

Got Lom?

By Eric Spivack

In Volume II of the *Living Traditions* newsletter, I wrote about the similarities and differences between Thai Yoga Massage and Acupuncture, both of which are energetic systems helpful in treating various conditions. I also wrote about how some Thai *sen* lines compared with Chinese meridians.

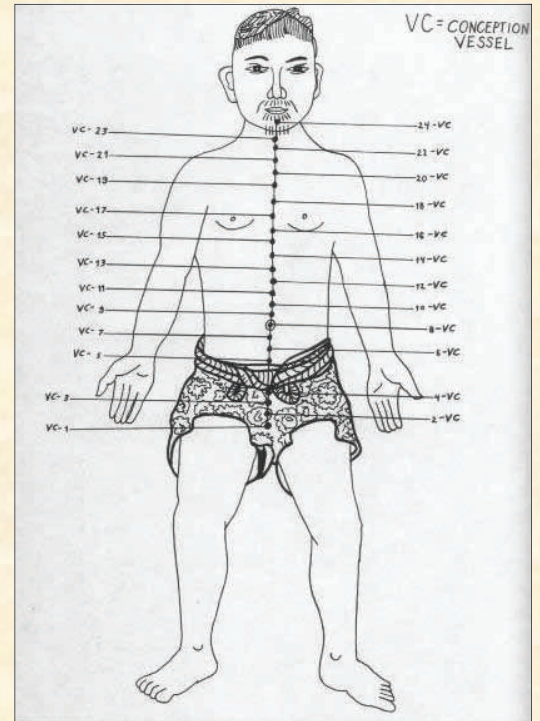
In this issue, I'd like to delve a little deeper into the Chinese theories of *Qi* and *Yin/Yang* and see how they compare with the Thai concept of *lom*, which means *wind* or *breath*.

Qi, *lom*, *prana*, *ki*, *breath*, and *spirit* are different words with the same meaning: They all refer to "life force", the energy that gives us life. If you've ever had the opportunity to be in the presence of a cadaver, I'm sure you've noticed that the physical remains are a mere shell of that which once housed the person's *qi* or *lom*.

The Thai word *sin* means 'to end, finish or stop'. Interestingly, when one combines *sin* and *lom*, the meaning becomes "to stop breathing" or "to pass away". Without that vital energy, we are dead or "*sin lom*".

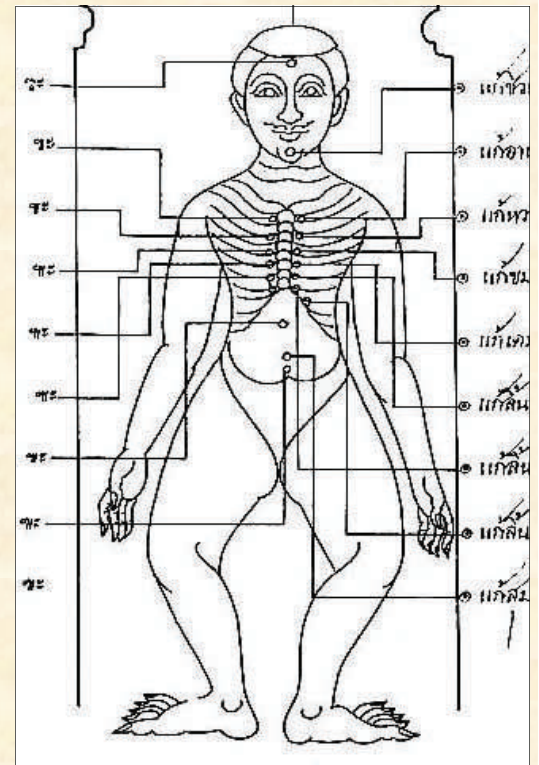
An important concept in acupuncture and Chinese medicine is that of *yin* and *yang*, which are complementary and opposite forms of energy. In order for one to exist, so must the other. For example, we cannot know the feeling of joy unless we have experienced sadness, and vice versa. In general, *yin* qualities include things which are cool, dark, damp, quiet, passive and female. *Yin* also represents the anterior and medial surfaces of the body. On the other hand, *yang* represents *yin*'s complementary opposite: hot, light, dry, loud, active, male, as well as, the posterior and lateral surfaces of the body. Each living creature, including ourselves, possesses both *yin* and *yang* characteristics.

When a client seeks a practitioner for pain relief in Chinese medicine, we think of their body as experiencing some degree of imbalance in their *yin* and *yang* energies. There may be too little or too much of one of these energies in a particular area. Similarly in Thai medicine we can think of a person's discomfort as a result of an imbalance in one of four different Thai elements: *lom/wind* (breath and circulation); *naam/water* (blood and bodily fluids); *din/earth* (solids such as bone, muscle, tendons and ligaments); and *fai/fire* (digestion and metabolism). By palming and stretching our clients, we are helping to release energetic blockages, to enhance their breathing, and to increase their life force. As a result, our clients (and we ourselves) feel better after a session. The energies are more balanced, and pain is diminished.



Above, a Chinese rendering of treatment points along Ren Mai. (Courtesy Eric Spivack)

Below, a Thai drawing of therapy points associated, for the most part, with *sen* Sumana. (Courtesy David Bliss)



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