

Foreword

When I was young, I heard that the Nan Jing was a summary of the Su Wen and the Ling Shu, and after reading the Nan Jing, I felt that its theories were connected to the theories from the Su Wen and Ling Shu; but it also contained some original ideas.

The Nan Jing was the first classic to use the term Ming Men. The Ming Men is understood as the Yang Qi of the Kidneys. The Ling Shu used the term Yang Qi of the Kidneys but not the Ming Men. The Ming Men is also called the Original Source Qi of the Triple Heater which circulates in each meridian. In treatments, the Qi which we deal with is actually this Original Source Qi of the Triple Heater, thus we can say that the tonification method increases the amount of Yang Qi or the Original Source Qi of the Triple Heater, and the shunting method decreases it.

The theory of the Five Pathogenic Factors is another original idea of the Nan Jing. This theory is stated in the 49th Difficulty and the 50th Difficulty and the treatment methods for the Five Pathogenic Factors are stated in the 69th Difficulty, 75th Difficulty, and 81st Difficulty.

The Nan Jing also explains both the aetiology and point selection. These theories are very unique and cannot be found in the other classics, and the treatment protocols introduced are very effective at treating disease.

In order to diagnose conditions that are stated in the Nan Jing, understanding pulse diagnosis becomes very important, so the 1st Difficulty through to the 18th Difficulty explore the pulse. For example, it states that if the Liver pulse is wiry, big, and deficient, LIV1 can be tonified. If the Liver pulse is showing a weak pulse, LIV8 can be tonified. Whereas, if the Liver pulse is excess, the condition should be treated as either Spleen

deficiency Liver excess pattern or Lung deficiency Liver excess pattern. If the left bar pulse is not palpable with light pressure (the Gallbladder pulse is impalpable), we need to judge whether we are treating this condition as Liver deficiency or Liver excess. This means that there are situations where, even if the condition seem like Liver excess, a Liver deficiency treatment should be applied, or a situation where the condition seems to be Liver deficiency, but the Lung meridian should be tonified first. So the treatment protocol is decided by the pulse patterns.

Another important theory in the Nan Jing is tonification and shunting (dispersion) which is also referred to as the tonification of Defensive Qi and tonification of Nutritive Qi. Tonification of Defensive Qi will improve the Qi circulation, which results in good transportation of the Jin Ye. Tonification of Nutritive Qi will improve the circulation of Blood, which means that Blood stagnation can be eliminated. This is the fundamental theory of tonification and shunting in the Nan Jing.

The Nan Jing is a complicated and difficult textbook, but if you read it with an unbiased heart, I believe it will provide you with new discoveries.

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Editors' Foreword

Reading and understanding the classics is essential training for people to improve as practitioners, and the classics must be understood as theories that are practical and effective. The theories and concepts in famous classical texts such as the *Su Wen*, *Ling Shu*, *Nan Jing*, *Shang Han Lun*, and *Jin Gui Yao Lue* also must not contradict each other. However, as the terminologies used in each text are different, with slightly different expressions, it can create confusion.

In this textbook, the *Nan Gyo*, theories of the *Nan Jing: the Classic of Difficulties*, are clearly explained without contradicting theories of the other classics.

This book has been compiled through knowledge gathered from attending Ikeda sensei's seminars and studying countless recordings of previous seminars. Information was also gathered from his various textbooks. We believe this textbook will guide practitioners to apply the *Nan Jing* theory effectively in their clinical practice.

We encourage practitioners to read the original version of the *Nan Jing*, or other *Nan Jing* commentaries, and compare them to the way Ikeda sensei has translated this text. If you can clearly understand this textbook, you will also be able to understand the other classics. If this textbook is difficult to understand, please read other texts written by Ikeda sensei first.

We would also like to mention that the method of tonification and dispersion is slightly different in the *Nan Jing* theory compared to the general understanding of tonification and dispersion. Tonification and dispersion is explained in the 76th Difficulty, and it states that tonification involves the tonification of the Defensive Qi, whereas dispersion involves the tonification of the Nutritive Qi. Thus dispersion in

the Nan Jing does not involve aggressive needling methods to withdraw Qi and Blood from the body. In order to gain a complete understanding of this subject, it is ideal to read this book many times, and it may also be helpful to read the 76th Difficulty before the other difficulties.

