The *Ying Qi* Cycle and a Relation of the Extraordinary Vessels to Daoist Cosmology

By Thomas Richardson

“If physicians are not aware [of such theories of the extraordinary channels], they will remain in the dark as to the cause of disease.” – Li Shi-Zhen

Abstract

This article follows the flow of the *ying qi* (nutritive qi) through the primary channels (corresponding to the horary clock) to examine a theoretical relationship of this cycle to the extraordinary vessels. This cycle reveals an underlying coherency within the extraordinary vessels and a possible relationship to Daoist conceptions of cosmogenesis and the evolution of consciousness (starting from the *wuji* or Source, splitting into the polarity of *yin* and *yang* (Heaven and Earth) and generating all that is manifest at the level of humanity). In flowing through the primary channels in this order, the diurnal cycling of the *ying qi* may allow each individual the opportunity, on a daily basis, to access the extraordinary vessels and their own individual relationship to the evolution of consciousness.

Introduction

The *ying qi* flows through the 12 primary channels, corresponding to the horary clock and the cycles of day and night. As it flows through the channels, it is following the cycle of birth, transformation, and death, just as the sun is born each morning and dies each night. If we follow the journey of the *ying qi* through the 12 channels, we find that it follows a course that moves from interior to exterior and exterior to interior, as well as connecting above and below. In so doing, it helps to maintain individual integrity while allowing one to connect Heaven and Earth, and the inside and the outside. This is a process of vertical and horizontal integration, the integration and connection of body and spirit, and self and other, which allows for nourishment, growth, and transformation in the day-to-day aspects of living.

Compared to the primary channels, the extraordinary vessels (*qi jing ba mai*) correspond relatively more to macro-cycles and trends, to the constitutional aspects of being and our connection to pre-heaven. This is seen in the way in which the primary channels circulate *ying qi* while the extraordinary vessels have a closer association to *yuan qi* and *jing*. It is also of note that many Daoist practices have historically used the extraordinary vessels as a focus for spiritual practice and transformation (Deng 1990).

While the extraordinary vessel confluent points are well known in acupuncture theory and practice, the significance and meaning of their placement along the primary channel system is rarely

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1 An earlier version of this article appeared in the California Journal of Oriental Medicine (Fall/Winter 2009).
2 As stated in the *Ling Shu* (Spiritual Pivot) Chapter 52, “The seminal essence qi moves in the channels and is the nourishing qi. When yin and yang follow together, outside and inside are connected together like a sphere without corners” (Wu 1993, p181). Also see an alternate translation in the *Jin Yi Jing* (The Systematic Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion): “…the essential qi which circulates within the channels is the constructive qi. With yin and yang following one another, the interior and the exterior connect to form an endless ring-like circuit flowing forever” (Mi 2004, p58).
3 For a deeper exploration of the vertical and horizontal axes, and how they relate to various aspects of Chinese medicine, see Richardson (2010).
discussed; similarly the interaction between the primary channels and extraordinary vessels is generally viewed as fairly limited. However, given that very few acupuncture point category placements are arbitrary, it seems likely that the placement of the extraordinary vessel confluent points has a deeper meaning, and may even shed light on other connections between the extraordinary vessels and the primary channels.

In this paper we will follow the daily cycle of the *ying qi* through the primary channels, in order to examine the order in which the extraordinary vessels are theoretically accessed on a daily basis (according to when the *ying qi* passes their corresponding confluent points). In so doing, a relationship and pattern emerges that suggests an underlying coherency and structure in the nature of the extraordinary vessels themselves, as well as in their relation to the primary channels, concepts of Daoist cosmology, and the evolution of consciousness.

