

A Deeper Look at Core, Psoas, ST30 and Liv4

In the past 2 years I have been emphasizing “upright posture” or the creation of the space that mediates Yin/Yang, Heaven/Earth, that is the space that Human occupies. Many times we see people whose issues cannot be effectively addressed by adjusting the organs, and yet when we create a space in their body, they respond much better. My emphasis in the past has been on Kid6, ST41, Inner Yin, MuShu (or “side G.B.28”) with the addition of ST9, Tooth Faerie, or U.B.2. Here I am trying to develop other strategies and ideas. It does not mean they are “better,” it simply allows us to take a different perspective. The perspective here is that if we activate the core, we create the space and action for the whole organism, and that we can access that core via releasing ST30 (and the inner thigh – Liv12) and then needling it.

The exploration of ideas is not always linear, and my purpose here is to allow for a more open thought process that will allow others to take the ideas and expand them. If you are looking for the “treat X for Y,” that list is at the end of this paper, following a rather long explanation. I feel that it is this exploration that is worth our attention because that process of exploring allows us to see more and be able to then apply different protocols than the ones listed, and it is this exploration that deepens our understanding of the human position (my more positive term for the human condition) and ways to affect it.

What is Core:

Many people associate the core with the abdominals and often assume it is the equivalent of a “6 pack.” But this is not accurate. A core can be seen as a physical centre or as an energetic centre, the place from which action is initiated, the place that extends authority to the rest of the entity and when it stops functioning, the rest of the entity, changes, collapses, etc. The core is like a spring or a coil that enlivens the rest of the organism.

If we look at a physical centre, the 6-pack abdomen would not constitute a core simply because it is too superficial, too far forwards to constitute a real core. Strong abdominals (rectus abdominus) do not affect or control the rest of the body. It is far more accurate to think of the psoas as the core – it is deeper, it directly affects the legs, the diaphragm and the spine (and hence the whole body).

The quality expected from a core is strength, agility, and “hollowness” - while it needs to be solid in action, it cannot be a solid mass: cores by nature are both full and empty at the same time, active and quiet. Hollowness can be found at the pelvic floor and between the two psoas muscles.

The core is also place of replication, regeneration, reproduction, so again the sphere of psoas fits the bill, while the abdomens as a whole (the 6-pack) do not.

We need to consider that the energetics of the body and the meridian system were formulated by many disciplines, not just acupuncture, and likely over many generations. When we investigate the concept of core in the meridians and look at point names, we shall see more than one idea expressed.

The Ancients have named Ren3 Zhong Ji (中極 - Central Extremeity/Pole indicating the north star), so they felt that this area represents the central core that can move from the centre to the extremities. It also serves as a meeting of all Leg Yin channels.

If we look at the core more as an area, perhaps a ring or a ball, we no longer have to limit ourselves to the Ren/Du lines and we can include the peripheries of the core and not just its dead-centre. For a meditator or one practicing breath control, ST30 and ST29 (which actually lie over the psoas) may be the best choice of feeling the core. In Padmasana (lotus position), the heels are pressing against ST30 creating an energetic lift and support of the spine. When retaining the breath, one can feel the pulse just above ST30, and one attempts to equalize the pulse on both sides. ST29 is called Gui Lai (歸來 – To Return: Gui is to arrive or to belong, Lai which means to come, is a pictograph of ears of wheat hanging from the wheat plant, implying growth: “Gui Lai” is “to return” and connotes both arriving and growing/expanding). ST30 is named either Qi Chong (氣沖 – Qi Rinsing, but this Chong is fully interchangeable with Chong, 衝, to rush or to charge), or Qi Jie (氣街 – Jie is translated as “street” and has the character for movement, 行, surrounding 圭 to confer authority).

When we look at the Chong as the core (or as Jeffrey Yuen like to speak of it – as our “blueprint”), it makes sense to associate ST30 with core (Chong). In doing that we would take ST30 to represent that as it is the emerging point of the Chong. We might then extend it also to SP12 (Chong Men, 沖門, the Gate of the Chong) and more importantly to Liv12 (Ji Mai, 急脈, the Anxious Pulsation) which is on the thigh, relating to the insertion of the psoas muscles, and Ji, 急, hurried/anxious is related to the Chong (see Nan Jing 29 below).

Animals who use their legs with their knees bent have a much stronger spring action (think of the leap of a tiger for example). Thus we can identify the core a little more clearly in animals, and we see that indeed it is very strongly related to the psoas area, ST30 as well as Liv12/SP12. Their movement is powered from this area.

The core is also a place of shutting down. If the core shuts down the organism shuts down. Again, we can identify this more easily in animals. When an animal is about to be caught by a predator, at the last moment, when no escape is possible anymore, the animal freezes and shuts down its nervous system. This (we believe) allows the animal about to be eaten to feel far less pain – it is a mechanism of “disassociation,” of shutting down. Because animals use their legs in a different fashion than humans, their knees are far more bent than ours coming closer to the abdomen, we can see that their central spring/coil is in the groin (ST30) area, and that this is where the shutting down happens – we see them crouching: an animal in “freeze mode” contracts into the groin/pelvic floor. So we see that this is the area that both activates and freezes the organism.

With our upright posture and straight knees (note that apes do not straighten their legs even though they are upright), we have lost some of the strength and agility of the core, and, perhaps more importantly, we have lost some of our ability to recover from freezing/shut down – we have less “shock absorption” which relies on the agility of the spring/coil at ST30/Liv12. In PTSD therapies, the release of the psoas (and top inner thigh), is utilized to release the freeze response of the trauma.

Su Wen 66 may well disagree with me on the psoas as being the core and seems to like the 6 pack, it has a sentence that seems to describe the core which it describes as the Ocean of the meridians master of irrigation where the Yin and Yang passages meet...

It says: Chong Mai is the Ocean of meridians, master of irrigation of creeks and valleys, joins Yang Ming at the Ancestral Muscle (Zong Jin), Yin Yang roads gather at Ancestral Muscle, joining at ST30 (Qi Jie), and Yang Ming acts as developing all categories in Dai Mai and Luo in Du Mai.

沖脈者，經脈之海也，主滲灌溪谷，與陽明合於宗筋，陰陽櫛宗筋之會，合於氣街而陽明為之長，皆屬於帶脈，而絡於督脈

Traditionally people translate Zong Jin (Ancestral Muscle) as the Rectus Abdominus, so if Su Wen specifically means that, they seem to like the 6 pack as the core (as do most people...), even though they also mention ST30 very clearly as its gathering space.

The sentence just before is -

Yang Ming is Ocean of the 5 Zang and 6 Fu, master of lubrication of Ancestral Muscles (Zong Jin), Ancestral Muscle master bundling bone (this is also the name of U.B.65) and benefits organization also.

陽明者五臟六腑之海，主潤宗筋，宗筋主束骨而利機關也

Again it seems they are talking about something we can claim to be the core (Ocean of the 5 Zang and 6 Fu, benefiting organization, bundling/holding the structure).

ST30 in the classics:

The passages below from the Ling Shu give the following ideas about ST30:

- It is the Core as it is the Ocean of the 12 Meridians – L.S. 62
- It is the Core as it is the Ocean of the 5 Zang and 6 Fu – L.S. 38
- It is the Core as it has perpetual motion – L.S. 62
- It has a strong correlation with ST36
as the Ocean of water and grain – L.S. 33
in treating abdominal issues – L.S. 59
- It connects with the diaphragm and chest – L.S.75
- It connects strongly with the legs, the thigh, knee, shin, ankle foot and big toe
and affects circulation and movement in the leg – L.S.38 & 62
- It is related to the head, the brain, the chest, the back (back Shu points) and the shin – L.S. 58

Ling Shu 26 says to use sides of the navel (often interpreted as ST25) for abdominal pain. If that does not solve the issue, use ST30

腹痛，刺臍左右動脈，已刺按之，立已
不已，刺氣街，已刺按之，立已

Ling Shu 33 says that the Stomach is the Ocean of water and grain, and its transportation points are ST30 above and ST36 below.

