

Acu.

Just my point: DU 20

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Exploring in mountainous territory, we know the thrill of reaching the peak, of standing on the high point where the view is breathtaking, where the earth reaches up to touch heaven and the two are united, one.

In our journey through time we cycle through different seasons, through the cold, the wind, the heat, the damp, the dry, through ice and snow, through exhausting heat and driving rain.

Despite the vagaries of continual weather changes, we know there is a turning point in that foundational cycle of light and dark, a climax, the high point of the midsummer sun that reaches highest and lasts longest – the time of extreme yang. Every day has its noontide hour, every month its full moon, every year its summer solstice, its fullest expression of heaven's power. Only this extreme yang can bring in the yin – and this is the story of DU 20 A Hundred Meetings bai hui 百會.

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It is the puppet master's master string

DU 20 lies between the two fontanelles in the skull: the posterior that closes six to eight weeks after birth – around DU 18 Unyielding Space qiang jian 強間 – and the anterior that closes between seven to eighteen months after birth – at DU 22 Fontanelle Meeting xin hui 囟會.

At birth the occipital bone at the back, the parietal bones at the sides and the frontal bones at the front are not yet fused, ossification is incomplete, allowing some compression of the skull during birth. The points of the du mai at the top of the head are not yet set in bone. DU 20 from the beginning is in this unique area halfway between the two fontanelles. At the crown of the head, it retains this key position throughout life, becoming one of the most important acupuncture points, said traditionally to be able to treat ‘the one hundred diseases’.

DU 20 is also halfway between DU 19 Behind the Vertex hou ding 後頂 and DU 21 Before the Vertex qian ding 前頂. DU 20 is then seen as the vertex ding 頂. Its alternative names reinforce this viewpoint: Mountain Top dian shang 巔上 and Ridge Top ling shang 嶺上. In internal alchemy the area of the top of the head is known as the nine peaks of the Kunlun mountains, as shown in the daoist Inner Landscape Map neijingtu 內景圖.

It is interesting to note that strictly speaking DU 21 is at the highest point on the body and DU 20 is in a hollow behind it. This may account for the fact that DU 20 is not only an extremely important and major reunion of yang, but also the upper sea of marrow, a yin nourisher of the highest order – hence its use in disorders of brain function such as memory loss, disorientation and depression. In the map picture DU 20 is represented by a pyramidal raised platform in amongst the peaks. It is not a peak, but a high place of reception, named the Spiritual Terrace of Yuluo (heaven) yu Luo ling tai 鬱羅靈臺.





Nine peaks of the Kunlun mountains, representing the top of the head. Note the pyramidal altar receiver in amongst the peaks representing DU 20 One Hundred Meetings bai hui 百會. This is named the Spiritual Terrace of the Yuluo (hHeaven) yu luo ling tai 鬱羅靈臺. Detail from the top section of the Inner Landscape Map neijingtu 內景圖

DU 20's most ancient name – given in the third-century acupuncture points text, the *Jiayijing* – is Three Yang Five Meetings san yang wu hui 三陽五會. The Three Yang san yang 三陽 show its connection with the three yang foot and hand meridians, so all the yang meridians. Some indicate it has a particular link with the foot tai yang bladder and foot shao yang gall bladder meridians – as well as an important link with the foot jue yin liver meridian, which is considered to end the meridian cycle. From DU 20 it descends down the spine, rises up the front with the ren mai and merges with the lung meridian to restart the cycle.

Lying high on the head and with its unique connection with the yang meridians and the meridian cycle, DU 20 has a particular power to attract and control all the yang in the body – supporting and raising the yang when it is weak and dispersing the yang when it is excessive. The Five Meetings wu hui 五會 indicate its yin power to gather and anchor all the movements of the yang. Some compare it to the pole star, that remains still while all the heavenly bodies move around it. In taiji and qigong DU 20 is seen to give an axis around which everything turns. It is the puppet master's master string.