**The Quiescent State**

We begin our journey through the primary channels with the Lung Channel of Hand Taiyin. This meridian begins the cycle of *ying qi* through the 12 primary channels and corresponds to 3-5am, the pre-dawn of a new day. Starting in the middle jiao and emerging at Zhongfu LU-1, the *ying qi* flows through the Lung meridian and in its course passes Lieque LU-7, the confluent point of the ren mai. Thus the first extraordinary vessel that is theoretically accessed, at the ‘birth’ of each new day, is the ren mai…i.e. the ‘conception’ vessel.4

Continuing, the *ying qi* moves into the exterior-paired Large Intestine Channel of Hand Yangming, traveling from the hands to the face, and corresponding to 5-7am. Here it connects to the Stomach Channel of Foot Yangming, corresponding to 7-9am, where it flows all the way down to the feet and crosses over into the Spleen Channel of Foot Taiyin, corresponding to 9-11am. As the *ying qi* starts flowing up the Spleen channel, it passes Gongsun SP-4, confluent point of the chong mai. In this first circuit of the horary clock (corresponding to the first 8 hours of the day, from 3am to 11am), the *ying qi* moves through the taiyin and yangming meridians. It travels from the interior (Lung) to the exterior (Large Intestine-Stomach) and back to the interior (Spleen), and passes the confluent points that correspond to the ren and chong mai. This circuit and these four primary channels also define the yin (anterior) plane of the body; similarly the ren and chong mai may also be considered to be fundamentally yin meridians, given their close connections to the Uterus and the Sea of Blood, as well as their anatomical pathways.5

From the Spleen channel the *ying qi* flows into the Heart Channel of Hand Shaoyin, corresponding to 11am-1pm, and marking the movement from the anterior plane of the body to the yang (posterior) plane of the body. After moving through the Heart channel, the *ying qi* flows into the Small Intestine Channel of Hand Taiyang, corresponding to 1-3pm. Here the *ying qi* passes the confluent point of the du mai, Houxi SI-3. Flowing through the Small Intestine channel and passing

4 Seen from this perspective, it is interesting to note Yang’s commentary on the 28th Difficult Issue and the meaning of the character for ren: “Jen ḕ ‘controller’ stands for jen Ṛ ‘pregnancy’. This is the basis of man’s [coming to] life and nourishment” (Unschuld 1986, p329). Examined in light of the *ying qi* cycle and the placement of the confluent point of the ren mai in relation to this cycle, perhaps the ren mai also has a relation to each individual’s “coming to life” each morning, as this is a microcosmic reflection of birth on a daily basis.

5 While the chong mai may be considered a yin meridian amongst the extraordinary vessels, it also has a fundamental relationship to the polarity between yin and yang, as will be seen shortly. However, in the context of pairing the extraordinary vessels (i.e. ren/du, yin/yang qiao, yin/yang wei, and chong/dai), the chong mai is the relatively yin vessel while the dai mai is the relatively yang.
the confluent point of the du mai also marks the completion of the first half of the horary cycle (the first six primary channels, Lung-Small Intestine, corresponding to 3am to 3pm), and corresponds to the ying qi passing the confluent points of the first three extraordinary vessels.

At this point in our journey we have passed the confluent points for, and theoretically accessed, the ren, chong, and du mai; these three vessels all start in the lower dantian, and can be considered three branches of one vessel. This can be referred to as the quiescent state, the deep interior reservoir from which all life springs forth, which resonates with the lower dantian and the trinity of the ren-chong-du mai. Thus they have a correspondence to the undifferentiated oneness as it is just beginning to separate into the foundations of yin, yang, and the pivot between within the microcosm of the human body. This process of the one becoming three is seen in Daoist conceptions of cosmogenesis and relates to the formation of the macrocosmic Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. As stated in Chapter 42 of the Dao De Jing, “Dao gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, three gives birth to the ten thousand things.” One represents Heaven, two represents Heaven and Earth, and three represents the triad of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity; it is from this triad that all else comes into being.

The ren and du mai correspond to the deep polarity of yin and yang within the channel system, with the chong mai being the connection/pivot between them. When oneness splits into two, it creates a polarity. A polarity, by definition, is composed of two oppositional aspects that are in relation to each other. It is this nature of polarity that indicates that even though there is the distinction of yin and yang, they are always part of one integrated whole, there is something that simultaneous connects and separates the polar aspects. In the macrocosm this corresponds to the level of Humanity, within the ren-chong-du mai this would be the chong mai. Within these three extraordinary vessels, the ren mai is often referred to as the Sea of Yin, and the du mai is often referred to as the Sea of Yang; thus the chong mai can be seen as the pivot between the yin and yang of the ren and du mai. Just as humanity is found between Heaven and Earth, likewise, the chong mai is found between the ren and du mai. Further support of this concept is seen in textbooks of Tibetan medicine and according to certain Daoist perspectives, which discuss a branch of the chong mai (sometimes referred to as the pre-heaven chong mai) that runs straight through the center of the body, from Huiyin REN-1 to Baihui DU-20, connecting the three dantian and anterior (ren) and posterior (du) heaven.