At this stage, there are several textbooks by Ikeda sensei published in English, including; *The Practice of Japanese Acupuncture and Moxibustion: Classic Principles in Action*, *Integration of Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine*, *Contemporary Clinical Foundations of the Classics*, and *Shou Kan Ron: Clinical Application of the Shang Han Lun*. Studying all these texts together will allow you to see a clear connection between the Su Wen, Ling Shu, Nan Jing, Shang Han Lun, Jin Gui Yao Lue and other classics.

We hope that you will make many new discoveries through studying this textbook.

Takashi Furue and the editing team

Bibliographical Introduction

When I was a student I read ‘*Nangyo no Kenkyu*’ [難経の研究 / *Researching the Nan Jing*], which is published by Idononipponsha and written by Shouhaku Honma. It was very challenging for me to understand so I thought to read the original Nan Jing text. After graduating from acupuncture school, my brother gave me a textbook called ‘*Nangyohongigenkai*’ [難経本義診解 / *Explanation of the True Meanings of the Nan Jing*], which has been republished by a research group of the classics. I read this textbook and I also listened to cassette recordings of the Nan Jing seminar by Keiri Inoue sensei.

Proceeding this period, I read many different texts including ‘*Ishyaku Koutei Hachijyuichi Nangyo*’ [意积黄帝八十一難経], ‘*Nangyotekkan*’ [難経鐵鑑], and ‘*Nangyotaisyo*’ [難経大抄] written by Takeo Kosodo sensei. I then completed writing the ‘*Nangyo Handbook*’ [難経ハンドブック]. This handbook still contains unexplained elements with some skipped theories, and the true intentions of the Nan Jing are not clearly explained. But still I tried to explain difficult ideas such as the 75th Difficulty.

When I turned sixty I thought about the things I have to do for the rest of my life. I am unsure how much longer I can live, but I decided to dedicate myself to explain texts like the Su Wen, Ling Shu, Nan Jing, Shan Han Lun, and Jin Gui Yao Lue for people who are studying the classics while I am still alive. I have made this my will.

I thought of people who may be struggling to start reading the classics even though they are willing to study. For this reason, I decided to write this textbook. Bear in mind, this textbook may be complicated for the fact that the Nan Jing has been

transcribed by so many people. Different copies of the Nan Jing present with slightly different Chinese characters as well.

In order to complete this textbook, I have used the '*Nangyoshittchu*' [難經集註], which is said to be the best transcribed copy of the Nan Jing, published by the Association of Internal Medicine [内径医学会], as a reference to the original text. I have also used '*Koutei Hachijyuichi Nangyousoshou*' [黄帝八十一難經疏証] as another reference.

In the 'Commentary' section of this textbook, I have explained the true intention of each difficulty. The sentences are constructed so the theories are presented in terms of its practical application. There are sentences that may be unclear, but I will rely on your ability to read and interpret them. Remembering the indication of points will not improve your acupuncture skills; rather it is more important to read the theories of classical medicine. For this reason, I believe this textbook will assist you in solving questions that you may have from studying the Nan Jing.

I have read many Nan Jing annotation textbooks, but all of those texts contained misunderstood theories or theories that were not clearly explained. This textbook may have misunderstood theories as well, but I have written this textbook as my will so I believe it is to the best of my ability. I hope people who are studying this field, and are intending to publish their own Nan Jing annotation textbook in the future, will one day write a better book than this one.

It is true that the theories of the Nan Jing are based on the Su Wen and the Ling Shu; but the Nan Jing contains its own original theories, the main characteristic being the theory of the Ming Men [命門]. If you do not understand the theory of the Ming Men, it is impossible to understand the Nan Jing. But why has this theory developed?

