientation, a way of placing ourselves on the map of human experience, but it is in the details and the meaning we draw from them that enables us to remake or redefine our experience, our treatment strategies and the clinical outcomes we are seeking for our clients and patients.

So, with this idea in hand, let us sit for a while, and delve into the point specifics of Kidney 9 (Kd 9) 築賓 Zhubin which translates as Guest Houseⁱ – Building Guestⁱⁱ – A Guest Serving Our Very Foundationsⁱⁱⁱ.

Kidney 9 is the intersection point of the Foot Shaoyin Channel and the Yin Wei Mai

The Foot Shaoyin channel is otherwise known as the Kidney Channel. Sometimes though it is helpful to consider the channel from the viewpoint of its extended connections, because it reminds us that the Kidney and Heart meridians form a cohesive unit, the Shaoyin. It pushes us to recognise the relationships rather than the separate identity of the channel. And it is these relationships which form the space between things.

Kidney 9 is also the beginning of the trajectory of the Yin Wei Mai, one of the Eight Extraordinary Vessels. The Wei vessels (yin and yang) are so named the linking vessels which describe the unfolding of yin and yang. They are the vessels responsible for 'recording the unfolding of one's life through time and space'². The vessels that link, that hold us together through

each cycle (of seven or eight years) and help us to connect and maintain a sense of cohesion, from one cycle to another. Transformation without context or linkages would be disorientating and thwart the unique characteristics of the cycle we are in. Each cycle will have a different focus whether that be growth, fertility and maturation, or aging³.

As Cecil-Sterman puts it the Wei Mai are 'analogous to a silk cloth depicting the images and actions of one's life'². 'The Yin Wei Mai is the record of change that is imparted to the bodymind' and the 'Yang Wei Mai records past actions, the actions that create the cloth'². When it is said that our biography is our biology, we are really referring to the Wei channels.

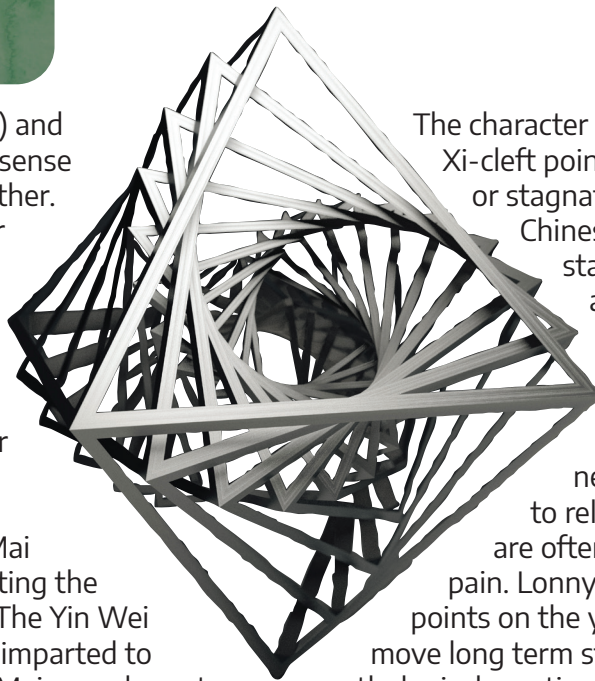
A note on trajectory points versus opening points of the Eight Extraordinary Vessels from the Classical perspective

Modern sources about the Eight Extraordinary Vessels place much emphasis on the opening points, or the Master and couple points. The opening points theory originated in the 11th Century, (the Ming Dynasty) and the idea of the Coupled Pairs of extraordinary meridians with Master and Couple points is a 17th Century theory².

It is not to say that they aren't useful pairings, or that they can't be used in Eight Extraordinary Vessel treatments that access the structural aspects of the vessels. There are some very useful treatments especially with the use of ion pumping cords from the Japanese Meridian Therapy traditions that use the standardised pairings⁴.

