

MONOGRAPHS

CHINESE HERBAL MAGICK

The operative reading of the materia medica



Hand-coloured Chinese materia medica album leaf, annotated 五葷第一 (the five pungents, item one).

大蒜

Dà Suàn

Garlic · Allii sativi Bulbus

ZACHARY LUI

CONTENTS

The classical drug books give garlic a category and a dose. A folk record hangs it over a door. This monograph argues that these are one operation: the action the entry describes over and over is the action a threshold asks for.

The operative sheet	3
PART ONE · THE RECORD	4
1.1 Identification	4
1.2 The name	5
1.3 The five keys	5
1.4 What the record gives, and what went missing	6
1.5 The calendar and the evil month	8
1.6 The five pungents, and the platter	9
1.7 Garlic and the dead	11
PART TWO · THE READING	12
2.1 The verbs	12
2.2 What the year is to the plant	14
2.3 Fire and Metal	15
2.4 Whichever door is open	16
2.5 One aggression, two scales	16
2.6 In practice	17
PART THREE · CONTACT	19
3.1 Contact with the plant, transcribed	19
3.2 Reading the contact against the record	19
Sources and method	21

Three parts, and they are not the same kind of writing. The divisions are the point. **Transmitted**, a named source says it and the passage is given. **Read**, I am arguing from what the sources say to something they do not say. **Received**, it is my own direct experience of the plant and has no source at all, except where a section is marked otherwise. Where it disagrees with the record, the record is printed too.

This is history and practice writing, not medical advice. In Ontario, acupuncture is a regulated health service; divination, ritual, qigong and herbal formulation for spiritual purposes are not, and are not offered to diagnose, treat or cure any condition. Nothing here is a prescription, a dose or a remedy for a condition. The formulas quoted are historical text, and nothing in them is to be taken internally. It is correspondence, cosmology and ritual operation, and nothing else.

The operative sheet

大蒜 Garlic

*A one-page working summary. **The record** means the classical texts, **the entry** the Compendium's garlic entry. **Transmitted** is the record's words, **read** is argument from them, **received** is my own experience.*

WHAT IT DOES

transmitted

去 **remove** · 除 **eliminate** · 破 **break** · 爛 **rot down** · 伏 **hold down**

Not one of them wards. Each acts on something already present. None of them interposes.

THE ONE RULE

read

It goes at what is there. It does not stand between things.

Purpose protective, method aggressive. Safety is the by-product of the attack, never the substitute for it.

WHOLE AND CUT

read

Whole **Holds.** Nothing is released until something opens it. A condition maintained.

Cut **Releases.** Pounded, chewed, pressed: how the record mostly works it. An event.

Same plant, two rates. Choose by whether you want a condition maintained or something to happen now.

TWO SCALES, ONE ACTION

read

In a person Clears what got in.

At a threshold Makes arrival unpleasant.

Neither is a wall. One hostility, aimed at a body or at a place.

REACH FOR IT WHEN

read

- **The threshold.** A door, a gate, a sill. Something in that should be out, or out and pressing in.
- **The crossing.** A journey, a move, a hospital, a courtroom. Any passage you would rather not be followed through.
- **The foreign thing.** Something got in that is not yours. Inside or outside, same action.
- **The solitary bulb.** 獨子, the undivided head. The ghost-killing is said of this form only: 1.4.

DIRECTION

transmitted

Outward 散 disperses, at the surface

Downward 下氣 drives qi downward, 引熱下行 leads heat down

Upward 吐出如蛇狀 vomits out a thing shaped like a snake, expulsion as method

It does not pick one exit. The route is the situation's to choose.

SITE

energetic, not literal

Openings: nose, ears, lower gate. 達諸竅 (reaches all the orifices). Surface: navel, soles, skin.

Direct the qi to an opening. Put nothing into one. This is the operative form of what the entry does with a slice of garlic laid on the skin, and it is qigong work.

PAIRING

read

The only plant hung beside garlic in any source here is sago palm, in the Canton report at 1.5. 菖蒲 (calamus) and 艾 (mugwort) are the classical plants of that day and garlic is not among them: pairing it with them is a choice, not a transmission.

THE CALENDAR

transmitted

New Year **Eaten.** 五辛盤, the five-pungent platter. Issue forth what is yours, remove what is not, ward what the season brings.

Fifth of the fifth **Gathered.** The midsummer festival day. A drug date in the medical record by 1406. The only dated report of a bulb over a door is 1876.

Eat the emergence. Hang the completion. Spring shoot, summer bulb. Read, not transmitted: 2.2.

IT HAS TO BE WORKED

transmitted

The record almost never leaves it alone. Roasted through 煨熟, pounded 擣, rolled into pills 擣丸, chewed to a pulp 爛嚼, pressed for juice 擣汁, made into relish 作齏, sliced under burning moxa 蒜錢灸法.

Used whole it is still acted on: rubbed 摩, trimmed at both ends 削去兩頭, plugged into a passage 塞. **Cutting is not what makes it work. It is what makes it work fast.**

WHAT IT WILL NOT DO

read

It does not soothe and it does not shelter. Sealing and screening: wrong plant. It does treat sores, 療瘡癰, and that works by clearing rather than covering. **Whether it fills is the one thing left in dispute,** against 宣通溫補 (frees the flow, warms and tonifies) and 健脾 (strengthens the spleen).

Sun Simiao bars it alongside every tonic, a rule about taking the two together. What it gives back is what the clearing made room for.

HANDLING

my caution, not a fault in the record

Acrid, warm, toxic. Prolonged eating is said to harm the eyes.

Nothing into nose, ears or rectum. Not fixed against skin. Not a bath herb, not a dream pillow. Reasons in Part Two.

I

PART ONE · THE RECORD

TRANSMITTED

What the sources say, and what they refuse to say. Every quotation below is given with its source, and where the sources disagree, or the source itself is uncertain, that is said at the point of quoting. **The passages are not mine. Setting them against each other is.**

1.1 Identification

Entry	葫 in 本草綱目 (the Compendium of Materia Medica), 李時珍 Li Shizhen, 1596. It quotes the 名醫別錄 (Supplementary Records), a much older book. Checked here against the 證類本草 (Classified Materia Medica) of 1108, in two surviving copies: the Siku Quanshu manuscript of 1782 and the Sibu Congkan photo-reprint of the 政和 (Zhenghe) edition of 1116
Name	大蒜 (great allium), filed in the classical record under 葫 (the Hu allium, the foreign one)
Pharmaceutical	Allii sativi Bulbus
Part used	Bulb
Modern category	Herbs that expel parasites, in Bensky, the standard English textbook. Chinese teaching texts shelve it instead among substances that kill parasites and stop itching, applied topically.
Gathered	Fifth day of the fifth month. The single-clove bulb is singled out: 獨子者亦佳 (also good) in the Supplementary Records as the Classified Materia Medica preserves that text; the Compendium quotes the same line, still under 別錄 (the Supplementary Records), but as 入藥尤佳 (especially fine for use in medicine).
Its year	李時珍 Li Shizhen, in the Collected Explanations: 大小二蒜皆八月種，春食苗，夏初食薹，五月食根，秋月收種 (both garlics, the large and the small, are sown in the eighth month; in spring one eats the shoots, in early summer the flower stalk, in the fifth month the root, and in the autumn months one gathers seed-stock). Eighth-month sowing is attested to the Eastern Han, 25 to 220, through 崔寔 Cui Shi quoted in the sixth-century 齊民要術 (Essential Techniques for the Common People).

1.2 The name

The 釋名 (Explanation of Names) opens with Tao Hongjing assigning the two names to the two graphs: 今人謂葫為大蒜，蒜為小蒜，以其氣類相似也 (people now call 葫 the great allium and 蒜 the small allium, because their qi and kind are alike).

