

# 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...  
*tienxing mijue shaoren zhi, zhifa zhuanfen qianhou shi* 天星秘诀少人知，此法专分前后施。 *The Rhyme 'Secrets of the Stars'*

ODES, SONGS AND RHYMES HAVE BEEN USED BY PHYSICIANS IN CHINA FOR CENTURIES AS A MEANS OF MEMORISING AND PASSING ON METHODS OF PRACTICE AND BEHAVIOUR, 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.

THE *ACUPUNCTURE AND MOXIBUSTION: THE GREAT COMPENDIUM* (1601), BY THE LATE MING PHYSICIAN YANG JIZHOU 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.

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: James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago 1962)  
Lu & Needham, *Celestial Lancets* (CUP 1980)  
Giafu Feng, *Book of Medicine* Trans/communications (Stillpoint Colorado, 1978-1986)

from the crazy Taoist acupuncturist Ma Danyang:

治病如神灵，浑如汤泼雪。北斗降真机，金锁教开彻。至人可传授，匪人莫浪说。  
healing a disease is like magic – a torrent whirling as wind-driven snow-  
the Northern Dipper sends down its true workings, the Golden Lock teaches us to snap it open!  
one truly clever can pass this on, the unfaithful have only restless talk

*Ma Danyang's Song on the Twelve Points Shining Bright as the Starry Sky and able to heal all the Many Diseases*

an example of the acu-points in cosmic view:

从筑宾兮上阴谷，掩横骨兮大赫麓，气穴、四满兮中注，膏肓上通兮商曲  
守石关兮阴都宁，闭通谷兮幽门肃，步廊、神封而灵墟存，神藏、彘中而俞府足。  
From Building Guest up into the Yin Valley, Hiding the Horizontal Bone - Great Glory at the mountain's foot.  
Into 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* listing acu-points K 9 through K 27.

acupuncturist as arbiter of destiny:

夫医乃人之司命，非志士而莫为；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 we must be taught by the very best of men.

*Ode to the One Hundred Symptoms*

how can we understand the ancients?

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 modelled 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 日 and moon 月 represent the enlightened self 明. Li Zhongzi: 'But were the great lights once seen, the smaller lights once and for all would be extinguished.' Tang 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 take 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*

watching both macrocosm and microcosm:

察岁时于天道，定形气于余心。  
Examine the seasons of the year upon their heavenly path,  
Decide upon the body and qi from your own heart.

*Ode to the Streamer out of the Dark*

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 'evoke 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)

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

述自先圣，传之后学，用针之士，有志于斯，  
果能洞造玄微，而尽其精妙，  
则世之伏枕之疴，有缘者遇针，其病皆随手而愈矣。  
This Art came from former Sages who passed it on to later generations.  
If the one who applies the Golden Needle is determined in just this-  
If finally he can take their silent hint  
And touch upon the limit of all mystery.  
Then the pains hidden on the world's pillows are met at the needle-point,  
And their troubles all obey the fingers and fall away!

*Ode to the Golden Needle*

stillness as ground central, a philosopher speaks:

'Stillness it is, 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 Taiji Diagram.*

"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 physicians; 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)