One can see why this point is indicated for the one hundred diseases

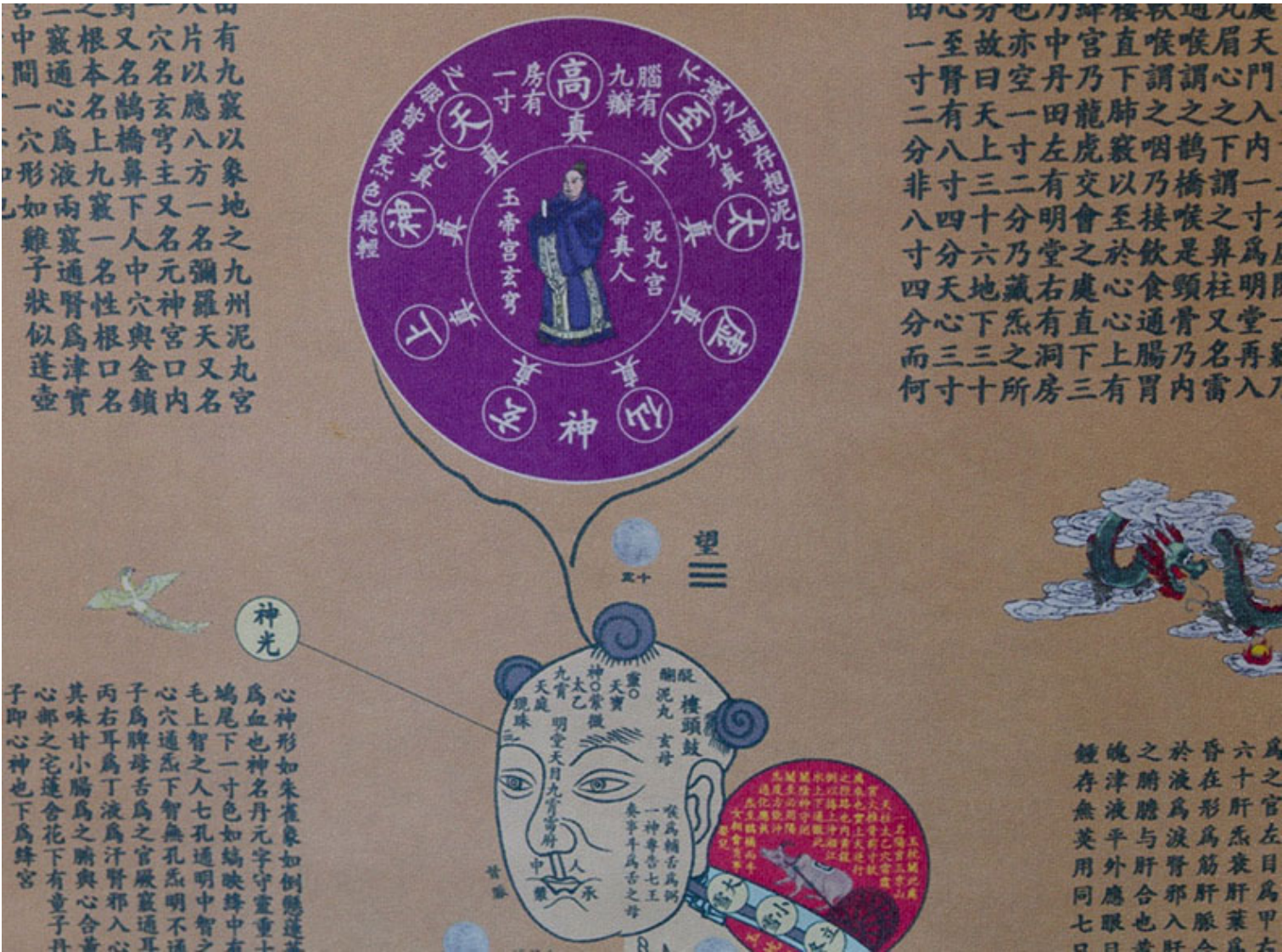
This strong connection to the yang and the liver means this point is well indicated to pacify wind and subdue yang. It is therefore important for wind stroke, fainting, dizziness, difficulty speaking, heavy head, hypertension and agitation. In such cases I always combine it with points below, such as LIV 3 Great Rushing tai chong 太衝 and KID 3 Great Ravine tai xi 太谿.

The location of DU 20 at the top of the head is the same as the sahasrara chakra – the thousand petalled lotus of the Indian yogic system, the highest chakra or energy wheel. The classic *Siva Samhita* text describes it: 'In the space in the centre of the thousand petalled lotus dwells the moon. From that triangular place, elixir is continually exuding, the moon-fluid of immortality'. This place is then a link to the elixir of immortality, which while not part of the Chinese medical vocabulary is certainly an intrinsic part of the language of internal alchemy neidan 內丹.

An alternative name for DU 20 is Mud Ball Palace ni wan gong 泥丸宮, the name of the upper dan tian elixir

field. The upper dan tian is also linked to the extra point M-HN-3 Seal Hall yin tang 印堂, as it is considered to be deep inside the head, three inches in from that area between the eyebrows. Here in DU 20 we see that it gives access to the field from above. Its name, A Hundred Meetings bai hui 百會 shows both its connections within the body and its connections to what lies outside, above and beyond the body – the realm of the immortals. It is a link between the visible and the invisible, the material and the immaterial, the finite and the infinite.

