



INSOMNIA

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SHEN 神

示



SHI “Influx from heaven; auspicious or inauspicious signs by which the will of Heaven is known to mankind”



The two lines at the top are the old form of *Shang* 上 (superior, above, high, hence “Heaven”)



The three vertical lines represent what is hanging from Heaven, i.e. the sun, the moon and the stars, the mutations of which reveal to people transcendent things.

申 *Shen* = to state, express, explain, to stretch, extend, the 9th Earthly Branch



Modern form of *Shi*

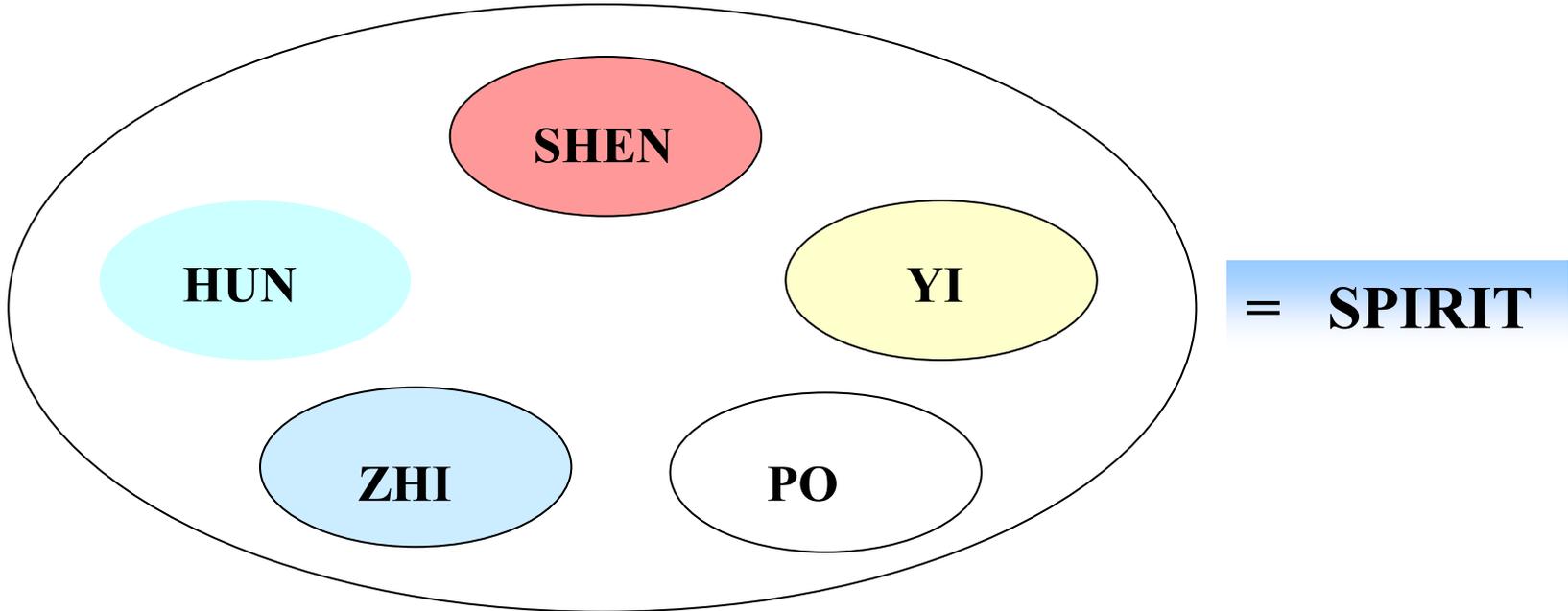
神 = Spirits, gods

TWO MEANINGS OF "SHEN"

**SHEN OF
HEART**

= **MIND**

1) *Shen* indicates the activity of thinking, consciousness, insight, emotional life and memory, all of which depend on the Heart. I translate this as "Shen".



2) *Shen* indicates the complex of all five mental-spiritual aspects of a human being, i.e. the Shen itself, the Hun, the Po, the Yi and the Zhi. I translate this as "Spirit".