However, the Classical acupuncture tradition does not use the opening points of the Eight Extraordinary Channels as treatment points² because it is the trajectory points (among others) that are considered to be more useful and important. And much of what passes for Eight Extraordinary Vessel treatments in other traditions is not considered by Classicists to be working with the yuan qi of the Eight Extraordinary Vessels. [According to Ann Cecil-Sterman, when I wrote to ask her; "The ion pumping cords move wei qi, not yuan qi...Also, any shallow needling is directed at wei qi and not yuan qi"⁵].

Kidney 9 is also the xi-cleft point of the Yin Wei Mai



The character Xi indicates a cleft or fissure. Xi-cleft points are 'areas where Qi pools or stagnates causing pain'. Because in Chinese Medicine anything that is stagnating is causing blockage and blockage tends to create pain.

In treating the primary channels, xi-cleft points are needed and strongly reduced to relieve pain in the channel. They are often very effective for alleviating pain. Lonny Jarrett states that 'these points on the yang channels...excel at helping move long term stagnation in conjunction with pathological emotions and disorders of spirit'⁶. In his observation, he has also found that '[t]he function of the yang xi-cleft points is related relatively more to issues involving qi and how we act in life, whereas the yin xi-cleft points tend to address issues involving the blood and our internal experience of ourselves'⁶.

When used in Eight Extraordinary Treatments (within a classical tradition) the xi-cleft points can be used singularly in the case of an emergency or they are used together with other points along the trajectory of the channel² to engage the person being treated with the deeper philosophical, psychological and physiological insights of the yuan qi.

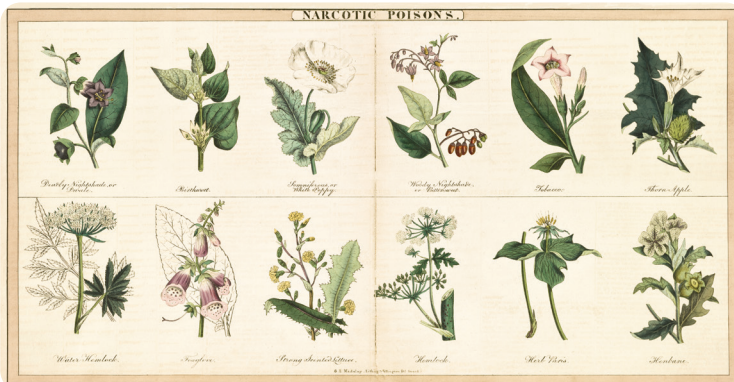
Yuan qi is the deepest level of qi. Sometimes termed the 'source' or 'original' qi, it holds the intrinsic essence of the self. It is the qi that expresses the jing or constitution, the original patterns that come to us from our ancestral lineages and propel us forward into our engagement with the world³.

There are two locations for Kidney 9 (Guest House)

The standard and classical location of the point is 'in the depression below the belly of the gastrocnemius muscle just anterior to the medial border of the Achilles tendon'⁷. This is, on the line going from Kidney 3 to Kidney 10, about one third of the way or about 5 cun proximal to Kidney 3, and 1 cun posterior to Liver 5 (Liv5)⁷.

The second location of the point, much less commonly used but described in the Japanese tradition of Kiiko Matsumoto 'is located on a painful spot three fingers below the traditional Chinese location of Kidney 10'⁸. According to Matsumoto and Euler the "upper Kidney 9" point 'should be used mainly for the treatment of addictions and was traditionally used for the treatment of morphine addicts'⁸. While morphine

is the term directly quoted here in the source text, morphine addiction should be understood to include opium and laudanum as well. This is because morphine was only synthesised commercially in 1823, and only available in injectable form a decade later, whereas opium has been used since antiquity and laudanum since the 1600s⁹. [For a fascinating discussion on the history of opium see Lucy Inglis' *Milk Of Paradise: A History Of Opium*¹⁰].



