

SHEN (mental energy, spirit, soul...) resides in the heart, which is why it is so important in Chinese medicine as well as in other medicinal practices. We can say in passing that this way of thinking is not uncommon in the West insofar as in Paracelso's hermetical medicine the mind is situated in the highest part of the right auricle. **Shen** is harboured in the heart, and if we have emotions that upset the heart our mind loses harmony. It is one of the reasons that the Taoists sought to liberate themselves from their emotions in order to achieve a strong **Shen**. The liver is also involved as it is responsible for harmonizing emotions and you cannot separate **Shen** from the brain, the special organ that controls the mind, another name for **Shen**.

In acupuncture, each viscera is characterized by a tendency towards a specific action, which differentiates itself from others and so defines its function in the body. They resemble that which to us is known as "vegetative souls" corresponding with "sensitive souls" not exactly the same but close. Each individual is unique, and no one else, through **Shen**. According to Chinese thinking **Shen** is not an abstraction, it is a reality which determines unique characteristics in each individual, **Shen** shapes that which will be the individual. One of the meanings of **Shen** is the type of "aspect" the person has, that is to say how **Shen** applies to spiritual and organic conditions. It is only through the heart that the **shen** of each **zang** arrives at its designated organ, as the sovereign is inside his ministers represented by them. For the Chinese, of all the human activities the most important is the **shen**. They represent an expression that designates the general phenomena of human life, its conscious and subconscious activity. It picks out the individuality of each organ. Harboring **Shen** gives the heart the knowledge as to all that happens in the organism. In China there are five sacred mountains, but in reality they are assumed to be distributed

throughout the earth (China was the world) those that were considered the support of the earth. There was one in each cardinal point and the fifth in the center which had a ritual importance. In these the monarchs made requests, prayed to the Heavens and made sacrifices because the spirits lived in these. **Tai**, that of the East, was the creator of human beings, controlled the duration of life and corresponded to spring and even in this day and age it has sacred connotations. It was the principal place to summon the spirits of **hun** and those of **po**. The mountain of the West represented autumn and the death of nature as part of the life cycle of human beings. It is important to highlight that the school of **wuxing** did not value life and death in a positive or negative way as the main object was the harmonic equilibrium among the cosmic forces.

Po is translated as the soul, a sensitive terrestrial soul, vigour, spirit, a physical manifestation of a sensitive soul, and **hun** also like soul, as the vital source of a human being, mood. It is the human soul produced by the progressive condensation of air breathed in; the Taoists considered **Hun** as one of the three main essentials, that after death was kept alive with offerings from the living.

It is always a risk to speak of the spirit as for an occidental the idea of a spirit is different from that of an oriental. For occidentals the soul is one and indivisible but for a Chinese, if as we have mentioned has the idea of **Shen** as a force and energy that forms an individual in the widest sense of the term, from this **Shen** more specific concepts are derived to designate those particular elements which form an integral part of a human being.

We speak on one hand, of the body **po**, flesh and bones and on the other **hun**, a spiritual element by which **hun** and **po** show the composition of man. **Lingshu** 8 says: that which moves with **Shen** actively giving form is **Hun** which implies the existence of a global **Shen**; the potential capacity to structure is represented by **po**.

The **hun** control the mental human essences because they were air above all (**yang** in the **yang** and also **yang** in respect to **po**) and they return to the air in which they remain after death. It is also something that governs the instincts and nature of every person. **Po** on the contrary heads towards earth (**yin** in the **yin**) because of its control of fluids, of flesh and bones essentially earth into which it will enter again after death; it had above all power over emotions. **Hun** represents the forces that model personality and **po** the structure that permits the fulfillment of psychic functions. Each organ has its soul. They appear in this way in the Classics although in truth **hun** and **po** do not appear in ancient medical texts.

Later they will change from being one **hun** and one **po** to three **hun** and seven **po**. This is interpreted that three **Hun** is a reference to the social relations of man: sovereign/subject , father/son, husband/wife. The seven **po** elements refer to the seven orifices of the body and therefore to the senses and the seven emotions that were described in that era: anger, hate, happiness, desire, sadness, fear. If illness presented itself it was because some **hun** or **po** was missing and one would die if the ten abandoned man, so it was evident that life and health were the harmonious amalgam of the ten elements.

As the **hun** after death is left wandering in the air and the **po** in similar circumstances comes back to earth, this gives root to postmortem filial piety, to the cult of the ancestors and the funereal monuments for the dead to dwell in so that their **hun** and **po** would not disperse and thus would serve as beneficial souls, intermediaries between their descendents and the Heavens. Behind the idea of the spirit in every organ, the **hun** soul is directly subject to **Shen** and corresponds to the liver, vegetative soul whose model puts all the dynamic organic in motion, it commands the rise, the breaking away, the creation. Under **hun** are imagination, planned thought, dreams, intelligence and meditation.

Po, vegetative soul of the lungs, spiritual natural force of the lungs, bound to the essences, possesses the necessary energy to conduct and look after all this mechanism. **Po** governs the descent, the harnessing of the elements, all that which is related to instinct and to the automatic care of the body. At the same time it is a hieroglyphic, which in astronomy defines the dark invisible portion of the moon. Functionally the lung is united to the large intestine and this is because **po** also is made up of a residue of vitality whose waste matters are eliminated through the anus which is called the gate of **po**, thus coinciding with the return of the **po**'s to earth, in comparison with the **hun**'s which go into the air.

Any illness or malaise is directly implicated to **Shen** or the spirit. If we speak of energy we have to speak also of the soul or spirit of **Shen**, a form of energy complimentary to material energy. We will remember the **Jing** Essence, the **Qi** Energy and the third "treasure" the **Shen** Spirit, where the human conscience takes root and altogether are part of the individual; there is no mind/body dichotomy in Chinese thought. The harmonious **Shen** keeps the mind clear and the will firm, it reacts reasonably to the surroundings, there are no irrational thoughts or incoherent actions.

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