THE ETHEREAL SOUL (HUN)

魂

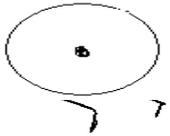
HUN

云

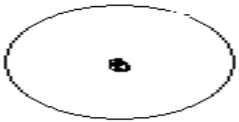
CLOUDS (*YUN*)

鬼

GUI



OLD CHARACTER FOR *GUI*



Head of dead person without a body



Swirling movement of the "ghost" of dead person in the realm of spirits

The Hun enters the body 3 days after birth and is imparted by the father. Ethereal in nature, after death it survives the body and flows back to "Heaven" (Tian).

THE ETHEREAL SOUL (*HUN*)

1) SLEEP AND DREAMING

The Hun influences sleep and dreaming. If the Hun is well rooted in the Liver (Liver-Blood or Liver-Yin), sleep is normal and sound and without too many dreams.



If Liver-Yin or Liver-Blood is deficient, the Hun is deprived of its residence and wanders off at night, causing a restless sleep with many tiring dreams. If Liver-Yin is severely depleted, the Hun may even leave the body temporarily at night during or just before sleep.

Tang Zong Hai says: *"At night during sleep the Hun returns to the Liver; if the Hun is not peaceful there are a lot of dreams"*.

In case of the Hun wandering at night and causing too much dreaming it is necessary to nourish Liver-Blood and Liver-Yin with sour and astringent herbs such as:

Mu Li *Concha Ostreae*



Long Chi
*Dens
Draconis*



Bai Shao *Radix
Paeoniae albae.*



Suan Zao Ren *Semen
Ziziphi spinosae*



There is an interesting correlation between the astringent and absorbing quality of such herbs on a physical level and their use in calming the Shen and "absorbing" the Hun to draw it back into the Liver.

The "Treatise of the Golden Flower" in chapter 2 says: *"In the daytime the Hun is in the eyes and at night in the Liver...."*

When it is in the eyes we can see..



... When it is in the Liver we dream".



THE HUN AND SLEEP AND DREAMING

The Hun is rooted in the Liver and in particular Liver- Yin (which includes Liver-Blood). If Liver-Yin is depleted, the Hun is deprived of its residence and becomes rootless. This can result in insomnia, fear and a lack of a sense of direction in life. The Hun, deprived of its residence, wanders without aim.

The Hun may even leave the body: some Chinese idiomatic expressions confirm this. For example, *fan hun* (literally "Hun returning") means "to come back to life", as after being in a trance during which the soul leaves the body.

Hun fei po san (literally "hun flying, po scattered") means "to be scared out of one's wits" or also "to be struck dumb", e.g. by love

INSOMNIA

The term "insomnia" covers a number of different problems such as

- inability to fall asleep easily
- waking up during the night
- sleeping restlessly
- waking up early in the morning
- dream-disturbed sleep.

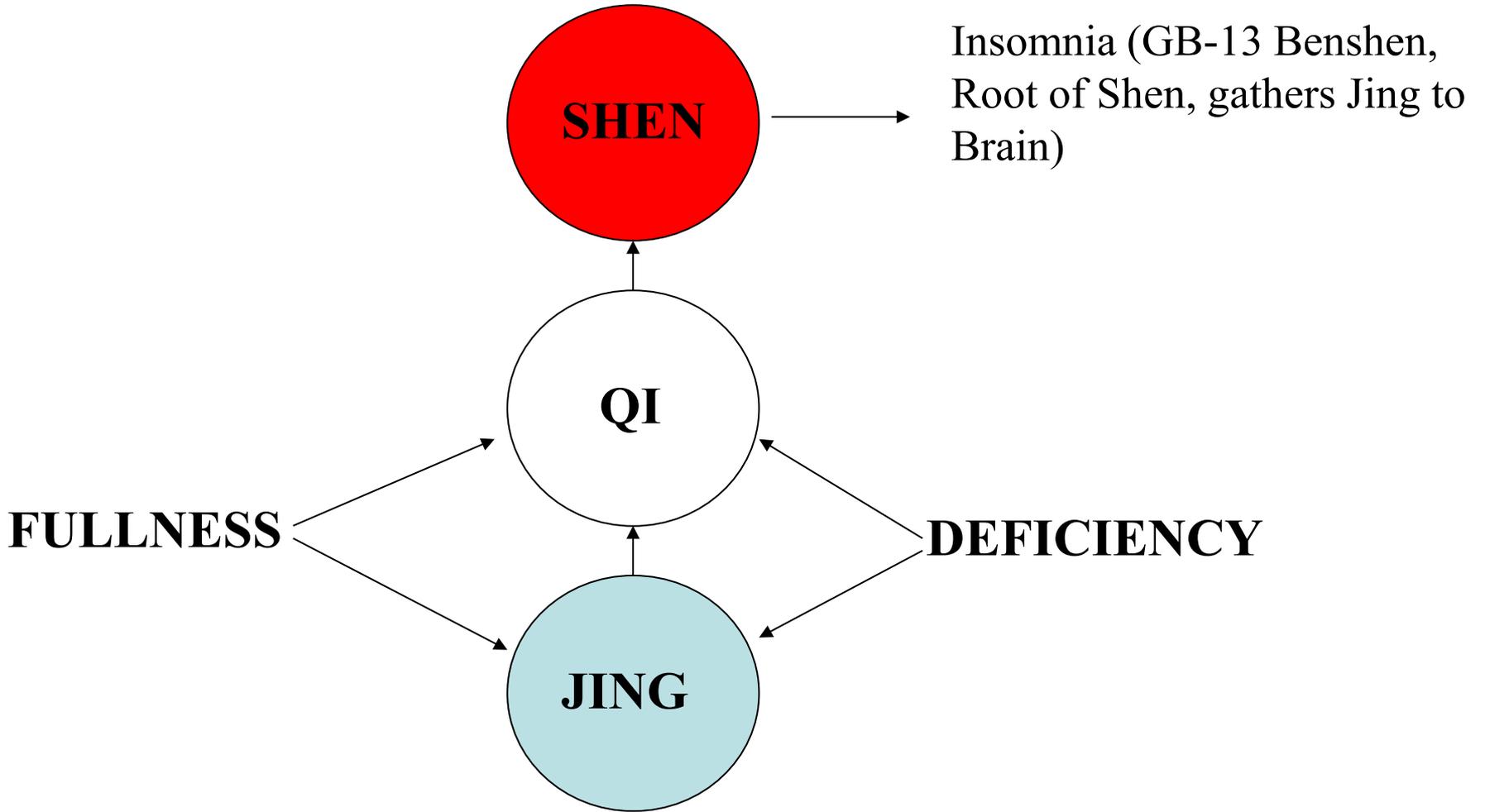
The amount and quality of sleep depend of course on the state of the Shen (*Shen*). The Shen is rooted in the Heart and specifically in Heart-Blood and Heart-Yin. If the Heart is healthy and the Blood abundant, the Shen is properly rooted and sleep will be sound. If the Heart is deficient or if it is agitated by pathogenic factors such as Fire, the Shen is not properly rooted and sleep will be affected.

In fact, any disharmony of the internal organs, whether it is due to a Deficiency or an Excess, affects Blood and Jing. Since the Jing and Qi are the root of the Shen (the "Three Treasures"), the Shen has then no residence and insomnia may result. The "Simple Questions" in chapter 46 says:

"When a person lies down and cannot sleep, [it means] the Yin organs are injured [so that] the Jing has no residence and is not quiet and the person cannot sleep".

The "Complete Book of Jing Yue" (1624) by Zhang Jing Yue says:
"Overexertion, worrying and excessive thinking injure Blood and fluids so that the Shen and Hun are deprived of residence and insomnia results".

It also says: *"Worrying and excessive thinking injure the Spleen so that it cannot make Blood and insomnia results".*



SLEEP AND HUN

The Hun is affected not only by a deficiency of the Liver, but also by any pathogenic factor (such as Fire or Wind) agitating the Liver.

As far as sleep is concerned the Shen is not the only mental-spiritual faculty involved. The *Hun* also plays an important role in the physiology and pathology of sleep and the length and quality of sleep are related to its state.

If the Hun is well rooted in the Liver (Liver-Blood or Liver-Yin), sleep is normal, sound and without too many dreams.

If Liver-Yin or Liver-Blood is deficient or if there is Heat, the Hun is deprived of its residence and wanders off at night, causing a restless sleep with many tiring dreams.