Then the arrival story, the one every herbal still repeats. Li Shizhen quotes 孫愐 Sun Mian's lost Tang rhyme dictionary: 張騫使西域，始得大蒜、葫荽 (Zhang Qian went as envoy to the Western Regions and first obtained garlic and coriander). The line as the 廣韻 (Guangyun, Broad Rhymes, 1008) transmits it has neither the 始 (the word "first") nor the same graph for coriander, writing 胡 where the Compendium writes 葫, the same character with the plant-sign added on top:

張騫使西域得大蒜、葫荽 (Zhang Qian went as envoy to the Western Regions and obtained garlic and coriander). **The arrival story does not survive contact with the histories, and has not for a century.** Berthold Laufer demolished the whole "Zhang Qian brought back X" formula in *Sino-Iranica* (1919), garlic included; what follows is his finding, rechecked here against the texts, and the point worth making is that the materia medica literature has gone on printing the story for a hundred years since. The 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian) and the 漢書 (History of the Han) credit alfalfa and grapevine to 漢使 (the Han envoys, unnamed), Zhang Qian is the subject of neither sentence, and the character 蒜 does not occur anywhere in either history, checked across the full text of both, Yan Shigu's seventh-century notes on the 漢書 included. The formula is not the dictionary's own either: the sixth-century 齊民要術 (Essential Techniques for the Common People) already quotes it from the 博物志 (Records of Diverse Matters). **It is one link in a chain of quotation, and the chain does not agree with itself.**

What the name carries is not a date of arrival. It carries foreignness, and that is what the tradition works with. The conclusion is Li Shizhen's own, marked with 則 (so then):

則小蒜乃中土舊有，而大蒜出胡地，故有胡名 (so then the small allium was already here in the Central Lands, while garlic came out of the Hu territory, and therefore bears the Hu name).

The graph itself holds no secret, and it is worth saying so before someone builds on one. 大蒜 is big garlic, 大 marking size against 小蒜. In 葫, the 胡 is the phonetic, the part that carries the sound and not the sense, and a sound-part on its own means nothing: 湖 (lake) is built on the same 胡 and does not say foreign. Sound-parts do sometimes carry meaning, which is the 右文 question, an old and unsettled argument about whether sound-parts carry meaning, but this is not one of those cases. The foreignness is in the name the graph abbreviates, 胡蒜 (Hu garlic, the foreign allium), not in the strokes.

1.3 The five keys

Flavour

辛 (acrid)

Nature	溫 (warm), in the 氣味 (Qi and Flavour) of the Compendium. 有毒 (toxic). 久食損人目 (prolonged eating harms the eyes). Not uniform across sources: 朱震亨 Zhu Zhenheng, better known as Danxi, gives 大蒜屬火，性熱喜散 (garlic belongs to fire, its nature hot and fond of scattering). 陶弘景 Tao Hongjing, also on the small allium: 味辛性熱 (acrid in flavour, hot in nature). 孫思邈 Sun Simiao gives 無毒 (non-toxic), but of the small allium, not this one. The 隨息居飲食譜 (Dietary Records from the Studio of Following One's Ease), a nineteenth-century diet manual, splits it by preparation: raw, acrid and hot; cooked, sweet and warm. Reported here from the secondary literature.
Channels entered	The channels are the routes a drug is said to run in, and the organ names below are functions rather than the physical organs. Large Intestine, Lung, Spleen, Stomach. Li Shizhen's own line is 入太陰、陽明 (enters the greater-yin and the yang-brightness): two of the six named channel-pairs, each linking an arm channel to a leg one. The four-channel list is the modern unpacking of it.
Modern actions	Kills parasites. 解毒 (resolves toxicity). Transforms meat and breaks up food that has stopped and is sitting. Unblocks hardened matter that has piled up. Promotes qi movement. Warms the Stomach, strengthens the Spleen. Expels cold-dampness.
Sources	The Compendium of Materia Medica for the classical lines. Bensky and Kim for the modern actions and for the channel list.

1.4 What the record gives, and what went missing

What follows is a collation, and it has a point: nearly every function the modern entry dropped is a function aimed at something with intent. Li Shizhen reports the earlier authorities rather than replacing them. Six voices carry the Indications of the garlic entry: the Supplementary Records, Su Gong in the seventh century, Chen Cangqi in the eighth, Rihuazi around the tenth, Kou Zongshi in the twelfth, and Li Shizhen himself in the sixteenth. Five of them matter here; Kou Zongshi carries no line that bears on this. The Supplementary Records give, in Li Shizhen's arrangement, 歸五臟，散癰腫蠱瘡，除風邪，殺毒氣 (homes to the five zang, disperses abscesses, swellings and eroding sores, eliminates wind-evil, kills toxic qi); the five zang are the heart, lung, liver, spleen and kidney; the Classified Materia Medica puts the same phrase, 歸五藏 (homes to the five zang, in the older graph), after 殺毒氣 (kills toxic qi), not before. Li Shizhen is rearranging, not adding. Su Gong, as Li Shizhen prints him, gives 下氣，消穀，化肉 (drives qi downward, digests grain, transforms meat), though 化肉 is not Su Gong's. The 新修本草 (the Newly Revised Materia Medica, 659), which survives only in fragments and in reconstruction from the Classified Materia Medica and so is not fully independent of it, reads with that text 下氣，消穀，除風，破冷 (drives qi downward, digests grain,

eliminates wind, breaks cold). The third verb is Li Shizhen's doing, and he did not invent it: 化肉 is Danxi's, from the 氣味 of the same entry a few lines above, 大蒜屬火，性熱喜散，快膈，善化肉 (garlic belongs to fire, its nature hot and fond of scattering; it eases the diaphragm and is good at transforming meat). Li Shizhen lifted the verb into Su Gong's slot. Nothing in Part Two rests on it; it is here to show how the entry was built. Then the eighth century, and the longest run in the entry.

去水惡瘴氣，除風濕，破冷氣，
爛疔癰，伏邪惡，宣通溫補，
療瘡癰，殺鬼去痛。

Removes noxious miasmal qi from water. Eliminates wind-damp. Breaks cold qi. Rots away lumps and accumulations. Holds down the malign. Frees the flow, warms and tonifies. Treats sores and ringworm. Kills ghosts and stops pain.

陳藏器 *Chen Cangqi*, 本草拾遺 (*Gleanings of the Materia Medica*), 8th c., as Li Shizhen condenses it

That eight-item string is Li Shizhen's tidying. In the *Gleanings* as the 證類本草 (*Classified Materia Medica*) preserves it, Chen Cangqi's run is six, closed by 無以加之 (nothing surpasses it); 療瘡癰 is a separate sentence further down; and 殺鬼去痛 is said not of garlic at large but of the single-clove bulb, 獨顆者殺鬼去痛，入用最良 (the single-clove ones kill ghosts and stop pain, and are the best of all for use). **The ghost-killing belongs to one form of the plant, not to the plant.**

Rihuazi is in the same entry, and his line is the one most often missed. 日華子, around the turn of the tenth century, as the *Siku* text, the eighteenth-century imperial copy, preserves him:

健脾，治腎氣，止霍亂轉筋腹痛，除邪辟溫，去蠱毒，療勞瘵冷風疔癰，溫疫氣 (strengthens the spleen, treats kidney qi, stops violent vomiting and purging with cramp and belly pain, eliminates the malign and wards off epidemic, removes gu poison, treats taxation-malaria, cold wind, abdominal masses and epidemic qi), taxation-malaria being a wasting recurrent fever; 蠱 (gu) is the poison-craft set out in the next section. Li Shizhen prints the same line as 除邪崇，解溫疫 (eliminates malignant haunting, resolves epidemic disease), turning 辟 (ward off) into 解 (resolve). And in his own 發明 (*Elucidation*) he writes:

葫蒜入太陰、陽明，其氣薰烈，能通五臟，達諸竅，去寒濕，辟邪惡，消癰腫，化癥積肉食 (garlic enters Taiyin and Yangming; its qi is fuming and fierce; it frees the five zang and reaches all the orifices, removes cold-damp, wards off the malign, disperses abscesses and swellings, and transforms concretions, accumulations and meat in the food).

Note the verb 辟 (ward off) in that summary, and its absence from Chen Cangqi's run. Part Two takes it up. And one line from the 發明 of the *small* allium says which way gu is driven out:

則蒜乃吐蠱要藥，而後人鮮有知者 (the small allium, then, is a chief drug for vomiting out gu, and

later generations have rarely known it). Three case narratives are attached to it. The mechanism is stated: bring the thing up and out.