胃者水谷之海，其輸上在氣街，下至三里

Ling Shu 59 says to use ST30 and ST36 for accumulation in the lower abdomen (and depending on how we read it for diarrhea also)

積於下者，瀉三里與氣街

Ling Shu 75 speaks of ST30 in connection with Zong Qi – one direction of Pectoral Qi is up in the airways and another is down to ST30, thus speaking of the connection of the psoas and the diaphragm
氣積於胃，以通營衛，各行其道。宗氣留於海，其下者，注於氣街，其上者，走於息道

Ling Shu 58 says that to know the 6 Fu of Qi Jie is to know the release and contraction of the windows and doors

知六腑之氣街者，能知解結契紹於門戶

It then speaks of 4 Qi Jie (Qi thoroughfares), and it is hard to know if they are relating ST30 as their master, but when we correlate this with other information given on ST30, it seems it does.

The four Qi through ways are (1) in the head which reaches the brain, (2) in the chest reaching the breast and back Shu points, (3) in the abdomen reaching the back Shu and the Chong, and (4) in the Shin, reaching U.B.57. The symptoms can be head dizziness and pain, abdominal pain and swelling
請言氣街，胸氣有街，腹氣有街，頭氣有街，脛氣有街。故氣在頭者，止之於腦；氣在胸者，止之膺與背腧；氣在腹者，止之背腧，與中脈於臍左右之動脈者；氣在脛者，止之於氣街，與承山踝上以下。取此者，用毫針，必先按而在久應於手，乃刺而予之。所治者，頭痛眩，腹痛中滿暴脹，及有新。痛可移者，易已也；積不痛，難已也

Ling Shu 38 and 62 both speak of ST30 in relationship to Shao Yin, but it is actually about the Chong describing the parts of the Chong that goes down the leg

Ling Shu 38 where the subject is regulating -

Chng Mai is Ocean of 5 Zang and 6 Fu. The 5 Zang and 6 Fu all report to it. Its upper part manifests below the forehead, permeating all Yang, irrigating all the Jing. Its lower domain pouring into Shao Yin's Big Luo, manifesting at ST30, following the Yin part (Yin thigh), inner angle, entering knee centre. Going down traveling the inner shin bone. Lower, arriving at inner ankle, behind, where it belongs and separates. A lower portion goes with Shao Yin meridian, permeates 3 Yin. In the front, going down traveling and manifesting in the instep where it belongs. Below it follows the insetp, enters the space of the big toe, permeates all Luo and warms muscle-flesh. Thus when the separate Luo are knotted, the attached-upper has no action/movement, no movement results in fainting (Jue) then cold.

夫冲脈者五臟六腑之海也，五臟六腑皆稟焉。其上者，出于頰頰，滲諸陽，灌諸精；其下者，注少陰之大絡，出于氣街，循陰股內廉入膕中，伏行骨內，下至內踝之後屬而別。其下者，並於少陰之經，滲三陰；其前者，伏行出跗屬，下循跗，入大趾間，滲諸絡而溫肌肉。故別絡結則附上不動，不動則厥，厥則寒矣

Ling Shu 62 where the subject is the movement of Qi in the meridians -

Leg Shao Yin what makes it move? Chong Mai is Ocean of 12 meridians and Shao Yin its big network (luo), rise below the Kidney, comes out at ST30, follow Yin thigh, inner corner, evil enter hollow centre (popleteal fossa), follows shin bone inner angle, furthermore below enters inner ankle back, enter leg below, this separate domain the evil enters ankle, comes out above, entering the big toe space, pouring all the Luo, accordingly warming the leg. This channel is always in movement.

足少陰何因而動？冲脈者，十二經之海也，與少陰之大絡，起於腎下，出於氣街，循陰股內廉，邪入膕中，循脛骨內廉，并少陰之經，下入內踝之後。入足下，其別者，邪入踝，出屬附上，入大指之間，注諸絡，以溫足脛，此脈之常動者也。

Nan Jing 29 says that when the Ching has an illness, opposite (rebellious) Qi and Interior Anxiety (rushing) occur.