The name most often used for Kidney 9 is 'Guest House' and gives us some very interesting insights to understanding the function and virtue of the point

When we think of a guest, there is a defined role and expectation that we have of a guest. A guest is someone who has a unique opportunity to see us in our surroundings; they are not family and there is hopefully something of a friend in a guest. Of course, there are good guests and difficult guests. This idea will hold more traction when we look more deeply at the metaphorical nature of the Guest.

There are a few ways we can understand the meaning of guest

The first meaning of guest is in reference to another, more specifically an embryo. This point and its use is, according to Jarrett, about assisting the developing life in a concrete way, for when 'a guest in the form of an embryo now lives within the building of the womb...[t]his 'guest' must be built within the womb as the commands of jing are implemented by the yuan qi⁶. Kidney 9 is a more useful point for nourishing and protecting an embryo than other Kidney channel points.

This is possibly because this point can be used during pregnancy for detoxification. Indeed, I have heard this point being referred to as the Beautiful Baby point, as it is said anecdotally to assist the placenta in flushing out impurities. In the classical and meridian therapy traditions, at the end of each trimester, moxa is applied to stimulate the function of detoxifying the embryo¹¹. The actions of detoxification seem to have a strong moxa focus, rather than needling. Therefore, I would suggest moxa is used rather than needles on this point, although needling is allowable.

Another way we can understand 'the guest' is not only as an actual embryo or foetus, but arguably more usefully as the symbolic foetus; a new or emerging perspective within us. This budding consciousness, this insight into ourselves and our life is the guest. The 'house' is the way we house this new idea of ourselves, furnished by the Kidney qi and yuan qi as it is engaged through the extraordinary meridians.

Similar to that idea of moxa being used at the transition stages of gestation for the baby's benefit; at the turn or transition of the post-natal qi cycles of seven or eight years this point can be useful in supporting the guest, that is, furthering the perspective we have already developed. The point can be used at any time for this purpose, but sometimes the changes wrought by fading or emerging cycles are best integrated and recognised by using this point at these times.

Jeffrey Yuen articulates it this way: "Kidney 9 gives us the fortitude to bear witness to ourselves, as a point it allows us to play guest to ourselves, so that we can observe who we are and perhaps examine how the social pressures and influences of our lives have moulded and shaped our self"¹¹. The unwanted or the difficult guest then, in some measure, represents our addictions and our obsessions¹¹.

Further considerations and point combinations for detoxification

It is not just in pregnancy that Kidney 9 assists detoxification. A number of different sources agree on the use of this point for detoxification overall. Within the Nagano tradition, Matsumoto uses this point for detoxification due to its diuretic properties. Kidney 9 in combination with Large Intestine 15 (jian yu) can be used as a general treatment for removing impurities especially if there is underlying pain, or the patient has been 'exposed to strong chemical treatments, radiation or has been poisoned'⁸.

Presumably because Li15 (the meeting point of the Arm Yangming and the Yang Qiao Mai) is considered an 'essential point for the treatment of skin diseases like rash, hives or eczema'⁸, it is considered helpful to remove toxicity from the body by engaging the largest organ of the body (the skin). This is a modern or biomechanical view of the connections between Kd9 and Li15. A more interesting approach is to view from a classical lens and to reconsider the Eight Extra Vessel connections.

If we remember that the Qiao vessels hold and express the way we 'feel about ourselves and the outside world in the present moment', how we stand up, or 'heel' to ourselves and the world¹¹. And the Wei vessels are about the recording of changes imparted to the mind and body, together then these two points will bring the consciousness of what has been recorded through the Wei and Qiao vessels namely 'the pathologies that accumulate during our lives'¹¹ into the primary channels (for this is not an Eight Extras Treatment protocol), to be let go via the Large Intestine.

Interestingly both of the above points (Kd9 and Li15) within the Japanese tradition are treated with rice grain moxa at least seven or eight times. It should be noted that it is not an arbitrary number of moxa rounds that have been suggested. The cycles of postnatal qi progress in cycles of seven and eight, (as discussed above) and so the use of moxa in this way is then a way of resonating with the Wei and Qiao channels.