The author of the Nan Jing discovered that if you intend to cure diseases with needles (the Nan Jing does not state moxibustion), improving the circulation of the Defensive and Nutritive Qi through tonification and dispersion is essential. The author also discovered the importance of understanding the functions of the Defensive Qi and Nutritive Qi. While the Su Wen and the Ling Shu mention the Defensive and Nutritive Qi, the Nan Jing has constructed its theories on Defensive and Nutritive Qi with the ability to be applied clinically. It can be said that the Nan Jing is the original foundation of meridian therapy, however, I am unsure whether many meridian

therapists have a good understanding of the Nan Jing style meridian therapy, but that is a different matter.

Firstly, we need to discuss Qi. If there is no understanding of Qi it is impossible to understand and apply classical medicine: it is very important to be able to feel the Defensive and Nutritive Qi. Some acupuncturists, who refer to the classics for their treatments, assume that the older classical texts are better, and that the Nan Jing is not enough. Many of them spend a lot of time researching the Su Wen and the Ling Shu, but I believe that reading the Su Wen is more beneficial for herbal therapy rather than acupuncture therapy. On the other hand, there are people who spend time studying textbooks that were written in more recent periods of Chinese medical history. This can be beneficial, but I question whether they see the connections and differences between the Su Wen, Ling Shu, and the Nan Jing, herbal therapy and the Nan Jing, bleeding techniques and thin needling, and the differences between modern Chinese medicine and the Nan Jing.

Bringing the discussion back to where it was; there is prenatal and postnatal Qi in classical medicine theory, and the combination of this prenatal Qi and postnatal Qi is called the Original Source Qi of the Triple Heater. This Qi of the Triple Heater is stored in the Kidneys and is referred to as Yang Qi. All vital activities in the human body such as breathing, digestion, absorption, and excretion occur due to the functions of this Yang Qi. It is also called the Ministerial Fire, which implies that it works pragmatically just like a prime minister. But where does this Yang Qi come from?

The Lung organ has astringing functions, which is Yin in nature, but the Lung meridian has circulating and radiating functions, which is Yang in nature. The Liver meridian has functions of astringing Blood, which is Yin in nature, but the Liver organ has a generating nature due to the characteristics of Blood, which is Yang in nature. The Spleen has a vast amount of Yin Qi, but the Tai Yin meridian has radiative functions. The Spleen also commands the Stomach to produce Yang Qi and radiate it. The Nan Jing states that “there is no Yang Qi in the Kidneys, but this can’t be.” This is because the lower heater has very important physiologies, including excretion and reproduction, which cannot occur without Yang Qi. So the Nan Jing believed that the Yang Qi of the Kidneys is the most important.

Why is the Yang Qi of the Kidneys (Ministerial Fire) important?

It is because the Ministerial Fire of the Kidneys is not only related to excretion and reproduction. The Stomach digests food and fluids, but if the Ministerial Fire of the Kidneys is deficient, the digestive system will become sluggish. Sugiyama style acupuncture theory states; “if there is fire underneath the pot, things inside the pot will cook and ripen easily.” Here, ‘the fire underneath the pot’ is referred to as the Ministerial Fire of the Kidneys, and ‘the pot’ as the Stomach. If the Stomach and the Intestines are working well, the production of Qi, Blood, and Jin Ye will increase and rise up to the chest where the function of the Pectoral Qi [宗氣/ Zong Qi] combine, allowing it to circulate throughout the whole body.

Thus the Ministerial Fire of the Kidneys is crucial for the body, and it is named the Ming Men or the Original Source Qi of the Triple Heater (because this is the Qi that functions the Triple Heater). Practitioners must carefully observe the condition of the Ministerial Fire of the Kidneys in the treatment of their patients.

What is the Ministerial Fire, which is produced in the middle heater and sent to the upper heater, then to the Kidneys?