Now set the eight-item string against the modern entry. Carried across, loosely: eliminating wind-damp, breaking cold, rotting down accumulations, freeing the flow and warming, and treating sores in the topical use the teaching texts keep. **Not carried at all:** removing noxious miasmal qi, holding down the malign, killing ghosts. Add 除邪崇 (eliminates malignant haunting) and 辟邪惡 (wards off the malign) from the same entry. Nothing in the modern entry corresponds to any of them; 解毒 (resolves toxicity) is the nearest thing on the list and it is not the same claim.

The losses are not scattered. Nearly every function that went is aimed at something with intent, and the exception is instructive: 瘴氣 (miasmal qi) has no will at all, and it drops out because modern entries drop the geography. Nor did the intentional category go quietly. 蠱 survived by being redescribed as parasites, and 殺毒氣 (kills toxic qi) is the plausible ancestor of the modern 解毒. **What went was not simply the intentional. Some of it was laundered.**

1.5 The calendar and the evil month

The harvest is the fifth day of the fifth month. One caution: the Supplementary Records give 五月五日採 (gathered on the fifth day of the fifth month) for the small allium as well, so it is a formulaic collection date rather than something distinctive to garlic.

That day is the height of the fifth month, which 宗懔 Zong Lin's sixth-century 荆楚歲時記 (Record of the Seasons of Jing and Chu) calls 惡月 (the evil month). The familiar roster of the 五毒 (the five poisons), centipede, gecko, scorpion, snake and toad, is the one modern accounts give, and it has no pre-modern list behind it that this search reached; in the 周禮 (Rites of Zhou) the five poisons are a compound drug, five minerals in Zheng Xuan's commentary. What the venomous creatures share with the day is 蠱 (gu), which the 隋書 (History of the Sui) says is made on the fifth of the fifth: 其法以五月五日聚百種蟲，大者至蛇，小者至蝨，合置器中，令自相啖，餘一種存者留之 (the method is that on the fifth day of the fifth month a hundred kinds of creature are gathered, the largest a snake and the smallest a louse, put together in a vessel and made to devour one another, and the one kind left over is kept).

Garlic is not among the classical plants of that festival. Those are 菖蒲 (calamus) and 艾 (mugwort), in 宗懔 Zong Lin's sixth-century 荆楚歲時記 (Record of the Seasons of Jing and Chu). That book survives largely through encyclopaedia quotation, and its silence about garlic carries only as far as the quotations that survive. A Ming account is more direct. 田汝成 Tian Rucheng's 熙朝樂事 (Festive Doings of a Glorious Reign), around 1547, says what Hangzhou households did on the day: 家家買葵榴蒲艾植之堂中 (every household buys hollyhock, pomegranate, calamus and mugwort and sets them up in the hall). Garlic is not in that list. The doorway custom belongs to a late and local layer, and the report behind it is worth stating exactly, because it is thinner than it sounds. Michel Strickmann, a modern historian of Chinese religion, quotes it; he does not observe it. His source is N. B. Dennys, *The Folk-Lore of China* (1876), page 70, and the passage there is about children. Dennys is

describing how parents at Canton marked their infant children on the fifth day of the fifth month, and the garlic arrives as an attendant clause: *“leaves of the sago palm and garlic bulbs being at the same time suspended over the entrance doors to prevent the intrusion of evil spirits.”*

Three things follow. **Garlic is not alone at that door**; it hangs with sago palm. **The door is not what the sentence is about**; the hanging is a side clause, something happening at the same time. And the chain is a Victorian folklore compiler, quoted in passing by a modern scholar, reaching this page at third hand. Later gazetteer notices are cited beside it in the modern literature, and this monograph reaches those at second hand only. **Dennys is the only doorway notice read here in full, and everything on this page that rests on the hanging rests on him.**

The date is a different matter, and the Compendium settles it. Three of its own formulas call for garlic gathered or made on that day. Two are for intermittent fevers and fluxes: 端午日取獨頭蒜煨熟 (on the Duanwu day take single-clove garlic and roast it through), Duanwu being the fifth-of-the-fifth festival, for alternating fever and chills, and 端午日以獨頭蒜十箇、黃丹二錢擣丸 (pound ten single-clove bulbs with two qian, about seven grams, of red lead into pills) for cold malaria and cold dysentery. Li Shizhen attributes both to the 普濟方 (Formulas of Universal Benefit) of 1406, where both stand in cognate but not identical form: its 蒜丹 (the Garlic and Red Lead Pills) takes one bulb and half a liang of red lead, pounded at noon on the day. The ten bulbs are his, and so is the smaller dose of lead: two qian against half a liang, which is five qian. The third, 端午日收獨蒜 (on the Duanwu day collect single-clove garlic) for cold-damp pain, is from 唐瑤 Tang Yao's book of tested formulas. Garlic is attached to the fifth of the fifth inside the medical record by 1406, as a day for gathering the single-clove bulb, and the only dated doorway notice anywhere in this monograph is 1876. **What is attested late is the doorway, not the date.**

The set called 天中五瑞 (the Five Auspicious Signs of Heaven's Centre), where garlic is usually said to sit, is modern: living folk custom, with no classical citation found here. The search is at the back, under Bounded negatives, the list of what was looked for and not found.

1.6 The five pungents, and the platter

Before any religious code got to it, the dictionary had decided what this plant was. The 說文解字 (Explaining Graphs and Analysing Characters), second century, defines it in two words, 蒜：葷菜也 (garlic: a pungent vegetable), as the 說文解字篆韻譜 (the Shuowen Seal-Script Rhyme Tables, 10th c.), the 集韻 (Collected Rhymes, 1037) and the sixth-century farming manual all cite it; then defines that word, in the received text: 葷：臭菜也 (pungent vegetable: a strong-smelling vegetable). In Han usage 臭 is odour as such rather than stink, so the definition is descriptive and the judgement comes later.

Garlic is defined by its smell before it is defined by anything else, three centuries before the vinaya, the Buddhist monastic code, reaches Chinese: the 十誦律 (Ten-Recitation Vinaya) around 404, the 四分律 (the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya), translated 410 to 412, and two more within the decade. The religious rules do not decide that this plant smells wrong. They inherit it.

Li Shizhen gives three versions of the prohibition: the form-refiners, the Daoists and the Buddhists each bar a set of 五葷 (five pungents). Garlic proper is in two of them and heads the Buddhist list; the Daoist set names the small allium instead. The Daoist bar is ritual rather than moral. The 雲笈七籤 (Seven Slips from the Cloudy Satchel) puts 並不得食蔥、薤、韭、蒜、乳酪等 (one must not eat scallion, shallot, chives, garlic or dairy) inside the preparation for the 朝禮, the audience before the perfected, the realized adepts: bathe in peach decoction the day before, and eat none of these. No reason is given. What it regulates is fitness to approach. Li Shizhen supplies a reason and it is not stench alone: 辛臭昏神伐性 (their acidity and stench fog the spirit and hew at one's nature), 生食增恚, 熟食發嬌 (eaten raw they increase anger, cooked they provoke lust).

The Buddhist rule has an origin story, and it is not the story that gets told. In the 四分律 (the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya) a nun is given garlic by a field owner, keeps going back, and sends novices to strip the rest. The rebuke names the fault exactly: 云何不見主拔取他蒜盡 (how could you, with the owner not present, pull up the whole of another man's garlic). The offence is greed. The plant is incidental. There is no lust in the passage, no demons, and no mention of smell. The famous reason comes from two other texts and neither holds the whole of it: the 梵網經 (the Brahma's Net Sutra) supplies the list of five and no reason, and the 楞嚴經 (the Shurangama Sutra) supplies the reason and names none of the plants. **The version most people carry, that garlic was banned because it inflames desire and attracts ghosts, is the last layer laid over the first, and the first is not about the plant at all.**

And the prohibition is not the whole of it. The same plants have their own rite at the other end of the calendar, and its stated purpose is not what it is usually reported to be.

