
**TEXTUAL RESEARCH ON INTENT IN ACUPUNCTURE AND MOXIBUSTION: THE GREAT COMPENDIUM (1601)**

Richard Bertschinger

Old Teacher Mulberry says: Few folk are aware of the ‘secrets of the stars’, this rule alone divides the very best and worst doctors...

"The need for a teacher is intrinsic to any craft; a careful study of the old books gives insight into the minds of great teachers and practitioners; careful observation brings lightness and gentleness of touch; this implies a thorough understanding of yin within yang – and yang within yin; and finally, a still and silent heart. Of these probably the last, a quiet heart, is the most important. Again and again we are exhorted to empty and still the mind, thereby allowing an intent to appear before applying the needle. This goes to the heart of learning." *Introduction to The Great Intent (2013)*

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**THE ACUPUNCTURE AND MOXIBUSTION: THE GREAT COMPENDIUM (1601), BY THE LATE MING PHYSICIAN YANG JI ZHOU CONTAINS ODES AND RHYMES COMPOSED BY TRADITIONAL ACUPUNCTURISTS FROM THE PREVIOUS FEW CENTURIES. Ming ‘digests’ that were precursors to Yang Jizhou’s compilation include – the Spiritual Response Bible (1425); Gatherings of Outstanding Acupuncturists (1529); Acupuncture and Moxibustion in its Grand Entirety (1439); Lifesense in All Things (c.1440); A First Introduction to Medicine (1575); A System of Medicine Ancient and Modern (1556), among others.**

**ODES, SONGS AND RHYMES HAVE BEEN USED BY PHYSICIANS IN CHINA FOR CENTURIES AS A MEANS OF MEMORIZING AND PASSING ON METHODS OF PRACTICE AND DIAGNOSIS, MORAL ATTITUDES, EFFECTIVE POINTS, DIAGNOSTIC TIPS AND RULES OF THUMB. THIS RESEARCH INTO THEIR TEXTS, FROM THE SONG, YUAN AND MING OFFERS A RICH INSIGHT INTO THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF SOME REMARKABLY SKILLED PHYSICIANS, AS WELL AS PRACTICAL INDICATIONS FOR TREATMENT. WE SEE INTO THE DEPTHS OF THEIR VIEW AND TRADITION, BETTER ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR BREADTH OF DIAGNOSTIC SKILLS AND TREATMENT PLANNING, AND AS A RESULT MAY GREATLY IMPROVE THE NEED OF AN UNDERSTANDING OF GREAT INTENT WITHIN OUR OWN PRACTICE.**

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**IN CONCLUSION: THESE RHYMES TOUCH UPON FIVE MAIN AREAS:**

1. THE NEED FOR A TEACHER,
2. A STUDY OF THE OLD,
3. THE NEED TO PRESERVE, LEARN ARTISTRY, SENSITIVITY AND GENTLENESS,
4. AN UNDERSTANDING OF YIN AND YANG...
5. AND LASTLY, A SETTLED AND SOLID HEART, OPEN TO THE GREAT INTENT.

**WESTERN REFERENCES:**


Lu & Needham, *Celestial Lancets* (CUP 1980)


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**an example of the acu-points in cosmic view:**

From building Guest up into the Yin Valley, Hiding the Horizontal Bone - Great Glory at the mountain’s foot. From the Cave of Energy, Four Full - and Middle Convergence, Up through the Vital’s Shu and Merchant’s Crook. Guarding the Stony Pass, peaceful at the Yin Capital - Shut up in the Open Valley, solemn and still at the Dark Gate. Walking on the Veranda, the Spiritual Seal protects Temple Ruins, Spiritual Shelter, Eventual Centre, completes the Passage to the Palace.

Ode to the Whole Body’s Points and Channels locating acu-points K 9 through K 27.