The daoist internal alchemy Cultivating Authenticity Map xiuzhentu 修真圖 shows at the top of the head a division of the upper dan tian elixir field into nine sections from the mud pill palace to the bright hall. These nine sections correspond to the nine heavens of authenticity zhen 真 shown in a circular diagram above the head, from high authenticity to heaven authenticity, different levels of attainment of spiritual immortality, the highest goal of alchemical daoism.



The nine sections of the upper dan tian elixir field in the head and the nine heaven levels of authenticity attaining spiritual immortality in the circular diagram above the head. Detail from the Cultivating Authenticity Map xiu zhen tu 修真圖.

Now most of us are busy enough with our own lives and pay little, if any, attention to such high concepts – but we would be wise to at least be aware of them and their specific relationship with the areas of the three elixir fields san dan tian 三丹田. The lower dan tian lies in the lower abdomen – REN 4 Origin Pass guan yuan 關元 to REN 6 Sea of Qi qi hai 氣海. The middle dan tian lies in the chest – REN 17 Central Temple dan zhong 膻中. The upper dan tian lies in the head – Seal Hall yin tang 印堂 or DU 20 A Hundred Meetings bai hui 百會.

Li Shizhen's obvious familiarity with such internal alchemy concepts gives an added depth to his classic 16th

century text *Exposition on the Eight Extraordinary Vessels qi jing ba mai kao* 奇經八脈考. His presentation tries to bring these diverse medical and alchemical influences together to achieve a deeper understanding. We need to respect this perception and be open to this perspective. After all, monks with their clean-shaven heads want not even a single hair in the way!

The medical text 'Ode to the Streamer out of the Dark' directly connects DU 20 with heaven, listing the three powers, heaven, earth and man and saying that DU 20 A Hundred Meetings bai hui 百會 echoes heaven, REN 21 Jade Pivot xuan ji 璇璣 echoes man, and KID 1 Bubbling Spring yong quan 涌泉 echoes the earth. One of DU 20's alternative names is Heavenly Fullness tian man 天滿, indicating again its powerful link to heaven and the spirit shen 神.

Importantly DU 20 is the upper sea of marrow point. The brain is the sea of marrow. Its transport points are DU 20 A Hundred Meetings bai hui 百會 and DU 16 Wind Pool feng chi 風池. When there is a surplus in the sea of marrow, 'the body will be light, agile, possessed of great strength, and one will have the ability to accomplish what is normally beyond oneself'. What a wonderful description of extreme good health we can all aspire to!

When there is an insufficiency in the sea of marrow, 'the brain will spin, the ears will ring, there will be aching pain in the lower legs, dizziness, and loss of vision, indolence and somnolence'. Here is a devastating loss of vitality, where the eyes and ears no longer function clearly, there is pain and dizziness, sleepiness and exhaustion. One can see why this point is indicated for the one hundred diseases.



It is wonderful to think how such a simple treatment can have so strong and effective a result

At this point at the height of yang comes the deep recovery of the yin. Remember DU 20 and DU 16 for premature aging, for loss of memory, for dementia, for recovery from deep trauma states, for disconnection with the higher aspects of the brain, for regaining consciousness itself.

The importance of this area is extended by the four extra points around DU 20, one cun anterior, posterior and lateral to it – the M-HN-1 Four Alert Spirits si shen cong 四神聰. Cong 聰 means intelligent, clever, bright, able to understand what one hears, so these points help to sharpen that aspect – an excellent combination to use with DU 20 as a set. They calm and nourish the spirit, while dispersing wind. Remember them in stroke, loss of memory, reduced vision and hearing, insomnia, instability, depression and mental confusion. I use them with DU 20 for those who have lost connection to themselves, for example after retirement or loss of a person close to them from separation or death. They lift the sunken spirit.

The image of lifting what has fallen is an appropriate one for DU 20. It is one of the best points for raising yang and treating prolapse – traditionally of the anus, but this was later extended to the uterus and stomach. It is also used for haemorrhoids. A colleague of mine told me that when she was in China she saw a woman in her late twenties treated successfully for prolapse of the uterus. She came to the hospital daily for outpatient treatment and was treated with DU 20 A Hundred Meetings bai hui 百會 combined with REN 1 Meeting of Yin hui yin 會陰 – two key hui 會 meeting points of the du mai and ren mai. The two points were inserted as she lay on her knees on the couch and remained there for 20 minutes. It is wonderful to think how such a simple treatment can have so strong and effective a result.

A polymath's point, a meditator's muse, few acupuncture points lie so high and treat so deep. Equal parts leader and receiver, in its primal position DU 20 integrates all we contain and shows us the door beyond.

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