Qi, Blood, and Jin Ye are explained as two functional aspects of Qi, which are called Defensive and Nutritive Qi in the Nan Jing. The Defensive Qi is the very active Yang Qi which circulates through the Yang areas of body before entering the Yin areas (mainly the organs) in the evening (please refer to the Ling Shu Chapter 78). This Qi circulates through the meridians and becomes the Ministerial Fire of the Kidneys, also known as the Yang Qi of the Kidneys or the Ming Men. This is a theory that I have been putting forward for a long time. The Nutritive Qi is also circulating through the meridians, but is not affected by day or night. The Nutritive Qi circulates in order, starting at the Lung meridian and finishing at the Liver meridian, before returning back to the Lung meridian. It may be said to be the same as Blood, or that it circulates the Blood. Because Nutritive Qi is still Qi, it can be said that the Nutritive Qi is less active compared to Defensive Qi, but it still has functions that are Yang when compared against Blood or Jin Ye. Nutritive Qi also circulates through the Kidneys, especially in the evening when Nutritive and Defensive Qi meet and combine. This means that the Yang Qi of the Kidneys is the Original Source Qi of the Triple Heater and it is also the Ming Men. It is a mixture of Defensive and Nutritive Qi. This will be explained later.

As previously stated, the Nan Jing emphasises tonification and dispersion of Defensive and Nutritive Qi with acupuncture as this will improve circulation of Blood and Jin Ye, leading to the eventual cure of the disease. Namely that tonification and dispersion of the Defensive and Nutritive Qi will increase the function of the Ming Men.

It is important to note that the Nan Jing expresses the Defensive and Nutritive Qi as Yang Qi and Yin Qi, therefore sometimes its theories do not match the Yin Yang theory of other classics such as the Su Wen. This can be explained as so: when the human body functions are divided into Yin and Yang, there is Qi of Yin and Qi of Yang that circulates around the body as Nutritive Qi and Defensive Qi, as well as Qi of Yin and Yang that do not move around (they are called the Yin and Yang of fixed areas). The Yin and Yang of fixed areas refer to the Yin and Yang nature of the Zang Fu functions or characteristics. The Su Wen and the Ling Shu explain the functions of Yin and Yang by including all of the above. Whereas the Nan Jing explains the Defensive Qi as Yang Qi, and the Nutritive Qi as Yin Qi. Because of this difference in expression between the Su Wen, Ling Shu, and Nan Jing, we can express theories of Yin, Yang, deficiency and excess pathologies differently as well. I will state this matter in each related difficulty, so please read carefully.

Secondly, I'd like to talk about pathology from the standpoint of tonification and dispersion techniques mentioned in the Nan Jing. Pathology is mainly based on the theory of the Five Pathogenic Factors, which suggest that disease can conduct to other Zang Fu organs. If we use this theory in clinical cases, our point selection method will change. This was also emphasised by master Hakkou Baba. The 50th Difficulty approaches the deficiency and excess theory from the standpoint of deficiency pathogen, excess pathogen, bandit pathogen, weak pathogen, and true pathogen, which is linked to the 69th, 75th, and 81st Difficulties.

The Nan Jing mainly explains its theories by using the Five Phases, which may cause some misunderstandings. In this textbook, instead of using the Five Phase theory, I have used the pathology of the Zang Fu organs to explain each difficulty. This should allow you to view the Nan Jing from a different angle. The Nan Jing also explores the original tonification and dispersion techniques, which is used to circulate the Defensive and Nutritive Qi. This is explained in later chapters of this textbook and I have also referred to related sentences from the Su Wen and the Ling Shu, so please read and compare them.

Finally, I would like to mention the author of the Nan Jing. According to *Nangyohongigenkai* [難經本義診解], the author of the Nan Jing is Qin Yue Ren [秦越人] who was the manager of Ren She [人舍]. My guess is that Ren She is a hotel or a restaurant. One day, a regular customer named Chang San Jin [長桑君] gave Qi Yue Ren some medical textbooks and told him to take some medicine. After Qi Yue Ren took the medicine, he gained the ability to see through things, including the organs of a person standing behind a fence. But because he did not want to seem suspicious, he decided to pretend that he could diagnose the human body through pulse diagnosis. Yue Ren became very well known with a good reputation, and was admired by the author of the Shang Han Lun. Yue Ren was well respected by famous doctors, and received an ancient doctor's name: Bian Que [扁鵲]. Unfortunately, he was killed by a public servant who was jealous of his gift. After this, the Nan Jing was passed down to Hua Tuo [華佗], who is a famous figure in 'The Romance of Three Kingdoms.' Hua Tuo was captured and sent to prison by Cao Cao [曹操].