主治：歲朝食之，助發五臟氣。常食，溫中去惡氣，消食下氣。

Indications: eaten on the year's morning, it helps issue forth the qi of the five zang. Eaten regularly it warms the centre, dispels malign qi, disperses food and drives qi downward.

陳藏器 *Chen Cangqi*, c. 739, in the 五辛菜 (five-pungent greens) entry of 本草綱目

That is the same voice as the eight functions. Chen Cangqi wrote both, and the platter carries its own clearing verb, 去惡氣 (dispels malign qi), without borrowing anything from the drug entry. The rationale is older than him again: the note on Zhou Chu's third-century 風土記 (Records of Local Customs) reads 五辛所以發五臟氣 (the five pungents are the means by which the qi of the five zang is issued forth). And the warding purpose is older than Li Shizhen. The Classified Materia Medica of 1108 quotes 孫真人食忌 (Sun the Perfected Man's Dietary Prohibitions) inside this drug's own entry, 正月之節食五辛以辟厲氣，一日蒜 (at the first-month festival one eats the five pungents to ward off pestilential qi, garlic among them). And the sentence Li Shizhen credits to Su Song in the leek entry, 昔人正月節食五辛以辟癘氣 (people of old ate the five pungents at the first-month festival to ward off pestilential qi), is older still: in the Classified Materia Medica it belongs to the ninth-century 食醫心鏡 (Mirror of the Heart of Dietary Medicine), not to Su Song. Li Shizhen's own phrasing comes later, under

瘟疫 (epidemic): 立春、元旦作五辛盤食，辟瘟疫 (at the Beginning of Spring and on New Year's Day, make it into a five-pungent platter and eat it, to ward off epidemic).

Only then does he add 取迎新之義 (taking the sense of welcoming the new), in the 集解 (Collected Explanations, his own commentary section). **That reading is the youngest thing here, and it is the one everybody repeats.** What the record actually gives the platter is three jobs at one moment: 發 (issue forth) what is yours, 去 (remove) what is not, and 辟 (ward off) what the season is bringing.

Same plants, opposite instruction. What a monk may not eat is what a household eats deliberately at the turn of the year.

1.7 Garlic and the dead

One tale puts garlic and a ghost in the same house and is unusually precise about what happens.

夏侯文規 Xiahou Wengui, dead a year, comes home in a cart with a retinue, announcing himself as Grand Administrator of Beihai. He is comfortable, and the tale says early on that he is a habitual visitor, every month or so, sometimes staying half a day.

見庭中桃樹，乃曰：「此桃我所種，子甚美好。」其婦曰：「人言亡者畏桃，君何為不畏？」答曰：「桃東南枝長二尺八寸向日者憎之，或亦不畏。」見地有蒜殼，令拾去之。觀其意，似憎蒜而畏桃也。

Seeing the peach tree in the courtyard he said, this peach I planted myself, and its fruit is very fine. His wife said, people say the dead fear peach; why do you not fear it? He answered, it is peachwood from a southeast-facing branch two chi eight cun, a little under seventy centimetres long, facing the sun, that they hate; otherwise there is nothing to fear. Seeing garlic husks lying on the ground, he ordered them picked up and taken away. Observing his manner, it seemed that he hated the garlic and feared the peach.

甄異傳 (Records of the Verified Strange), 戴祚 Dai Zuo, Eastern Jin, per the 隋書 (History of the Sui) bibliography; quoted in 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taiping Era), juan 325 (juan are scrolls, the divisions of a long book), whose end-title reads 甄異記, the same title with “records” for “traditions”

Be careful with what this shows, because it is smaller and better than it first looks. The garlic is one visit among many, he does not leave because of it, he has the husks removed, and the tale ends there.

Nothing was warded off and nothing was cleared out. **A dead man expressed disgust at garlic peelings and had them swept up.** The verbs will not split cleanly either: the closing line separates them, but that is the narrator's inference and he flags it with 似 (it seemed), and in his own mouth the dead man uses 憎 (hate) and 畏 (fear) of the peach in one breath.

What survives is the part worth having. The peach he flinches from has to meet a specification: a southeast branch, two chi eight cun, facing the sun. **Garlic has none. It was 蒜殼 (garlic husks) unswept on the ground, and it still registered.**

Two more tales put garlic near a death and neither is protective. In the 還冤記 (Records of Required Wrongs) an executed man returns carrying his own head and hands the official who doomed him a bowl of 蒜齏 (garlic relish); the man runs, cannot get away, eats it 不獲已 (having no choice), sickens and dies. The plant is the instrument, not the barrier. In a third, which the Siku text of the Extensive Records marks 闕 (lacking) and other recensions assign to the 廣五行記 (Expanded Records of the Five Phases), a strange monk asks whether there is garlic for the fish, is told 蒜盡 (the garlic is finished), and leaves; the host dies that night. The tale supplies its own pun: 蒜 (garlic) and 算 (reckoning) sound the same. 蒜者算也，年盡 (garlic is reckoning; his years were spent). **There, having garlic would have meant time remaining, and its exhaustion does not kill him; it announces the death.**

Three appearances, three registers: aversion, instrument, omen. **The plant is never neutral and never comfortable in any of them.** Beyond that the tales do not agree, and they should not be made to.

One prescription puts garlic directly against a named ghost illness:

鬼疰腹痛，不可忍者：獨頭蒜一枚，香墨如棗大，搗和醬汁一合，頓服 (ghost-infixion abdominal pain, in unbearable cases: one solitary-clove garlic and a piece of fragrant ink the size of a jujube, pounded with one 合 of soy liquor, drunk at a single draught), from the 永類鈐方 (Key Formulas of Every Category) of 1331. A 合 (ge) is on the order of a hundred millilitres in Yuan measure, and “ghost infixion” renders 鬼疰. The seventh-century 諸病源候論 (Treatise on the Origins and Symptoms of Disease) defines the illness: 注之言住也 (infixion means lodging), and 死後注易傍人，故謂之鬼注 (after the death it transfers to those nearby, and therefore it is called ghost infixion). **The illness lodges, will not move, and passes to the people standing next to you.**

II

PART TWO · THE READING

READ

The quotations are still the record. The conclusions drawn from them are not. **All of it is mine. It is kept here, apart from one further reading at 3.2, where the contact meets it.**

2.1 The verbs

Read Chen Cangqi’s run for its verbs alone. 去 (remove). 除 (eliminate). 破 (break). 爛 (rot down). 伏 (hold down). Five verbs, then a sixth item that is not one of them, 宣通溫補 (frees the flow, warms and tonifies), after which the run closes on 無以加之 (nothing surpasses it). 殺 (kill) belongs to a different sentence, and to the single-clove bulb.

Not one of the five means ward off, shield or guard. Every one is done to a thing that is already there. Nothing in that run stands between anything and anything else.

Then the warding verb arrives: 辟, to ward off, to keep away. Not with Li Shizhen, where only the Compendium puts it, but with Rihuazi around the turn of the tenth century, in this same drug's entry: 除邪辟溫 (eliminates the malign and wards off epidemic). Li Shizhen's editing hides that date: he takes the 辟 out of Rihuazi's line and puts one back in his own summary, so a reader working from the Compendium alone sees an eliminative record with a single Ming warding verb bolted on the end. That reader is looking at an editorial artefact.

One qualification. The Classified Materia Medica carries another 辟 in this entry, 孫真人食忌's 正月之節食五辛以辟厲氣，一日蒜 (at the first-month festival one eats the five pungents to ward off pestilential qi, garlic among them). But that is a warding purpose for the New Year platter, not a function of the drug. The first 辟 among this plant's own indications is Rihuazi's.

The eighth-century layer is eliminative throughout. Warding attaches to this plant by the tenth century and never leaves. That does not make the later layer false. It makes it later, and it means the operative core is the earlier one.

Two cautions on the verbs themselves. 伏 is the mildest: the 說文 (the Shuowen) defines it 司也 (to lie in wait) and the 康熙字典 (the Kangxi Dictionary) adds 匿藏也 (to conceal) and 屈服也 (to make submit). It means to make lie low, to keep latent, not to destroy. And 辟 is a different category of word from the other five: its own 說文 (Shuowen) gloss is 法也 (law), and the warding sense is borrowed from its relatives 避 (to avoid) and 闢 (to drive off), both built on the same 辟. That is part of why it stands out in a run of plain action verbs.

Read them away from the body and the three that matter run like this. 破冷氣 (breaks cold qi) treats the thing as solid enough to be broken rather than as a temperature to be corrected. And 冷氣 (cold qi) is a named Tang illness, not a metaphor, so the extension to whatever has gone cold and still in someone is a reading, not a line in the text. 爛疔癰 rots hardened masses. Not dissolved, not soothed away: rotted. And the entry does not say at what level they formed. 伏邪惡 subdues rather than repels, excludes or shuts out, and the entry never says where the malign is. **One rival reading has to be faced here, because it would cost a verb.** 伏邪 (latent evil) is a standing idea in the later fever literature, a pathogen that lodges and surfaces later, running from 冬傷於寒，春必溫病 (injured by cold in winter, in spring one must sicken with warm disease) through the Qing warm-disease writers. Read that way, 伏邪惡 would be a target, not an action, and the run would have four verbs rather than five. The construction is against it. The four items before it are all verb then object: 去水惡瘴氣 remove water-miasma, 除風濕 eliminate wind-damp, 破冷氣 break cold qi, 爛疔癰 rot hardened masses. A bare noun dropped into the middle of that chain has nothing to stand on. The item after it, 宣通溫補, is four verbs and no object, which is not a noun phrase either. If anything the standing term points the same way I do, inward, to something already lodged. **Internal or external, the action is identical, and it is aggressive in both directions.**

And not everything in the entry is done to a thing. 去痛 (stops pain), which the entry says of the single-clove bulb, is a benefit conferred on the person, as are 溫 (warms), 補 (supplements) and 療瘡癰 (treats sores and ringworm). **Some of the entry's functions act on you. Most act on something in you.**

2.2 What the year is to the plant

The medical date and the folk date are not two traditions. The harvest date proves nothing on its own, since 五月五日採 (gathered on the fifth day of the fifth month) is formulaic in the Supplementary Records. The three fifth-of-the-fifth formulas do prove it: they are medicine, they are 1406 and earlier, and the only dated notice of a bulb over a door is Dennys in 1876. **So the medical attachment is attested first.** The custom attached itself to a plant already in the hand on that day, already carrying functions built out of breaking, rotting and subduing.

One objection has to be met here, and it is the strongest one available. **Earliest attestation is not earliest existence, and these two literatures are written down at very different rates.** Medical compilation has fifteen centuries of continuous transmission and a citation habit. Household apotropaic practice barely gets written down at all until the customs section of the local gazetteer, the county and prefectural record, becomes a standard rubric, which is a development in the genre and not in the custom. So the order of attestation is close to what one would expect whatever the truth was, and it will not carry a claim about which practice came first. What it will carry is narrower and still worth having: the fifth of the fifth is a garlic date inside the medical record on its own evidence, not because a doorway custom put it there.

Now turn the calendar around and ask what the two dates are to garlic. It goes into the ground in the eighth month, heading into the cold. It sits there through the winter, breaks ground in spring, throws a flower stalk in early summer, and is pulled complete in the fifth month. That is the whole life, and both rites sit on it.

At the start of spring the plant is not a bulb. It is a shoot that has just come up after a winter underground, and the platter does not ask for bulbs. It asks for 辛嫩之菜 (acrid, tender greens); a Qing copy reads 辛辣 (acrid and biting) here, and the Siku reading is the one followed. Li Shizhen says elsewhere in the same chapter what spring garlic-eating is, 春食苗 (in spring one eats the shoots). He never joins the two statements. I am joining them. At the fifth of the fifth the plant is finished: it comes out of the ground whole and goes up over a door. **Eat the emergence. Hang the completion.**

And the line that falls out of both halves of the record: **the plant that breaks cold spends the whole winter buried in it.** 破冷氣 is not only a claim about what a substance does to a body. It is a description of what this thing did to get here.

That matters, because the tradition names a mechanism for this kind of work: 同氣相求 (qi of the same kind seeks out its own), from the 文言 (Words of the Text) commentary on the first hexagram of the 易經 (the Book of Changes). *The five phases are Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water. Each carries a flavour, an organ and a season; each engenders the next around the circle, and each restrains one across it.* Li Shizhen uses it as a pharmacological explanation of the antelope horn. The goat is a fire animal but the antelope belongs to Wood, which is the Liver's phase, so 故其角入厥陰肝經甚捷，同氣相求也 (therefore its horn enters the reverting-yin Liver channel most swiftly, qi of the same kind seeking out its own). Note what that matches, because I am about to stretch it. In 王冰 Wang Bing's eighth-century commentary it explains a disease passing from one channel to the next, 以陽感熱，同氣相求 (yang

being affected by heat, qi of the same kind seeking its own); in Li Shizhen it explains a drug reaching a channel. Neither transfers a plant's *developmental state* to the person eating it. **Read at that stretch:** at the turn of the year the plant on the plate is doing the thing the year is doing, and the tradition has a name for likeness acting on likeness.

One asymmetry to carry forward. Two verbs sit on the eaten preparation. One removes what is present: 去惡氣, Chen Cangqi's, around 739. The other wards off what is coming. For the drug that is Rihuazi around 900, in this entry; for the platter it is the ninth-century 食醫心鏡, as the Classified Materia Medica preserves it, before Li Shizhen rewords it as 辟溫疫 (wards off epidemic disease). The distinction between the two is drawn here; neither author marks it. **The record gives no verb at all for the hung preparation.** Everything in the entry is a drug taken. Assigning 伏邪惡 to a bulb over a door is inference from the folk practice, not a line anyone wrote.

2.3 Fire and Metal

Fire is transmitted and Metal is read, and the two do not have equal standing. Danxi assigns the phase outright, and his is the only phase attribution any source makes about this plant: 大蒜屬火，性熱喜散 (garlic belongs to fire, its nature hot and fond of scattering). His sentence does not stop there. It runs on and turns: 傷氣之禍，積久自見，養生者忌之 (the disaster of damaging qi shows itself over time; those who nurture life avoid it). Take the phase attribution from him. Do not take him as an endorsement.

Metal is the read. It comes from the general rule in the 素問 (Basic Questions), 陰陽應象大論 (the Great Treatise on the Correspondences of Yin and Yang): 金生辛，辛生肺 (Metal engenders the acrid, and the acrid engenders the Lung), and from the channels. No source applies Metal to garlic. Flavour assigns the phase; nature assigns the temperature, a separate coordinate, and there the entry is unambiguous: warm, toxic, breaks cold, opens and warms.

The way I fit them is this. **Metal is what it acts on. Fire is how it acts.** The site is the boundary, the surface, the openings, which is Metal's whole domain. The method is hot, driving and ascending, which is Fire. And 火克金 (Fire overcomes Metal) is the restraining relation, not a governing one, and restraint pushed hard stops restraining and starts damaging, so the pairing has a consequence worth stating plainly: a substance whose method is Fire and whose site is Metal is one whose action damages its own site. The entry agrees. 傷肺 (harms the Lung) is exactly what Fire over Metal predicts, and the entry records it twice. Su Song gives 多食傷肺、傷脾、傷肝膽 (eaten in quantity it harms the Lung, the Spleen, the Liver and the Gallbladder), which names the Lung first in a list of four. Li Shizhen gives 辛能散氣，熱能助火，傷肺損目，昏神伐性 (its acidity scatters qi and its heat feeds fire, so it harms the Lung and damages the eyes, fogs the spirit and cuts at the nature). The Lung is not the only organ the entry says it damages; it is the one tied to the mechanism.

2.4 Whichever door is open

Start with what the entry actually gives, because the four-channel list is not it. Li Shizhen writes 葫蒜入太陰、陽明 (garlic enters the greater-yin and the yang-brightness). Two conduit pairs, which the modern entry unpacks as Lung and Spleen, Stomach and Large Intestine. Either way the spread is the point. **Three of the four are exits.** The gut is two of them, Stomach and Large Intestine. The breath is the third, and the skin arrives through Lung, which governs it. Spleen is not an exit. This herb does not care which route it uses. **The operation is expulsion, and the site is wherever the thing can be got out.** That reading is built on the spread and on the functions; the line usually pressed into service here, 能通五臟，達諸竅 (frees the five zang and reaches all the orifices), gives reach and not discharge.

The entry does run both ways, and it is worth being exact about where. 下氣 (drives qi downward) is the stated action, from Su Gong. The line people set against it will not do the work: 恐引氣上 (for fear of drawing the qi upward) is Li Xun's caution inside his 論蒜錢灸法 (Discussion of the Garlic-Coin Moxibustion Method), forbidding the method outright anywhere above the neck, and the qi driven upward there is at least as much the burning moxa's, dried mugwort burnt on top of the slice, as the plant's. A site caution, not a second direction.

The counterweight is in the entry proper. Chen Cangqi records a man told in a dream to eat three whole heads of garlic a day (三顆 (three heads), and the same entry glosses a head as six or seven cloves), who on first taking them went into 暈眩吐逆 (dizzy stupor and retching) with 下部如火 (the lower body like fire); and the snake-mass formula of the 危氏方 (Master Wei's Formulary) makes the reversal the method, 飲蒜汁一盃，吐出如蛇狀 (drink a bowl of garlic juice and vomit out a thing shaped like a snake). **So the record gives descent as the stated action and reversal as the recorded effect**, which fits a plant whose job is unsticking, moving what has stopped, rather than directing. The direction is the situation's, not the plant's.

Of the exits the skin tells you most, and it is not a shield. **The skin is not a wall it defends. It is a door it uses.** What comes out there is not being kept out. It is being got out, and it was already inside.

2.5 One aggression, two scales

None of that means the plant does not protect. It does, and the one placement the living custom gives is precisely that. The question is by what means, and the answer is not obstruction. Consider what is being hung there. The record never says what an unbroken bulb does at a door, because it never hangs one. At the door is a hot, acrid, toxic thing that Tao Hongjing calls 性最熏臭 (most fuming and rank in nature) and Li Shizhen 其氣薰烈 (its qi fuming and fierce), and that anyone crossing has to pass. That does not erect a barrier. **It makes the doorway hostile.** The plant is not standing between the house and what is outside. It is making the place unpleasant to arrive at.

The obvious reading is that the enemy is cold and dark and the plant is warm against it. The entry rules that out on its own: 治中暑不醒 (treats heatstroke with loss of consciousness), 引熱下行 (leads heat downward), Wang Zhen's 夏月食之解暑氣 (eaten in summer it resolves summerheat), a prescription for 丹毒 (erysipelas, a heat-toxin sore), and the 蒜連丸 (the Garlic and Coptis Pills) of the 濟生方

(Formulas to Aid the Living, 1253) pairing garlic with 黃連 (coptis), the bitter-cold heat-clearer itself. **A plant whose enemy was cold would not be in any of those places.**

There are two temperatures here and they are not the same one. The first is the plant's own and it is fixed: hot, acrid, driving. The second is the condition's, and it varies with every case. **The action is unsticking, and it is indifferent to the second while working by means of the first.** 引熱下行 does not cool the heat, it moves it. 破冷氣 does not warm the cold, it breaks it. 爛痃癖 rots the mass. Not one of them changes a temperature; all of them move something that had stopped. That gives the condition's temperature its actual job: it sets the pace, not the target.

So the two scales are one action. **Inside a person it clears out what has already got in. At a threshold it makes the place unwelcoming to what would come in.** And a threshold need not be a doorway: a person in transit is a threshold too, which is a reading rather than a line in the record. Neither is a wall and neither is passive. It is the same hostility, pointed at a body in one case and at a place in the other. **The purpose is protective; the method is not.** The household is left alone as a consequence of the attack rather than as an alternative to it. A bodyguard who hits first is still a bodyguard.

A boundary is not held by whoever is at the centre. It is held by whatever has been to the other side, and this one has: it entered the record under a name that says it came from elsewhere, and Li Shizhen is still explaining in 1596 that this is the foreign allium and the other one is ours. Then a late and local custom hands it the door. And there is a second exclusion running the other way: garlic heads the 五葷 (the five pungents), the Buddhist list of acrid vegetables barred from the table, set out in 1.6. **So the plant a late custom posts at the door is the plant the cloister will not admit past it, while the household eats it on purpose at the turn of the year.** The bar is monastic, not domestic, and that is the shape of a guard rather than a guest.

One objection before the practice, and it is the obvious one. Something this hot ought to need a counterweight, and the obvious place to look is Earth: the 太陰、陽明 (Taiyin and Yangming) pair includes the Spleen and Stomach, the centre, and the modern entry gives warming the Stomach and strengthening the Spleen. **That counterweight does not hold.** Six named voices in the entry record damage, Tao Hongjing, Chen Cangqi, Sun Simiao, Danxi, Su Song and Li Shizhen, and the only one who names the Spleen names it inside a list: Su Song's 多食傷肺、傷脾、傷肝膽 (eaten in quantity it harms the Lung, the Spleen, the Liver and the Gallbladder). The others take qi, Lung, Liver, eyes and spirit. Two lines do record building, 宣通溫補 (frees the flow, warms and tonifies) and 健脾 (strengthens the spleen), and neither describes a base under you. **This plant does not build one.** It takes something off the top instead, and Part Three is where that distinction gets made.

2.6 In practice

This is what the record and the living custom actually have people do. What the reading implies is on the operative sheet at the front.

ATTESTED

- **Hung at the entrance · Canton, 1876.** Bulbs suspended over the entrance doors on the fifth of the fifth, together with sago palm leaves, to keep evil spirits from coming in. That is Dennys, *The Folk-Lore of China*, page 70: a local custom reported in a nineteenth-century folklore compilation, not a line in the materia medica. The entry itself gives no placement, no 懸 (hang), no 掛 (suspend), and no door used as a site. I.5 traces the chain.
- **The undivided head.** 入藥尤佳 (especially fine for use in medicine), in the Compendium's quotation of the Supplementary Records; the Classified Materia Medica reads 亦佳 (also good). Su Song explains what it is: a single clove planted alone makes an undivided bulb that year and reverts the next, so it is a growth state rather than a kind.
- **Eaten at the turn of the year.** The 五辛盤 (five-pungent platter): at New Year and the start of spring, the acrid tender greens, garlic among them, mixed and eaten together. Three purposes, all older than the symbolic gloss.
- **The plants of the day · not garlic.** 菖蒲 (calamus) and 艾 (mugwort) are what the sixth-century record hangs on the fifth of the fifth. Garlic is not in it, and I.5 sets out what that silence is worth.

HANDLING · CAUTION, NOT CORRECTION

Acrid, warm and toxic in the entry's own words, and prolonged eating is said to harm the eyes.

The entry uses more routes than a modern reader expects. It puts garlic in the nose, in the ears, packed into the rectum, spread on the navel, pasted on the soles, and into a wash. And its most developed technique is fixing it against skin: a slice of the single-clove bulb laid on the flesh with moxa burnt on top of it, which the entry calls 灸蒜 (moxa-ed garlic) in Ge Hong and 蒜錢灸法 (the garlic-coin method) in Li Xun. The later standard name for it, 隔蒜灸 (moxibustion insulated by garlic), is not in this entry. **None of that is in dispute here.** It is the record, the lineage is named and real, and it is a clinical procedure with practitioners trained in it.

What follows is caution rather than correction, and it turns on a distinction the record never had to make: the physical route and the energetic one.

Physically, the routes the entry uses are not recommended here.

- **Nothing into the nose, the ears or the rectum.** Garlic is an irritant with no barrier between it and mucous membrane, the classical uses assume a trained hand and a reason, and the injuries when it goes wrong are burns in places that heal badly.
- **Not fixed against skin.** The garlic-coin method puts the slice between the flesh and the fire on purpose. Garlic held against skin without that context blisters.
- **Not a bath herb and not a dream-pillow herb.** Prolonged unattended contact with a hot acrid irritant is where the injuries happen outside a trained hand.