Kidney 9 is also used in combination with another so called 'antitoxin' point Liver 5 (li gou)⁸, the Luo point of the Liver channel, to assist medication (especially opioid) detoxification. Liv5 has a strong action on the mucous membranes lining the urinary bladder and urinary tract according to Master Nagano, so used together these points assist detoxifying through diuresis⁸.

Some thoughts on detoxification

The metaphorical and symbolic language of Chinese Medicine is something we can tend to overlook. Much

of the time, even as acupuncturists we see the body and its ailments through the lens of the biomechanical model. Partly this is because the Eastern medical lens has been poorly understood by those who taught us, but it is also because we are saturated in culturally defined ways of seeing, such that to look in another way requires a determined effort.

We are also clinicians busy dealing with the concrete nature of symptoms. We have clinics to run and people to help. If we don't address the symptoms and provide relief then people aren't going to come back to us or trust we know what we are doing.

It's easy for our lens to get fixed, our thinking to become rigidly materialistic. Thus, it is due to a number of factors that we can sometimes miss the deeper, interconnected nature of the ideas and the points. And in missing it I mean both that we are not seeing it, and we are yearning for it.

This notion of detoxification from an Eastern medical perspective is not only a biological process. As acupuncturists we rest upon scientific but also philosophical traditions (of Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism) that ascribe a whole other level of meaning to these material processes.

Classically, the philosophical and psychological or 'Jing-Shen' aspects of the points are considered integral to the function, understanding and use of the points. Jing is held and ruled by the Kidneys and in its expression through the yuan qi represents the self, the dense physical substance of us that is unique within time and space. The Shen is held in the heart and represents the spirit, the 'divine spark' if you will, that untainted aspect of ourselves that breathes life into the material substance of the Jing, that aspect that speaks to our sovereignty, our sense of purpose and destiny¹¹.

In a sense though we could consider detoxification a form of alchemical transformation. A way of transforming that which is leaden, no longer serving us, poisoning the waters of ourselves into wisdom, knowledge and spirit. If it is a new self that we need to develop and nourish in order to emerge more fully, then the nature of Kidney 9 (Guest House) in detoxifying is an interesting one.

Detoxification by its very name is about getting rid of the unwanted stuff. And this seems like a good thing to do. But if we are in a toxic environment how do we detoxify? When we detoxify something, we presume we are making it healthier, and what if healthier also means more sensitive? Are we ready for the sensitivities that come with new ways of seeing?

It is important then that we communicate this possibility and understanding to our patients. Knowing, sometimes is enough to be able to make better decisions in the moment, or to begin the dialogue about change that can be done in a protective manner, nourished by slow progress.

A final word on all of the 'extraordinary' channels we work with as acupuncturists

For most of us, we are generally working with the Sinew or Primary channels, and this means we are working with the Wei and Ying Qi levels (respectively). Yet it is useful to have a sense of the deeper yuan level and the metaphorical wisdom of 'Jing-Shen'.

Classical acupuncture Eight Extraordinary Vessel treatments work with and at the yuan qi level. And as a system of instruction and protocol it ensures the deepest levels of the body are not accessed without due reverence. You really don't want someone messing about with the energies of your source without that reverence, do you?

Nevertheless, all acupuncture treatments will provide some instruction to the yuan qi, however basic or minute because of the nature of interpenetration and the fractal structure of life, each part reflecting the whole. By treating the exterior, we influence the interior, needling the distal points we effect regions and specific areas that seem on first glance unrelated. As acupuncturists though we are familiar with the interconnectedness of all things.

So even if we never do an Eight Extras Treatment or access the yuan qi levels in a strong or direct way, there is still a requirement that we cultivate reverence for the deeper connections of ourselves and for those who seek us out for treatment, because at some point we will touch into the source of another and when we do, we had better be ready.



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