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6 See Yü Shu’s commentary (written in 1067) on the 28th Difficult Issue: “Principally, the supervisor vessel, the controller vessel, and the through-way vessel all three emerge from the hui-yin 会陰 hole, where they are united. One vessel, then, branches out into three [vessels], which proceed separately through the yin and yang sections [of the organism]. Hence, they all have different names” (Unschuld 1995, p330).

7 Along these lines, it is of note that taiji (太极) is sometimes translated as “Supreme Polarity.”

8 As noted by Kiiko Matsumoto and Stephen Birch (1986, p16), Li Shi Zhen stated that: “The ren mai and du mai make contact together at the chong mai.” They go on to say that: “He explains this statement by noting that the ren mai and du mai are the fundamental divisions of yin and yang in the body. The chong mai insures the inseparability of oneness of the ren and du mai, the yin and yang functions.” Also see Lonny Jarrett (2004, p8): “Note that chongmai (沖脈), one of the eight extra meridians, possesses the function of blending the influences of heaven and earth, and yin and yang, as they are mediated by the conception and governor vessels, respectively.”

9 See Yuen (2005) and Deng (1990). It should be noted that in other Daoist traditions and qigong practices this is sometimes called the zhong mai (Central Meridian) or taiji pole.
It is from this quiescent state, the original division of the oneness into *yin*, *yang* and the connection/pivot between these two that everything else comes into existence.\(^\text{10}\) Perhaps this is why Li Shi Zhen stated that “*The extraordinary vessels are the root of the Great Avenue of Pre-Heaven, the Governing, Directing and Penetrating Vessels [Du-Ren-Chong Mai] are the Source of Creation*” (as cited in Maciocia 2005, p821).\(^\text{11}\) This concept of the *ren-du-chong mai* as the *taiji* or ‘supreme polarity’ is graphically illustrated below.

![Graphical Illustration](image)

**Figure 1. The Quiescent State**

**The Second Half of the Horary Cycle: Movement, Manifestation, and Integration**

As we return to following the *ying qi* through its horary cycle, it enters the Bladder Channel of Foot Taiyang, corresponding to 3-5pm. This also marks the movement into the second six primary channels, corresponding to the time period from 3pm to 3am. As the *ying qi* flows down through the Bladder channel it passes *Shenmai* BL-62, the confluent point of the *yang qiao mai*, the Yang Motility vessel. In this theoretical model, this corresponds to the beginning of the second order, moving from the quiescent state into the dynamic state of movement and manifestation.\(^\text{12}\) In the master-couple system, *Shenmai* BL-62 is coupled with *Houxi* SI-3, confluent point of the *du mai*. This suggests that the movement and mobilization of *yang*, the dynamic *yang*, arises out of the quiescent *yang*. Thus the *yang qiao mai*, the Yang Motility, may be seen as arising from the *du mai*, the Sea of Yang. As stated by Larre and Rochat de la Vallée (1997, p204), “…the qiao mai follow the same pattern as the *du mai* and *ren mai*…They are just a development of the *du mai* and

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\(^\text{10}\) It may be for this reason that the *chong mai* is called the Sea of Blood, the Sea of the 12 channels, and the Sea of the *zangfu*. If the *chong mai* corresponds to the interplay of the deepest *yin* and *yang* within the body (as represented by the *ren* and *du mai*), then it would also correspond to fundamental polarity that gives rise to everything else within the body, just as it is the polarity between Heaven and Earth in the macrocosm of the universe that gives rise to the 10,000 things manifest at the level of Humanity.

\(^\text{11}\) Also see *Su Wen* (Simple Questions) chapter 60: “Among the eight extraordinary channels, the ren/conception, du/governing, and chong/vitality are of the greatest importance” (Ni 1995, p209).

\(^\text{12}\) This also corresponds to the movement from the vertical axis (and relative oneness) to the horizontal axis and duality—thus we see that the next extraordinary vessels have more characteristics of duality (they have *yin* and *yang* components, they travel bilaterally rather than on the midline, etc).
In a sense, the *du mai* can be seen as the *yin* within *yang* of these two coupled channels, pertaining to the deep, interior, quiescent state of *yang*, with the *yang qiao mai* representing the *yang* within *yang*, pertaining to the relatively more dynamic, active state of *yang* within the body.

Soon after passing *Shenmai* BL-62, the *ying qi* passes into the Kidney Channel of Foot Shaoyin, corresponding to 5-7pm. As it begins flowing up the Kidney channel, it passes *Zhaohai* KID-6, confluent point of the *yin qiao mai* (the Yin Motility vessel). *Zhaohai* KID-6 is paired with *Lieque* LU-7, confluent point of the *ren mai*—thus the movement and mobilization of *yin*, the dynamic *yin*, may be seen as arising out of the quiescent *yin*. Here again, the *ren mai* would pertain to the *yin* within *yin* of these two coupled channels (pertaining to the deep, interior, quiescent state of *yin*, the Sea of *Yin*), and the *yin qiao mai* to the *yang* within *yin* (pertaining to the relatively more dynamic, active state of *yin*).

After beginning in the lower *dantian* with the *ren*, *chong*, and *du mai*, this movement of the *ying qi* through the Bladder and Kidney channels would thus correspond to the mobilization of the fundamental *yin* and *yang* of the body through the activation of the *yin* and *yang qiao mai*. This is also seen in basic Chinese physiology—in order for the essence and *yuan qi* of the Kidneys and lower *dantian* to nourish and sustain the function and structure of the human being, it must first transform into *yin* and *yang*, which, once mobilized, go out to become the basis of the *yin* and *yang* for the *zangfu* and the entire body. In the daily evolutionary cycle of the extraordinary vessels, this mobilization of *yin* and *yang* may correspond to the opening of the *qiao mai*. At this point in the daily cycle, *yin* and *yang* may be moving, circulating, and manifesting throughout the body, creating the energetic polarity of body and spirit (and *jing* and *shen*) as it dynamically moves, weaves, and manifests throughout the body. In terms of Daoist cosmology, this relates to the creation of the 10,000 things—it is the movement and interplay of *yin* and *yang* that occurs once the vertical foundation of the three (Heaven-Humanity-Earth, or *ren-chong-du mai*) is established.

The movement of the *ying qi* through the Kidney channel marks the end of the second circuit of the horary clock (corresponding to the second 8 hours of the day, from 11 am to 7 pm), during which time the *ying qi* moves through the *shaoyin* and *taiyang* meridians. This circuit and these four primary meridians define the *yang* (posterior) plane of the body; during this journey the *ying qi* passes the confluent points that correspond to the *du* and *qiao mai*. The *du mai* is fundamentally *yang* in nature; similarly the *qiao mai* (as a whole) may be considered to be fundamentally *yang*, given their close connections to the movement and mobilization of the quiescent *yin* and *yang*, not to mention their direct relationship to allowing each individual the ability to be active and physically move through the world.

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13 This close relationship between the *du mai* and the *yang qiao mai*, and the *ren mai* and the *yin qiao mai*, is also reflected in the way in which they were sometimes interchanged in the classics. For examples of this, see the commentaries on the 26th Difficult Issue, in trying to understand which of the *qi jing ba mai* have network vessels—in the *Nei Jing* (Inner Classic) it is stated that it is the *ren* and the *du mai* that have network vessels, whereas in the *Nan Jing* (Classic of Difficult Issues) it is the *qiao mai*. In trying to clarify this, Liao P’ing states: “Yang Walker vessel must refer here to the supervisor [vessel]. *The names are identical but the substance is different.* [Yin walker vessel] must refer to the controller [vessel]” (Unschuld 1986, p320; emphasis added).

14 The relation of the *qiao mai* to this transformation may also be inferred from the literature: “The commentators of the *Nan Jing* and other texts suggest that the *zang* and the innermost are irrigated by the *yin qiao mai*, and the *fu* are watered by the *yang qiao mai*. This is just another way to show the total impregnation in the rising up movement of the *yin* and *yang* of the body” (Larre and Rochat de la Vallée 1997, p174). As stated by Chang Shih-hsien, in commenating on the 26th Difficult Issue, “The yang walker [vessel] penetrates the five palaces; it masters the external [affairs]. The yin walker [vessel] links and penetrates the five depots; it masters the internal [affairs]” (Unschuld 1986, p319).
Continuing along the horary cycle, the *ying qi* flows from the Kidney channel into the Pericardium Channel of Hand Jueyin, corresponding to 7-9pm. As the *ying qi* flows through the Pericardium channel it passes *Neiguan* P-6, which is the confluent point of the *yin wei mai*, the Yin/Interior Linking vessel. In master-couple theory, *Neiguan* P-6 is coupled with *Gongsun* SP-4, the confluent point of the *chong mai*. Just as we saw above that the *yang qiao mai* and *yin qiao mai* may arise from the quiescent *yang* and *yin* of the *du* and *ren mai*, respectively, as seen through the coupling of their confluent points, so too does the *yin wei mai* appear to share a similar relationship to the *chung mai*. Just as the *chung mai* is the energetic polarity or pivot of the quiescent *yin* and *yang* of the *ren* and *du mai*, the *yin wei mai* may play a role as the energetic polarity of the mobilized *yin* and *yang* of the *yin* and *yang qiao mai*. The Yin Linking vessel may thus allow the dynamic polarity of the *yin* and *yang qiao mai* to be integrated, thereby rendering the interior an integrated whole. Support for this is also seen in the pathology associated with the *yin wei mai*, as seen in the *Nan Jing* (Classic of Difficult Issues): “When the *yin tie* has an illness, one suffers from heartache” (Unschuld 1986, p333). The Heart symbolizes the one of the deepest unities of *yin* and *yang* within the human being, and corresponds to the middle *dantian*; heartache (whether physical or emotional) is often associated with a separation of *yin* and *yang*, of a loss of integrity within self.15

After each of the 10,000 things is made manifest through the interaction of the mobilized *yin* and *yang*, each individuated entity must integrate these polar energies to become whole within oneself before extending to connect with all else that is manifest; this is the action of the *yin wei mai* and the Heart. It may be at this point of the evolutionary cycle that one is able to experience self-realization as the *yin wei mai* engenders integration within oneself.

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15 Within the microcosm of the human body, the upper *dantian* corresponds to Heaven, the lower *dantian* corresponds to Earth, and the middle *dantian* (and the Heart) correspond to the level of humanity—the coming together and the interplay of *yin* and *yang*, Heaven and Earth. Thus the Heart is often called the Emperor, for its role in unifying Heaven above and Earth below with all that is present at the level of humanity.
After finishing its flow through the Pericardium channel, the ying qi flows into the San Jiao Channel of Hand Shaoyang, corresponding to 9-11pm. As it moves up the channel it passes Waiguan SJ-5, confluent point of the yang wei mai, the Yang/Exterior Linking vessel. The yang wei mai “rules the exterior and movement towards the exterior,” and can be seen as the energetic matrix of one’s external energy field. This is also supported when looking at the pathology associated with the yang wei mai, as seen in the Nan Jing (Classic of Difficult Issues): “When the yang tie has an illness, one suffers from [fits of] cold and heat” (Unschuld 1986, p333). Chills and fever are seen primarily in exterior pathologies, when the wei qi and the outermost level of the body is being affected—thus offering confirmation of the yang wei mai as the external energetic field.

If the yang wei mai relates to the external level of being, and rules movement towards the exterior, then it will have a strong relationship to how each individual connects to others at the level of humanity. In theories of Daoist cosmogenesis and the evolution of consciousness, connecting to others (and all else that is present at the level of humanity) is the next step after each individuated being is integrated within oneself. It is only after the internal integration (as represented by the yin wei mai, in this model) that one is able to then extend to connect to the exterior (as represented by

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16 Also see Li Shi Zhen: “Hence, the yang wei governs the exterior of the entire body while the yin wei governs the interior of the entire body, and so they are referred to as qian and kun” (Chase and Shima 2010, p96).
the *yang wei mai*), thereby connecting the inside and the outside in a process of horizontal integration.\(^{17}\)

**The Return to Quiescence**

Returning to the horary cycle, we near the end of our journey as the *ying qi* flows into and through the Gall Bladder Channel of Foot Shaoyang, corresponding to 11pm-1am. Traveling through this channel it passes Zulingqi GB-41, confluent point of the *dai mai*, or the Belt/Girdling Vessel. In this model, the activation of the *dai mai* may correspond to reaching a state of wholeness and completion, and of returning to the beginning to start the cycle anew. In theory, the *dai mai* may function to take one from the most expanded exterior state back to the deepest interior, back to the quiescent state. It is able to accomplish this through its actions of binding all of the meridians and the external energy field, thus astraining the exterior and holding everything together in the horizontal plane, and finally guiding the *ying qi* back to the Source.\(^{18}\)

If the *yang wei mai* is seen as the energetic matrix of the energy field that expands externally in relation to oneself in order to experience all that is present in one’s environment, the *dai mai* may be seen as regulating how much horizontal expansion occurs.\(^{19}\) The *dai mai* is also known to bind the *ren, chong*, and *du mai* (at the level of the lower dantian) and may thus act to bring each individuated being full circle: back to the beginning of undifferentiated oneness, back to the quiescent state.\(^{20}\) This is a return to the primordial unity that is reflected by the essence prior to division into *yin* and *yang*, a grounding back in the *yuan qi* and the Source.

Thus the *dai mai* may help to render the *yin* and *yang* aspects of being (Above and Below, Inside and Outside) into a unified whole and allow one to start the cycle again the next day. From this perspective it is interesting to note that, in Neoclassical Pulse Diagnosis, there is a dominant tendency for individuals to have a *dai mai* pulse (which occurs when both middle positions are the largest) and/or a *yang wei mai* pulse (when there are ulnar displacements of the proximal positions with radial displacements of the distal positions) according to the eight extraordinary vessels system, as well as a tendency for a Liver to Lung blockage along the *ying qi* cycle.\(^{21}\) These three pulse patterns correspond to the end of the *ying qi* cycle, when one is just on the verge of transitioning back to the interior and pre-heaven state. In modern society, the individual’s energy is often “exteriorized” and drawn outward, and there is difficulty in guiding the *qi* back to the Source.

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\(^{17}\) As noted by Claude Larre and Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallée (1997, p182), in referencing the work of Zhang Zicong, “This commentator also said that as the *qi* of *yin* and *yang qiao* are joined together, the exterior and interior are in an exchange and relationship and penetrate each other.” This may be read as suggesting that it is only after the joining/integration of the *qiao mai* (which, in this model, relates to the activation and function of the *yin wei mai*) that the *yang wei mai* opens to the exterior and the *wei mai* are able to connect with each other and allow interpenetration of the inside and the outside.

\(^{18}\) For a fuller exploration of the relation of the *dai mai* to these processes, see Richardson (2009b).

\(^{19}\) “*Dai mai* is not only a circle but the expression of the volume of the body…The *dai mai* comes from within, and expands, giving an expansion of volume, and also a limit to this expansion” (Larre and Rochat de la Vallée 1997, p154).

\(^{20}\) According to Li Shi Zhen, “Zhang Zi-He says that…The three vessels of the *chong, ren*, and *du* have the same origins but their trajectories differ. They are of a single source but have three branches and all network with the *dai vessel*” (Chase and Shima 2010, p157). Also see Jeffrey Yuen (2005, p46): “…*Dai Mai* is often referred to as the Meridian that maintains the integrity of the First Ancestries, that returns the integrity: the *Chong* in the middle, the *Ren* in the front, and the *Du* in the back.”

\(^{21}\) For more information on this relationship, and extraordinary vessel pulse diagnosis, see Morris (2004).
and returning to the quiescent state—thus it makes sense that many individuals would have stagnations and challenges along these patterns.²²

The *dai mai*, although theoretically activated at the end of the horary cycle, would therefore also relate to the beginning and to oneness. Within the extraordinary vessels there are four nuclear vessels (*ren*, *chong*, *du*, and *dai mai*) that relate primarily to the quiescent state, oneness, and the vertical axis, and they are paired (in the master-couple system) with four peripheral vessels (the *qiao* and *wei mai*) that primarily relate to the active/manifest state and expansion from the source outwards, duality, and the horizontal axis. This perspective also lends itself to seeing how the *chong* and *dai mai* make a perfect *yin-yang* pair. The *chong mai* connects anterior and posterior heaven (*ren* and *du mai*), as it is the polarity between the two, whereas the *dai mai* wraps around the outside and contains them. Just as the *chong mai*, as the polarity between the *ren* and the *du mai*, becomes the link between the quiescent state and the dynamic state (and therefore may correspond to the movement from pre-heaven to post-heaven), so too does the *dai mai* relate to movement from the dynamic state back to the quiescent state (corresponding to the movement from post-heaven back to pre-heaven).

After passing through the Gall Bladder channel, the *ying qi* enters the Liver Channel of Foot Jueyin to finish out its daily cycle, corresponding to 1-3am. This marks the movement through the third and final circuit of the *ying qi* cycle, corresponding to the meridians that define the pivotal (median/sagittal) plane of the body (*jueyin* and *shaoyang*). During this circuit the *ying qi* passes the confluent points corresponding to the *wei mai* and the *dai mai*; these meridians also have a strong resonance and association to being pivots/polarities by linking the inside and the outside and allowing the entire cycle of extraordinary vessels to become one integrated whole.

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²² Interestingly, this may also shed further light on the name of *Zulinqi GB-41*—Foot Governor of Tears or Close to Tears. The end of a cycle, the death, the transition from the end of something to a new beginning is difficult, and often sad.
Figure 3: Connecting the Interior and Exterior, Returning to the Source

Conclusion

To recap, during the first half of the horary cycle the ying qi passes the confluent points corresponding to the extraordinary vessels that have their origin in the lower dantian—the ren, chong, and du mai. These three extraordinary vessels are three-yet-one—they are three branches of one vessel, and have a resonance to the oneness as it divides into the triad of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. Thereafter, the ying qi passes the confluent points of the qiao mai, which, in this model, correspond to the mobilization of the quiescent yin and yang, the dynamic yin and yang that moves through the body to nourish the zangfu and manifest each individuated being. Next, the cycle of the ying qi passes the confluent point of the yin wei mai, which assists in linking, consolidating, and integrating the internal manifestation of the dynamic yin and yang of the qiao mai. The internal integration of yin and yang then allows one to extend and connect within and without, as represented by the opening of the yang wei mai. Finally, the exterior can be consolidated and regulated as the ying qi cycles through the Gall Bladder channel and passes the confluent point of the dai mai, which also then facilitates the return to the quiescent state and oneness, allowing one to start the cycle again the next day.

This cycle of the extraordinary vessels corresponds to Daoist conceptions of cosmogenesis and the evolution of consciousness, whereby everything originates with the Source and thereafter divides into the triad of Heaven (yang), Earth (yin), and Humanity (the polarity/pivot between yin and yang). After yin and yang arise and begin circulating and interweaving, manifesting the 10,000 things, they then begin to integrate and connect with each other—first integrating Body and Spirit
within each individuated being, allowing each to be whole in oneself, and thereafter connecting with everything else in manifestation. This is a process of vertical and horizontal integration, and corresponds to the dynamic flow of qi at the level of Humanity. Through this progression, one eventually returns to a state of oneness.

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Bio
Thomas Richardson currently lives and practices in Rapid City, South Dakota, USA. This article is part of an emerging model that examines the foundational place of the extraordinary vessels within the channel and organ systems, as well as the relationship of the extraordinary vessels and the extraordinary fu to the evolution of consciousness (Extraordinary Chinese Medicine: Medicine for Extraordinary Times). Thomas is available to teach seminars on Neoclassical Pulse Diagnosis and Extraordinary Chinese Medicine, and can be contacted at tomasrichardson@hotmail.com.
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