I wanted to research the meaning of Blood and its function in TCM, especially *Huang Di Nei Jing*. So that I selected *Su Wen* juan (五臟生成) as the main study and reorganized the relationship and concept of Blood compared it with information in other *Su Wen*.

First of all, a special relationship was believed to exist between the blood and the heart. “All blood is tied to the heart.” (*Su Wen* 10) “The heart rules the body's blood and vessel.” (*Su Wen* 44) ‘Fullness’ in the heart manifests itself in fullness in the blood vessels.” (*Su Wen* 9)

“The heart generates the blood.” ‘The blood,’ in turn, ‘generates the spleen.’ (*Su Wen* 5) That is, the association of the blood with the core organs is not as one-dimensional as it might appear at first glance. One source states that the liver plays a role in the generation of blood and qi; (*Su Wen* 9) elsewhere the liver is said to store the blood. (*Su Wen* 62)

We can only speculate whether different schools of thought coexisted, one proposing a special relationship between blood and heart, others proposing one between blood and other organs such as the liver. Or whether these links between blood and two different core organs were not regarded as contradictory and were developed by the same school. The latter assumption, at least, is somewhat justified by a statement associating a loss of blood through the lower orifices with a disease simultaneously affecting the heart and liver, causing a ‘flush’ in both of them. (*Su Wen* 48)

The close association between liver and blood is outlined in yet another context. From *Su Wen* 10 we learn.

> When man lies down, the blood returns to the liver.  
> When the liver receives blood, one can see.  
> When the feet receive blood, one can walk.  
> When the palms receive blood, they can grasp.  
> When the fingers receive blood, they can hold.

This is the only passage in the *Su Wen* tracing specific functions of body parts to the presence of blood. This passage is also noteworthy because it informs its readers that the blood appears to leave the liver in the morning and returns there at night as an overnight shelter, that is, when a person lies down to sleep. No statement in the *Su Wen* explicitly suggests the notion of blood circulation; as I discuss below, the only reference to circulation in the *Su Wen* is an isolated statement speaking of the 'contents of the conduits' in general. (The flow in the conduit vessels does not stop. It circulates without breaking. (*Su Wen* 39)

Like its physiological companion, the Qi, the blood may reverse the direction of its flow and ‘move contrary’ (to its regular course) in the conduits. (*Su Wen* 62) Blood can congeal inside the vessels, a pathological process that of course stops its flow. (*Su Wen* 43) Again this is not necessarily a circulation-type flow; it is often considered more like a movement ‘to and fro’ in that the blood leaves certain position and should return there later. Once it congeals, this of course is no longer possible. Hence;

> When someone has lain down and then walks out, and wind blows at him, and  
> When the blood congeals in the skin, this is block.  
> When it congeals in the vessels, this is retarded flow.  
> When it congeals in the feet, this is receding (Qi).  
> In these three cases,  
> the blood has passed but cannot return to the void it (has left). (*Su Wen* 10)  
> (This mention means the functions of blood.)

It is interesting to note that an unimpeded flow is to be strived for as an end in itself;

> The sages arranged yin and yang (in such a way that  
> their) sinews and vessels were in harmony,  
> (their) bones and marrow were solid and firm, and
(their) Qi and Blood both followed (their usual course). (*Su Wen* 3)

If one carefully balances the five flavors,
the bones are upright and the sinews are soft.
As a result, Qi and Blood flow. (*Su Wen* 3)

Unlike the flow of Qi, which is discussed below, the mere flow and supply of blood represents health. Stagnation, blockage, reverse flow, and depletion of blood in specific body parts represents disease. The warning against the detrimental effects of stagnation was derived from observations of the quality of flowing and stagnant water. A ‘flowing water’ analogy is found both in the Jin Shu (*盡數*) essay of the *Lue Shih Chun Qiu* of 239 B.C. and in the *Mai Shu* text of the Zhang Jia Shan manuscripts of perhaps the second century B.C.;

Now, the reason why flowing water does not become putrid and the doorway pivot is not devoured by bugs is because they move.

The blood itself is not an inert substance. Its proper flow is tied to the presence of warmth:

- When heave is cold and when the sun is hidden,
  then the Blood in man congeals. (*Su Wen* 26)

- When Evil enters the vessels,
  if it is cold, then the Blood congeals and freezes. (*Su Wen* 27)

- When blood is exposed to and excessive intake of salty flavor, it will be harmed. (*Su Wen* 12)

Also,

- to observe over a long time harms the Blood. (*Su Wen* 23)

At least one passage in *Su Wen* 62 speaks of ‘bad blood’ and warns of the harmful, pathogenic effects it can cause when entering the conduits;

- Look for the Blood network (vessels),
  pierce them and let their blood.
- Do not allow bad blood to enter the conduits and generate a disease there. (*Su Wen* 62)

Pain is an indicator of the presence of both ‘undispersed’ blood, that is, blood accumulations, and depleted blood. (*Su Wen* 39) The idea of a pathological insufficiency or depletion of blood was as plausible to ancient Chinese physicians as it was to their Greek contemporaries. It was sometimes tied to blood loss, sometimes interpreted as resulting from excessive emotions, sometimes said to be associated with the phase of the moon, and sometimes seen in conjunction with an unbalanced distribution of blood in the yin and yang regions of the organism.