Meanwhile, the Nan Jing was passed on to a prison keeper. His wife worried that he may turn into a famous doctor, just like Hua Tuo, and burnt the Nan Jing. It is said that the Nan Jing that is left for our generation is the remaining section of the burnt Nan Jing text.

I am not sure if this story is true, but that is not an important issue. History is researched by many, so please refer to their findings. Zhang Zhong Jing [張仲景] (the author of the Shang Han Lun) made it apparent how he referred to the Nan Jing when writing the Shang Han Lun. The Nan Jing also greatly influenced Japanese acupuncture, including Keigakuzensho [景岳全書] and Sugiyama style acupuncture [杉山流]. Thus, one who wishes to be an acupuncturist should read the Nan Jing first, in order to accustom oneself to classical texts, followed by the Su Wen and the Ling Shu. By doing this, the different nuances of the classics and their meanings will become clear, and clinical results will surely improve.

The 1st Difficulty

Interpretation

The 1st Difficulty states: each of the twelve meridians has a palpable pulse. But how are we able to diagnose conditions of the Zang Fu organs and make a prognosis of disease by only using the radial pulse?

Well, the radial pulse belongs to the Tai Yin Lung meridian. The movement of Qi within the meridian system begins at the Lung meridian and, after circulating through the entire meridian system, returns back to the Lung meridian. Thus it is said that the radial pulse is the meeting point of all the Qi of the meridians.

The Qi of the meridians is circulated through breathing. Qi moves 3 Cun upon each exhalation and another 3 Cun upon each inhalation. So Qi moves 6 Cun per breath. Humans breathe around 13,500 times a day (which is when the water clock ticks to one hundred).

The Qi of the meridians is both Nutritive and Defensive and it circulates 25 times in the Yin areas of the body, and 25 times in the Yang areas. In total, Qi circulates throughout the entire body 50 times a day in a 24 hour period. The Qi of the meridians returns to the Tai Yin Lung meridian, thus the radial pulse, each time.

Because the Qi of the meridian system passes the radial pulse 50 times a day, we can diagnose conditions of the Zang Fu organs and make prognosis of a disease by using the radial pulse.

Commentary

1. There are Arteries in Each of the Twelve Meridians

There are palpable arteries in each of the twelve meridians. For example, LIV3 is the palpable area for the Liver meridian, HT7 for the Heart meridian, PC8 for the Pericardium meridian, SP11 for the Spleen meridian, LU8 for the Lung meridian, and KID3 for the Kidney meridian. There are also areas where palpable pulsations can be felt on the Yang meridians. The ancient acupuncturists most likely used each of these palpable areas to diagnose the flow and condition of Qi and Blood in each of the meridians independently. Even today, we should understand that we can use these areas to diagnose the state of Qi and Blood in the corresponding meridian. In particular, the instep Yang pulse (ST42) and the Shao Yin pulse (KID3) (please read: *The Practice of Japanese Acupuncture and Moxibustion Pg. xxxi* for further details on this), are clinically very useful. Even when the radial pulse feels normal, if the instep Yang pulse is deficient, we consider that the Stomach Qi is deficient. If the radial pulse feels normal but the Shao Yin pulse is big, the condition is considered to be Kidney deficiency.

After the very ancient period, theories such as Yin, Yang, Heaven, Earth, and Man were introduced to pulse diagnose. Then the Ren Yin Qi Kou [人迎氣口] method, discussed in the Ling Shu Chapter 9 and the Su Wen Chapter 20, which is the San Bu Jiu Hou style pulse diagnosis [三部九候論第二十脈診法] was invented. The Ren Yin Qi Kou pulse method is useful for observing the Yang meridians, but not for observing the Yin meridians. The Su Wen Chapter 20 style San Bu Jiu Hou pulse diagnosis could be useful in diagnosis, but it is not very practical.

2. The Methodology of Diagnosing Everything Through the Radial Pulse

The Nan Jing states that the radial pulse diagnosis method is different from the pulse diagnosis methods mentioned above. However, the radial pulse method from the Nan Jing is still discussed in the Su Wen and the Ling Shu, where its importance is made apparent.