Energetically, that same list is the working map. Read it again and the entry is telling you where this plant goes: the nose, the ears, the lower gate, the navel, the soles, the surface. The orifices in that list are 達諸竅 (reaches all the orifices) made concrete; the soles and the skin are the surface, and Part Two reads both as doors. **Directing the plant's qi to an opening is the operative form of what the entry does**

with a physical slice, and nothing is placed on the body. That is qigong work. The record tells you where to work. It does not tell you how, and the how is not in this monograph. What is here is enough to choose the plant, the moment and the place. The rest is trained rather than read.

This plant was never meant to be comfortable. That is not a defect in it, and it is the reason to be careful with the literal form and free with the energetic one.

III

PART THREE · CONTACT

RECEIVED

Neither transmitted nor argued, apart from 3.2, which is marked. This is my own direct experience of the plant, what it does when I work with it, written down as it came rather than written up. **It has no source. Where it parts from the texts, both are printed.**

3.1 Contact with the plant, transcribed

It purifies and it breaks things up. Neither word on its own describes it.

It is aggressive about the work. This is not a plant standing in front of you with its arms out. It is a warrior, it is motivated, and it has already decided. It does not take anyone's nonsense. It does not work in an order. It goes at whatever needs going at, mind, feelings or spirit, and it does not seem to rank them.

It clears however it can. Skin, wind, the gut, whatever exit is available. It does not seem fussy about the route. Same thing each time, whatever the way out.

At the skin it feels energetic rather than physical. It burns, and it disperses whatever the issue is. It did not feel like anything was being held off.

At a door it does protect. But not by standing in the way. It is not a place you would want to be.

It moved qi quickly. Faster than I expected.

It pushed up, hard, and it pushed up from the stomach.

It runs hot and it moves circulation. It reads as Fire. I feel it in the head. And then afterwards I am more rooted rather than less, which I did not expect.

It does not soothe and it does not fill. It takes out, and then it stands there.

3.2 Reading the contact against the record

Read, not received. The transcript above is one witness and the texts are another. Most of it lines up: the Fire, the indifference to which exit it uses, the protection that is not obstruction. Two places need more care, and both come after the overlaps below.

Four places where the two arrive at the same thing. The transcript was set down as it came; the readings in Part Two were built out of the texts. One reader stands behind both columns, which is why the overlaps are printed and named rather than counted as proof.

It reads as Fire. I feel it in the head.

Danxi's 大蒜屬火，性熱喜散 (garlic belongs to fire, its nature hot and fond of scattering) is the only phase attribution any source makes about this plant. 2.3.

It clears however it can. Whatever exit is available.

The entry gives 散 (disperses) outward, 下氣 (drives qi downward) downward and vomiting upward, and never ranks them. 2.4.

At a door it does protect, but not by standing in the way.

Not one of the five verbs interposes. Each acts on something already present. 2.1 and 2.5.

It pushed up, hard, and it pushed up from the stomach.

Li Shizhen puts it in 太陰、陽明 (Taiyin and Yangming), which the modern entry unpacks to include the Stomach, and the 危氏方 formula has garlic juice bringing a thing up: 飲蒜汁一盃，吐出如蛇狀 (drink a bowl of garlic juice and vomit out a thing shaped like a snake). 1.3 and 2.4.

The first is a straight disagreement. The contact says this plant does not fill. Chen Cangqi gives 宣通溫補 (frees the flow, warms and tonifies), and Rihuazi, as the Compendium prints him, gives 健脾胃，治腎氣 (strengthens the spleen and stomach, treats kidney qi); the Classified Materia Medica reads 健脾 without the stomach, as 1.4 gives it. Sun Simiao bars it alongside every tonic, 凡服一切補藥，不可食之 (when taking any tonic medicine whatsoever, do not eat this), but that is a co-administration rule and not a statement about the plant's own category. The read offered here is that the supplementing is what the clearing produces, and that what returns is what was already yours. **That is a reading. The two lines stay on the page either way.**

The second is a word rather than a disagreement. Rooted, grounded and settled are Earth words in English, and reaching for one sends you looking for Earth in the record. The mechanism the texts actually give is descent: 下氣 (drives qi downward) and 貼足心能引熱下行 (applied to the soles of the feet it leads heat downward). Heat leaving the head is felt as settling. Nothing is added; something is taken off the top. **The tradition is large enough to confirm almost any word you bring to it, so the word has to come from the mechanism rather than the mechanism from the word.**

The entry. Li Shizhen, 本草綱目 Bencao Gangmu, 1596, entry 葫, 菜部 (Vegetables division), juan 26, with its 釋名 (Explanation of Names), 集解 (Collected Explanations), 氣味 (Qi and Flavour), 主治 (Indications), 發明 (Elucidation) and 附方 (Appended Formulas) sections, and the neighbouring 蒜 and 五辛菜 (the five-pungent greens) entries. Also juan 3, 百病主治藥 (Drugs for the Principal Treatment of the Hundred Diseases), and juan 51 for the antelope horn. Through it: 名醫別錄 (Supplementary Records of Famous Physicians), 陶弘景 Tao Hongjing, 蘇恭 Su Gong, 陳藏器 Chen Cangqi (本草拾遺 (Gleanings of the Materia Medica), 8th c.), the 日華子 Rihuazi Materia Medica, 朱震亨 Zhu Zhenheng, 孫思邈 Sun Simiao, 蘇頌 Su Song, 寇宗奭 Kou Zongshi, 李昉 Li Xun (論蒜錢灸法), 葛洪 Ge Hong, 李仲南 Li Zhongnan, 孫愐 Sun Mian's 唐韻 (Tang Rhymes), 王禎 Wang Zhen, the 永類鈴方 (Key Formulas of Every Category) of 1331, the 普濟方 (Formulas of Universal Benefit) of 1406, the 濟生方 (for the 蒜連丸), the 危氏方, the 肘後方 (Emergency Formulas to Keep Up One's Sleeve) and 唐瑤 Tang Yao's book of tested formulas.

Outside the entry. 周易 (Book of Changes), 文言 (the Wenyan, Words on the Text) commentary on 乾 (Qian, the Creative, the first hexagram), the Nine-in-the-Fifth. 黃帝內經素問 (Basic Questions), juan 2 陰陽應象大論, for 金生辛, 辛生肺; and 王冰 Wang Bing's commentary of 762, on 熱論 (the Treatise on Heat Disorders). 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian) and 漢書 (History of the Han), both searched entire, with 顏師古 Yan Shigu's commentary on the latter; juan 123 and juan 96 read through for the Western Regions material. 許慎 Xu Shen, 說文解字 (Explaining Graphs and Analysing Characters), 2nd c., 艸部 (the plant-radical division). The 葷 (pungent vegetable) gloss stands in the received text; the 蒜 lemma head is missing from the Sibu Congkan digitisation used here and is recovered from the 說文解字篆韻譜 (the Shuowen Seal-Script Rhyme Tables, 10th c.), the 集韻 (Collected Rhymes, 1037) and the sixth-century quotation in the farming manual. 康熙字典 (Kangxi Dictionary) for the verb glosses. 賈思勰 Jia Sixie, 齊民要術 (Essential Techniques for the Common People), 6th c., 種蒜第十九 (Growing Garlic, chapter nineteen), quoting 崔寔 Cui Shi and the 博物志 (Records of Diverse Matters). 四分律 (Dharmaguptaka Vinaya) juan 25, Taishō 1428, with the Pali parallel at Bhikkhunī Pācittiya 1, alongside 梵網經 and 楞嚴經. 雲笈七籤 (Seven Slips from the Cloudy Satchel), juan 41. 周處 Zhou Chu, 風土記 (Records of Local Customs), 3rd c., surviving in quotation in the 初學記 (Records for Beginning Study, 728) and 太平御覽 (Imperial Readings of the Taiping Era, 983). 荊楚歲時記 (Record of the Seasons of Jing and Chu), 6th c. 田汝成 Tian Rucheng, 西湖遊覽志餘 (Supplement to the Record of Sightseeing at West Lake) juan 20, 熙朝樂事 (Festive Doings of a Glorious Reign), Ming. 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taiping Era), 978: juan 325 for the 甄異傳 (Records of the Verified Strange), juan 120 for the 還冤記 (Records of Requited Wrongs), juan 142 for the tale the Siku text marks 闕 (lacking, a lacuna) and other recensions assign to the 廣五行記 (Expanded Records of the Five Phases). 巢元方 Chao Yuanfang, 諸病源候論 (Treatise on the Origins and Symptoms of Diseases), 610, juan 24. 隋書 (History of the Sui), juan 31, on the making of

gu. 周禮 (the Rites of Zhou) with 鄭玄 Zheng Xuan's commentary, on the classical sense of 五毒 (the five poisons). 唐慎微 Tang Shenwei, 證類本草 (Classified Materia Medica), juan 29, which preserves the Supplementary Records and the Gleanings in their own order. 汪昂 Wang Ang, 本草備要 (Essentials of the Materia Medica), 1694. 隨息居飲食譜 (Dietary Records from the Studio of Following One's Ease), 19th c., through the secondary literature. Late gazetteer material for the Duanwu practice, likewise.