衝之為病，逆氣而裏急

This relates ST30 also to anxiety disorders.

ST30 - By Name:

氣冲 - Qi Chong

Chong (冲) is to flush or to rinse, but it is also interchangeable with Chong (衝) to dash, to rush, to move with force. When we see one, we can assume the other could have been used. Chong (衝) is literally movement (行) done with emphasis (重 – the character that is surrounded by 行, to move) – a heavy/serious movement

氣街 - Qi Jie is another name used for ST30 and it tends to be more popular in the Ling Shu

Jie (街) is a street or through-way and is composed of movement (行) surrounding 圭, Gui, a tablet which symbolizes feudal authority over the land (it is basically two earths, 土, on top of each other). The connotation is “to walk with authority.”

From these names we can see a few connections. Obviously ST30 will relate to other points that carry Chong in them (e.g., ST42 – Chong Yang, 冲陽) which is also implied by ST30 being the first point on the Chong meridian

Points with Chong, 冲, in the character are – U.B.3 Mei Chong, HT9 Shao Chong, SP12 Chong Men,, ST42 Chong Yang. and Liv3 Tai Chong.

Points with Chong, 衝, are G.B.9 Tian Chong, S.J.1 Guan Chong and P.9 Zhong Chong

The character 重 which is in the centre of Chong (衝) meaning serious, comes originally from Tong, 童, that means a virgin as in serious crime that requires celibacy. The top of the character was changed. The “original top” is 立 Li to stand and the bottom (in both cases) is 里, Li, distance.

Li, 里 is the same as in ST36 which the Ling Shu associates with ST30. It is also the idea of “measure” (and is similar to the idea of Li, 理, logic, reason, to arrange, to administer, that is used commonly in Confucian ideas), and suggests ST30 has to do with measuring, regulating, managing Qi

The Li points family is composed of 2 Three-Li (L.I.10 and ST36), 2 Five-Li (L.I.13 and Liv10), one each for the arm and the leg channels, one Penetrating/Bursting Li – HT5 (通里), and Ren 11, Jian Li, 建里, Establishing Li – Jian 建 - to write, 隹, rules of behaviour (隹 – going)

Chong, 衝, to rush, is also similar in idea to the character Tu, 突, abrupt, to dash

Tu, 突 is a dog (犬) rushing from its cave (穴)

The Tu family of points is residing fully in the neck: Ren22 Tian Tu, ST10 Shui Tu and L.I.18 Fu Tu

This might be explained by the idea that when the core is not engaged, people will try to lift themselves from the extremities, and the neck will become tense, or one might say that the strong movement is started below and is vented at the other end, at the neck. Either way, it shows us a connection between ST30 and the neck/throat.

The connection with Liv4:

The last connection by point name leads us to Liv4 (and possibly Kid23).

Liv4 is named Zhong Feng, 中封, Centre Seal (and Kid23 is named Shen Feng, 神封).

The character Feng is composed of a hand on the right side. The left side has earth, 土, and growth, 之, which look like the character Gui, 圭, at the centre of Chong (衝). In fact some dictionaries say it is that character, and some say it is land and growth. In both cases it suggests conferring (hand) authority over the land, which in feudal times implied a seal.

Thus we can see a connection in the name of Liv4 and Chong (and thus ST30): they both connote authority over territory.

Ling Shu 2 enumerates all the important points of each channel (Jing, Ying Shu, the elemental points, etc.), however it does not stop to discuss any of them with the exception of Liv4.

L.S.2 says on Liv4 – Make opposite (against) then bent (crooked), make harmony then open (flow), wiggle the foot to obtain it.

使逆則宛, 使和則通, 搖足而得之

Meaning – if you needle Liv4 against the flow you cause an obstruction (a bending, a turning), whereas needling with the flow (harmony) opens up the flow (Tong, 通 is unobstructed movement or to penetrate, to burst open).