For example, the Ling Shu Chapter 10 states;

“the meridians are not always visible, thus excess or deficiency should be observed through the radial pulse.”

The Su Wen Chapter 11 states;

“Yellow Emperor: Why does the condition of Essence Qi of the Five Zang organ only appear on the radial pulse?

Qi Bo: The Stomach is the sea of fluids and grains, source of Six Fu. When the Five Flavours enter the mouth, they are stored in the Stomach and nourish the Qi of the Five Zang organs. The radial pulse is the Tai Yin meridian. The taste of the Five Zang and Six Fu comes out from the Stomach and appears on the radial pulse.”

The Su Wen Chapter 21 states that the

“pulse Qi flows into the meridians, the Qi of the meridians then returns to the Lungs, thus many types of pulse qualities can appear on the radial pulse ... diagnosing life or death can be guessed by using the radial pulse.”

The Su Wen Chapter 18 discusses the radial pulse in general as well.

The radial pulse was mentioned before the time the Nan Jing was written, and its author strongly emphasised that everything can be diagnosed through the radial pulse.

3. The Reason Why We Can Diagnose Everything Through the Radial Pulse

The length of the entire human meridian system is 1,620 Cun (please refer to the 23rd Difficulty). The Qi of the pulse is circulated by the breath, and it moves 6 Cun per breath. Therefore, in 10 breaths the Qi moves 60 Cun and completes circulating the whole body in 270 breaths. The Qi circulates 50 times in 24 hrs. This means that Qi flows past the radial pulse 50 times and this makes it possible to diagnose everything through the radial pulse.

The Ling Shu Chapter 15 states;

“the water clock drops 100 times a day. Qi of the pulse is circulated through breathing and Qi moves 6 Cun per breath.”

4. Circulation of Nutritive Qi and Defensive Qi

The 1st Difficulty states that the

“Nutritive and Defensive Qi circulates 25 times in the Yin areas and 25 times in Yang areas.”

There are textbooks that translate Yin and Yang as night and day, but that interpretation is inaccurate.

In the Ling Shu Chapter 76, it states that

“day dominates Yang and night dominates Yin. The Defensive Qi circulates the body 50 times a day, hence the Defensive Qi circulates 25 times in the Yang areas of the body and 25 times in the Yin areas of the body. It circulates the Zang ... at the beginning of Yin circulation it always enters into the Shao Yin meridian and pours into the Kidneys ...”

The Ling Shu states that

“it is important to eat, in order to start the circulation of the Nutritive Qi. Food enters the Stomach and the Stomach sends Qi to the Lungs. This Qi circulates inside and is dispersed to the outside. It is the Nutritive Qi's job to always nourish, so once the circulation is complete it starts again. This is called the period of Heaven and Earth. Nutritive Qi appears in the Tai Yin meridian and pours into the Yang Ming meridian ... where it rises up to the Liver, then again rises up from the Liver to the Lungs. This is the way of the Nutritive Qi.”

To summarise these classical texts above, both Defensive and Nutritive Qi circulates through the whole body 50 times a day, but the route of circulation is different. Defensive Qi has characteristics that are Yang in nature compared to Nutritive Qi, which is Yin in nature. During the day, the Defensive Qi is dispersed to the outside by the pores, which results in the cooling of the body. At night, the pores close in order to keep the body warm. Whereas the function of the Nutritive Qi is to circulate Blood, so it is constantly circulating through the whole body. This means that the Defensive Qi and Nutritive Qi both circulate through the Zang Fu organs together during the night.

5. The Relationship Between the Defensive Qi and Nutritive Qi

The functions of the Defensive Qi and Nutritive Qi are explained in the 30th Difficulty and it is important to compare them. Defensive Qi is Yang Qi, and Nutritive Qi is Yin Qi, but Defensive and Nutritive Qi are still both Qi so, when compared to Blood and fluids, they are more Yang in nature. The main characteristic of the Nan Jing theory is the importance of treating every disease by circulating the Defensive and Nutritive Qi, so needling is shallow and diagnosis is based on the deficiency or excess of the Defensive or Nutritive Qi.