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**to touch upon the mystery of the Art and relieve suffering:**

From ancient wisdom, to the creator of the needle; from the mind, to the hand. This Art came from former Sages who passed it on to later generations. If the one who applies the Golden Needle is determined to judge this... they can take the silent hint And touch upon the limit of all mystery. Then the pangs hidden on the world’s pillows are met at the needle-point, And their troubles all obey the fingers and fall away.

From the crazy Taoist acupuncturist Ma Danyang:

治病如神灵, 渚如洗病雪。北斗降真机, 金针泼雪。治病如神灵, 浑如汤泼雪。

Ma Danyang’s song on the Twelve Points Shining Bright as the Starry Sky and able to heal all the Many Diseases

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**to examine the mind of the ancient:**

老医之为司命，非论天而莫为；针乃理之渊微，须至人之指教。

The need for a teacher is intrinsic to any craft – a careful study of the old books gives insight into the minds of great teachers and practitioners; careful observation brings lightness and gentleness of touch; this implies a thorough understanding of yin within yang – and yang within yin; and finally, a still and silent heart. Of these probably the last, a quiet heart, is the most important. Again and again we are exhorted to empty and still the mind, thereby allowing an intent to appear before applying the needle. This goes to the heart of learning. *Introduction to The Great Intent (2013)*

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**to touch upon the mystery of the Art and relieve suffering:**

医者须有至人之命, 非论天而莫为；针乃理之渊微, 须至人之指教。

A physician is a man working as the arbiter of human destiny – if we are not determined there is nothing we can do!

A needle follows the principle of depth through subtlety - and must be taught by the very best of men.

Ode to the One Hundred Symptoms

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**watching both macrocosm and microcosm:**

The Neijing Suwen chapter On the Natural Behaviour of Those of Ancient Times says: ‘...and then there were those wise people of old - their model lay in the skies and earth, their images the sun and moon, their discernment akin to the full array of stars which reveal the time; they acted in accordance with Yin and Yang, and recognised the distinction between the four seasons...’ Ming physician Li Zhongzi (1642) adds: ‘These wise people were essentially those who followed the path of healing. They modeled themselves upon the principle of the skies and earth, and acted in accordance with Yin and Yang in order to apply the arts of needle, medicinal herbs and stone probe. One who can use these tools will bring harmony to the body. Then they will be somebody indeed!’ In Chinese literature the images of the sun’s Grand moon  和 the enlightened self  謳. Li Zhongzi: ‘But were the great lights once seen, the smaller lights once and for all would be extinguished.’ Yang editor Wang Bing agrees, ‘If the great light is seen, then the smaller lights must perish, the virtue of the great light must always be, to be stored up.’

The Neo-taoist Wangbi states: ‘For even though Heaven and earth are vast, they take non-being as their pivot - and though Kings and sages are great, they lack humbleness as their master. The message of these Odes and rhymes is clear - to possess a humility along with great power. This is the intent expressed in this poems. A great intent which sweeps up and along all small intents – this is the province of the great-hearted.

Introduction to The Great Intent: Acupuncture Odes, Songs and Rhymes

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**what were the Odes all about?**

James Liu (1962) describes a Fu or Ode ‘not as a verse form but as a literary genre’. They are ‘descriptions or expositions, usually lengthy and elaborate, in verse or in prose, on given subjects.’ He also quotes the ancient poet Sima Xiangru ‘the mind of the writer of Odes can be achieved from within but cannot be conveyed in words’. Thus the Odes were to ‘evolve the Muse’, as vehicles for the transmission of an oral tradition, they are intrinsic to the great craft of acupuncture doctoring.

Introduction to The Golden Needle (1991)

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**stillness as ground central, a philosopher speaks:**

‘Stillness is it, which has to be our lord – to be without desire - and thus still. Stillness is the goal for human kind! Then the sage ‘is one in virtue with Heaven and earth, one in light with the sun and moon, one in order with the four seasons, and one in finding good or ill-fortune with the gods and spirits.’

Chou Tunyi 1017–1073 commenting on the Taijig Diagram.