Since the domain of Liv4 as a seal is the centre, we can assume that they meant that it creates flow in the abdomen (or in the Chong).

Most modern textbooks have defined the location of Liv4 as just medial to the tendon, so it is implied that it is level with ST41. This is unfortunate. The Ling Shu gives us a very clear location, that not only is different, it is far more effective. The modern location has robbed Liv4 of its usefulness and meaning.

Ling Shu 2 says that Liv4 enters the ankle prior one cun half/incomplete

中封內踝之前一寸半

Meaning we need to stop before we get to the ankle 1 cun, not complete the movement into the ankle. Thus the location for Liv4 is indeed medial to the tendon but about one thumb below the joint.

You will find a slight swelling or a soft/gummy area (on most people) there. This is the effective Liv4.

This location also relates to the upright (or surging forward) posture: when we sink at Liv4 and fall onto the inside of the foot, the whole inside of the leg is not activated, the core is not supported and the spine and torso will also sink. The action is correlates to the action of opening Kid6 in order to shed light (Zhao, 照 as in Zhao Hai – 照海).

Indeed Liv4 (taken at the right location) does release the psoas and consequently used in Japan extensively for back pain.

ST30 Indications and Reflections:

ST30 reflects the capacities of the psoas:

- relates to the diaphragm (the psoas attaches and affects the diaphragm)
- relates to the lumbar spine and back – structurally
- relates to the structure and circulation of the legs, and balance
- relates to the hips, inguinal, piriformis and gluteals

ST30 reflects the Core:

- it is the valve that regulates the movement of energy
ST30 is one of the major faucets/valves in the body
- Hormonal function: regulation is also the role of the endocrine system
ST30 is related to the DU (thus to the nervous and endocrine systems)
and is itself a regulator related to Li (里)

ST30 relates to the Nervous System:

- it regulates our freezing response and disconnecting
- its activation/release increases our capacity to absorb and recover from shock

ST30 reflects the Chong:

- The Chong is the core, the blueprint, sea of the 12 meridians and the Zang and Fu
- it is related to anxiety, depression (Nan Jing 29 – Li Ji, 裏急, internal worry)

ST30 relates to Zong Qi (respiration/chest):

- it is related to breathing (via psoas)
- related to panic attacks (also related to freezing mechanism)

ST30 relates to the neck and throat:

- the throat is the other pole of the core
- lack of capacity in the core will result in the neck/extremities tensing
so as to take on the burden
- Chong (衝) and Tu (突) are related

Always check ST30 for reflecting and/or as a potential treatment point in the following conditions:

- pelvic shifts
- back pain (lower as well as whole back)
 - ST30 relates to Back Shu
- viscero-ptosis
- leg structural or circulatory problems (shin as well as knee and thigh)
- throat and neck problems
- hormonal issues (may be accompanied by S.I.11 or S.J.15)
- anxiety, depression, panic attacks
- Neurological and ANS problems
- digestion problems
- respiratory problems

If ST30 is painful release it via one of the following:

Liv4 – confers authority over the Centre, releases the psoas,
helps establish upright movement in the inner thigh into the pelvic floor

Kid9 – relates to Yin Wei
especially useful in - pelvic shifts
neck pain
anxiety/depression

Zhu Bin (Kid9 – 築賓) Zhu = building, Bin = visitor: bringing presents to the home
the idea of core/home and one occupying it or visiting it

ST13 – relates to viscero-ptosis

Immune – for weakness in ligaments (it is also a Li, 里, point – L.I.10)

ST42 – Chong Yang – gives uplift to the core from the foot (so does ST41)

ST41 and Stomach Qi line – this is the Sea of Chong and the axis of the ankle
supporting the structure of the whole body

Mu Shu – (side G.B.28 – Wei Dao 維道)
support the core from the side
provide it with a lift (Ju - 舉) and extension (Shen - 申)

combined with U.B.2, or ST9 or Tooth Faerie

Once released look at the use of ST30 and evaluate in accordance with reflexes cleared.
Needle ST30 down and out towards the thigh, or it can also be needled towards the centre.