Secondary literature. This monograph works from the primary texts. The following cover the same ground and are worth reading beside it. Berthold Laufer, *Sino-Iranica* (1919), on the Zhang Qian formula and the 胡 plant-names, with Edward Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*. Paul U. Unschuld's annotated *Ben Cao Gang Mu* (California, 2021) and Zheng Jinsheng et al., *Dictionary of the Ben Cao Gang Mu*. 尚志鈞 Shang Zhijun's reconstructions of the 本草拾遺 and the 名醫別錄 (the Supplementary Records), which do by edition what Part One does by hand. H. Y. Feng and J. K. Shryock, "The Black Magic in China Known as Ku" (*JAOS* 55, 1935). Derk Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China* (1975), for the fifth month and the 惡月 (the evil month). Frederick Simoons, *Food in China* (1991), for garlic and the five pungents. Where this monograph differs from them, the text is printed so the difference can be checked.

Modern reference. Bensky, Clavey, Stöger and Gamble, *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica*. Kim, *Handbook of Oriental Medicine*. Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure, Stanford, 2002, p. 189, for the Canton doorway practice, quoted there from N. B. Dennys, *The Folk-Lore of China* (London and Hong Kong: Trübner, 1876), p. 70. Dennys is a nineteenth-century compiler, and Strickmann cites him in passing, in a chapter about marking the body. **That is the doorway notice this monograph reads in full; the gazetteer material is reached through the secondary literature.**

Method. Every rendering is set against published translation and independent transcriptions, and every character gloss against a character dictionary rather than a materia medica textbook, because textbooks copy each other and that is how a bad gloss survives four hundred years. The dictionaries used are the 說文解字 and the 康熙字典, read in their received texts, with the 說文解字篆韻譜, the 集韻 and the sixth-century quotations where a lemma has dropped out of the digitisation used here.

Text. In Chen Cangqi's list the reading is 伏邪惡, unanimous across the witnesses checked; the 辟邪惡 (wards off the malign) that circulates online for that line is not followed, since the two are different verbs. It is genuinely Li Shizhen's in his own 發明. The rare characters 瘰 (a string-like abdominal mass) and 蠹 (an eroding sore), which most digitisations garble, are restored. The Siku Compendium misprints 去水惡瘴氣 as 去水惡痒氣, turning miasmal qi into itching qi; the Classified Materia Medica's 瘴 (miasma) is followed. And Rihuazi is quoted from the Classified Materia Medica, not from the Compendium, which prints Li Shizhen's rewriting.

Attribution. 同氣相求 (like qi seeks like) is from the 文言 commentary on the first hexagram, not the 繫辭 (the Xici, the Appended Statements) where it is usually placed; it is absent from the 素問 (Basic Questions) base text and enters medicine through 王冰 Wang Bing's commentary of 762. For the platter, the functional rationale is Chen Cangqi's, around 739, with an anonymous note on the 風土記 lemma dated between the third century and about 600. **All three working purposes precede 取迎新之義 (taking the sense of welcoming the new), which is Li Shizhen's in the 集解 (the Collected Explanations).**

Variants. The damage line 多食傷肺、傷脾、傷肝膽 (eaten in quantity it harms the Lung, the Spleen, the Liver and the Gallbladder) is headed 頌曰 (Song says, i.e. Su Song) in the Siku text, the reading followed here, and 瑞曰 (Rui says, i.e. 吳瑞 Wu Rui) in other lines of transmission. Two things follow the Siku reading: the six-voice roster at 2.5 and the attribution at 2.3. The Siku Compendium prints 唐瑤 (Tang Bao, a variant graph) in the garlic entry and 唐瑤 (Tang Yao) twice elsewhere; 唐瑤 is followed here. A Qing witness to the platter passage reads 辛辣 (acrid and biting) where the Siku text reads 辛嫩 (acrid and tender). The Siku reading is followed here, and 2.2's reading of the platter as young growth turns on it. A line attributed to 莊子 (the Zhuangzi) travels beside the Zhou Chu note in both witnesses, 春月飲酒茹葱，以通五藏 (in the spring months one drinks wine and eats scallion, to free the five zang). It is not in the received Zhuangzi as the Sibū Congkan witness gives it, which says closer to the opposite: 唯不飲酒不茹葷者 (only one who drinks no wine and eats nothing pungent).

Bounded negatives. Each is a search of a stated corpus and nothing wider: the garlic entry and the authorities it quotes, plus the named texts, in the Kanripō and CBETA witnesses. None is a claim about the literature at large. Garlic has no entry in the 神農本草經 (Divine Husbandman's Classic); it enters with the 別錄 (the Supplementary Records). No text found links it to 衛氣 (the defensive qi) by name. No 懸 (hang) or 掛 (suspend) occurs in the garlic entry. 門 (door, gate) occurs three times and never as a placement: 幽門 (the pylorus), a market gate in an anecdote, and 門臼灰 (dust from a door-pivot socket). In the Compendium's own 瘟疫 and 邪祟 lists garlic appears four times, all swallowed, never as a placement. Neither the 天中五瑞 set nor the animal roster of the 五毒 occurs in any pre-modern text searched here, and no modern account of either names a pre-modern source. Five claims in the body carry the same bound: 蒜 nowhere in the 史記 or 漢書 (full text of both, Yan Shigu included); Danxi's the only phase attribution and no source applying Metal (the entry and its authorities); sago palm the only plant hung beside it (the sources named here); no garlic in the Ming festival list (蒜 occurs nowhere in the 西湖遊覽志 or its 志餘); 同氣相求 absent from the 素問 base text (Sibū Congkan).

The same method runs on any plant you work with.

One plant, read all the way down: texts first, argument second, plant third, so every claim traces to its layer. The useful part is not the agreement. It is the two or three places where what you felt outran what anyone can corroborate, because those are where you are most likely to be wrong.

This monograph tells you where to work. It does not tell you how.

Chinese Herbal Magick is where the how is taught: plant by plant, the record read in the original, the reading built from it, your contact tested against both, and the operative work that makes a plant act.

\$45 CAD a month

One hour of live teaching every month, EST, recorded if you cannot be there.

Members vote on what it covers.

First access to monographs like this one.

BECOME A FOUNDING MEMBER

Founding membership is a subscription. Your rate holds for as long as you stay subscribed, and the price rises for those who join later.

More at zacharylui.ca

@THEZACHARYLUI

Not medical advice, and nothing here is a prescription, a dose or a remedy. Full notice on page two.

Zachary Lui is a 巫 (wū), a shaman and folk priest in Toronto. His spiritual master is Andrieh Vitimus, under whom he continues to train in ritual and magick. He carries 茅山上清 Mao Shan Shangqing Daoist transmission, and works 唐密 Tangmi, Chinese Esoteric Buddhism, in the folk register. He has kept a practice since 2008. A Registered Acupuncturist and Master of Medical Qigong, he has spent years teaching Chinese medicine to people who now practise it themselves.