Blood, to sum up, is treated in the *Su Wen* on a conceptual level that does not present a reader in the twenty-first century with any significant problems of understanding. Although modern physiological knowledge makes it impossible to repeat some of the statements quoted above, nothing of what has been said on ‘Blood’ in the *Su Wen* is to be considered enigmatic or, judged from the context of context of ancient Chinese theories, absurd.

I, also, researched the relationship between blood and Qi in *Su Wen* as following;

- Blood and Qi determine man’s spirit and energy and one should not be heedless of their nourishment and care. (*Su Wen* 26 juan 八正神明論)

- If cold Qi stays between the small intestine and diaphragm, it means for cold Qi to stay in minute collaterals. So that blood is becoming stasis and does not enter into large vessels. Then the blood Qi stops and no longer circulates and in chronic cases can accumulate in the body. (*Su Wen* 39 juan 擎痛論)
If Qi of the cold reverting rises upward, cold Qi accumulates in the chest and expels warm Qi. Then the cold Qi is left alone, so that the blood becomes stasis and meridians become blocked. They form an interior cold disease which is large and blocked. (Su Wen 62 juan 調經論)

If the body bleeds too much, then the person becomes angry. If the body has a shortage of blood, then the person becomes frightened. If Blood and Qi are not gathered in a specific location then five viscera are stable. If minute collaterals overflow, then they can have blood stasis. (Su Wen 62 juan 調經論)

The explanation of blood stasis in Su Wen is as follows;

If a person falls down from a high place, then there can be blood stasis. The blood stays in the body and can create fullness and distention of the abdomen. They can also have difficulty urinating and defecating. (This explains the generation of blood stasis and its symptom. Su Wen 63 juan 調刺論)

Bleeding is the overflowing out of blood vessels due to a fast flow, so that movement of blood becomes a disorder. (This explains the cause of bleeding. Su Wen 76 juan 示從容論)

Finally in order to research the complexion related with blood, I want to add the explanation of the complexion of a person as following (Su Wen 10 juan 五臟生成);

- The heart is in accord with the pulse. The complexion of a person shows when the heart is in a splendid and flourishing condition. The heart rules over the kidneys. (Water controls Fire)
- The lungs are connected with the skin. The condition of the body hair shows when the lungs are in a splendid and flourishing condition. The lungs rule over the heart. (Fire controls Metal)
- The liver is connected (in accord) with the muscles. The condition of the finger and toe nails shows when the liver is in a splendid and flourishing condition. The liver rules over the lungs. (Metal controls Tree)
- The spleen is connected with the flesh. The color and appearance of the lips show when the stomach is in a splendid and flourishing condition. The liver rules over the lungs. (Tree controls Earth)
- The kidneys are connected with the bones. The condition of the hair on the head shows when the kidneys are in a splendid and flourishing condition. The kidneys rules over the spleen. (Earth controls Water)

The manifestation of five viscera appears on the face as corresponding colors.
- When their color is green like withered grass they are without life.
- When their color is yellow like that of orange (of zhi shi) they are without life.
- When their color is black like coal they are without life.
- When their color is red like clotted blood they are without life.
- When their color is white like dried and withered bones they are without life.
This is how the five colors manifest death.

- When the viscera are green like the kingfisher's glossy wings they are full of life.
- When they are red like a cock's glossy comb they are full of life.
- When they are yellow like the glossy belly of a crab they are full of life.
- When they are white like the glossy grease of pigs they are full of life.
- When they are black like the glossy wings of crow they are full of life.
This is how the five colors manifest life.

- The color of life displayed by the heart is like the vermillion red lining of a white silk robe.
- The color of life displayed by the lungs is like the lucky red (of zhu sha) lining of a white silk robe.
- The color of life displayed by the liver is like the violet lining of a white silk robe.
- The color of life displayed by the spleen is like the juniper berry (gua lou) colored lining of a white silk robe.
- The color of life displayed by the kidneys is like the purple lining of a white silk robe.

These are the colorful and magnificent external signs of life of the five viscera.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue</th>
<th>Yellow</th>
<th>Red</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
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[Table] Symptoms of life or death from five colors on the face
Normal | Green like the kingfisher's glossy wings | Yellow like the glossy belly of a crab | Red like a cock's glossy comb | White like the glossy grease of pigs | Black like the glossy wings of crow 
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- 
Symptom of Life | The violet lining of a white silk robe | The juniper berry (gua lou) colored lining of a white silk robe | The vermilion red lining of a white silk robe | The lucky red (of zhu sha) lining of a white silk robe | The purple lining of a white silk robe 
Symptom of Death | Green like withered grass | Yellow like that of orange (of zhi shi) | Red like clotted blood | White like dried and withered bones | Black like coal 

Therefore, as a natural consequence, I think that Su Wen 10 juan (五藏生成) is important for us to understand the foundation of the relationship between blood and the five viscera as well as complexion.

References:


