

Pairing the Extraordinary Vessels with the Primary Channels and Zangfu, Part 1

By Thomas Richardson

Abstract

This article is an exploration of correspondences between the extraordinary vessels and the primary channels and *zangfu*, and posits that there may exist a direct relationship between them. This is the next segment of an emerging theoretical model (Extraordinary Chinese Medicine) that examines the foundational place of the extraordinary vessels within the channel and organ systems, as well as the possible relationships of the extraordinary vessels and the extraordinary *fu* to the evolution of consciousness and Daoist cosmology.

Introduction

In this paper I will explore various connections between the primary acupuncture channels and the extraordinary vessels (*qi jing ba mai*), developing a theoretical acupuncture model that sees the two sets of channels as having a direct correspondence to each other and integrated at a fundamental level. This is a continuation in a series of articles examining possible relationships of the extraordinary vessels and the extraordinary *fu* to Daoist cosmology and the evolution of consciousness.ⁱ To develop this perspective, I will examine anatomical, functional and relational correspondences between the extraordinary vessels and the primary channels and *zangfu* (viscera and bowels), utilizing the structure of the horary clock as the primary framework for exploration.

Let us start by examining the cycle of the *ying qi* as it flows through the 12 primary channels (corresponding to the horary clock) and observing the locations of the confluent points of the extraordinary vessels. In so doing, we can see that there is a specific distribution of the extraordinary vessel confluent points among the primary channels; in fact, there is a perfect, one-to-one distribution between each extraordinary vessel and each *zangfu*/primary channel pair. In order to make the relationships more clear, we can think in terms of the six extraordinary vessels, by unifying the *yin* and *yang* aspects of the *qiao mai* and *wei mai*. This leaves us with the *ren*, *chong*, *du*, *qiao*, *wei* and *dai mai*, which allows us to easily examine their relation to the six interior-exterior related pairs of primary channels and *zangfu*.ⁱⁱ Thus we arrive at the following:

Table 1. *Pairing the Extraordinary Vessels and the Primary Channels*

<i>Ying qi</i> cycle/ Horary Clock	Confluent points	Extraordinary vessel
LU-LI	Lieque LU 7	<i>Ren mai</i>
SP-ST	Gongsun SP 4	<i>Chong mai</i>
HE-SI	Houxi SI 3	<i>Du mai</i>
KD-UB	Zhaohai K 6, Shenmai UB 62	<i>Qiao mai</i>
PC-SJ	Neiguan P 6, Waiguan SJ 5	<i>Wei mai</i>
LIV-GB	Zulinqi GB 41	<i>Dai mai</i>

This table illustrates a one-to-one correspondence between the confluent points of each extraordinary vessel and each pair of interior-exterior related primary channels and *zangfu*. Given this clear correspondence, the question then becomes: is this merely coincidence, or is there a deeper, underlying coherency and relationship between the primary channels/*zangfu* and the extraordinary vessels? This paper posits that there is indeed a deeper relationship, and aims to shed some light on this inquiry.

General Support

Before we examine these pairings individually, it will be useful to review some of the general information regarding the extraordinary vessels and the connections to their respective primary channels and *zangfu*.

It has been said that one indication for utilizing an extraordinary vessel treatment strategy is when there is a disorder in the *zangfu* of the primary channel where its confluent point is located—i.e. using the *ren mai* (whose confluent point is Lieque LU 7) for all Lung issues and imbalances. As stated by John Pirog (1996, p170) in his discussion of the *ren mai*:

...the symptoms of the meridian on which the master point is located must be incorporated into the list of indications for the associated extraordinary vessel. In this case, the *ren mai* is linked to the lung meridian through Lu 7. Because of this connection, the lung function is more closely related to the *ren mai* than to any other extraordinary vessel. We must therefore include the full variety of lung patterns...as potential indications for *ren mai* treatment.

This suggests that there is a strong association between each extraordinary vessel and the primary channel where its confluent point is located (as well as the *zangfu* of that primary channel). It further suggests that the confluent points are not arbitrarily placed along the primary channel system, but that there is indeed an underlying connection between the extraordinary vessel and its associated primary channel and *zangfu* pair.

It is also of note that, of the eight confluent points, four of them (Lieque LU 7, Gongsun SP 4, Neiguan PC 6, and Waiguan SJ 5) are also the *luo*-connecting points of the primary channel on which they are found. This is significant, as *luo*-connecting points are one of the primary distal places along the channel where the *yin* and *yang* aspects of each pair of primary channels and *zangfu* meet and connect to each other. This suggests that there may be an important relationship between these confluent points (and their associated extraordinary vessel) and the connection between the interior-exterior related primary channels where they are located. For example, the *ren mai* likely has correlations to the Large Intestine as well as the Lung, and perhaps even to the connection *between* the Lung and the Large Intestine, given the nature of Lieque LU 7 as both the confluent point of the *ren mai* as well as the *luo*-connecting point of the Lung channel.ⁱⁱⁱ

Of the remaining four confluent points, it is of note that Zulinqi GB 41 is the exit point of the Gall Bladder channel, and thus the point where the Gall Bladder channel diverges to connect with the Liver channel—suggesting that the *dai mai* may have a correspondence to the Liver as well as the Gall Bladder (and possibly to the connection between them). Lastly, not only are the

confluent points of the *qiao mai* (Zhaohai K 6 and Shenmai BL 62) said to be the starting points of the *yin* and *yang qiao mai*, clearly demonstrating a close connection between these extraordinary vessels and their associated primary channels and *zangfu*, but the *qiao mai* themselves have often likened to *luo* vessels of the Kidney and Bladder channels—the significance of this will be examined later on in more depth.

The Quiescent State and the First Six Primary Channels

In order to examine the individual relationship of each extraordinary vessel to its associated primary channel pair, we will begin by looking at the groupings of the first half of the horary clock (the time period from 3am to 3pm, corresponding to LU-LI, ST-SP, and HE-SI) and their relationship to the extraordinary vessels that form the quiescent state (*ren mai*, *chong mai*, and *du mai*).^{iv}

In this model, the Lung and Large Intestine (*zangfu* and channels) correspond to the *ren mai*. As mentioned above, Lieque LU 7 is both the confluent point of the *ren mai*, as well as the *luo*-connecting point of the Lung channel, suggesting a possible relationship between the *ren mai* and the connection between the Lung and Large Intestine channels. Beyond this, there are several other strong correspondences between anatomical and functional aspects of the *ren mai* to these Metal channels and organs.

For starters, the Lungs are said to house the *po*, the corporeal soul. This is the relatively more physical, material, *yin* aspect of the *shen*. Similarly, the *ren mai* pertains more to the physical, material, *yin* aspects of being, and corresponds very closely to the *jing*-essence. The *ren mai* is called the Sea of Yin, yet (as noted in an earlier article (Richardson 2010b)) it may also be called the Sea of *Jing* when examining the *ren*, *chong*, and *du mai* in relation to the three treasures. And there is an intimate connection between the *po* and the *jing*-essence, as noted by Giovanni Maciocia (2005, p80-81):

The entering and exiting of Qi are also controlled by the Corporeal Soul (Po), which is in charge of the entering and exiting of the Essence (Jing). In other words, the Corporeal Soul and the Essence are closely coordinated and the Corporeal Soul is sometimes described as the ‘entering and exiting of the Essence’. For this reason, the Corporeal Soul contributes to all physiological activities.

This suggests a strong link between the Lungs and the *ren mai*, as relates to the *jing* and the *po*. The *po* is the most physical/material aspect of the *shen*, and the *jing*-Essence is the material/physical substance of experiential reality; together the *po* and the *jing* are regulated by the *ren mai* and the Lungs.

A further correspondence, related to this resonance between the *po* (Lungs) and the *jing* (*ren mai*), is seen in the way in which both the *ren mai* and the Lungs relate to the process of embodiment, of taking on “the burden of being human” and existing in the world at this level. As stated by Miriam Lee (1992, p41):

As the lung qi works physically in the body against the force of gravity

to hold up tears, etc., so too lung qi on an emotional or soul level holds up the spirit against the gravity of our struggle to survive in the world. When the lung qi is low, that knowledge of how to live becomes weaker and may be lost. When this soul goes, the person's will to live is gone.

This sentiment is echoed when we examine the etymology of the Chinese character for “*ren*”:
“...to bear the burden of being human, which is for instance, to be able to take charge and cope at each level of human life: to cope with each situation, to endure, to withstand, and to be able to resist attack. At the same time this idea of being able to withstand is softened by the notion of following the natural way. It is coping, not by confrontation, but allowing” (Larre and Rochat de la Vallée 1997, p85).^v Thus both the *ren mai* and the Lungs may relate to the process of embodiment, of taking on the charge of being human and all that it entails.

Further, to examine it from an anatomical perspective, the Lung channel pathway is in close relation to the *ren mai*. As summarized by Pirog (1996, p168):

Recall that the internal course of the lung meridian, which begins at RM 12, descends down the *ren mai* to the lower abdomen, and reascends up the *ren mai* to RM 17 before surfacing at Lu 1...The lung meridian therefore shares some of its internal trajectory with the *ren mai*.

Thus, even beyond the close relationships demonstrated by their connections to the *po* and the *jing*, and the process of embodiment, the *ren mai* and the Lung channel have confluence in their energetic pathways as well.

The *Chong Mai* and the Spleen and Stomach

Next we can examine some of the correspondences between the *chong mai* and the Spleen and Stomach. As noted above, Gongsun SP 4 is the confluent point of the *chong mai* and the *luo*-connecting point of the Spleen channel, and thus may share in this connection between the Spleen and Stomach. Beyond this, there are numerous other relationships between the *chong mai* and the Spleen and Stomach systems.

Anatomically, the *chong mai* shares many points with the Kidney channel; it also resonates functionally with the Kidneys.^{vi} However, it also has numerous connections to the Spleen and Stomach channels. As stated in the *Nan Jing* (Classic of Difficult Issues), “The through-way vessel originates from the ch’i-ch’ung [hole] {Qichong ST 30}, parallels the foot-yang-brilliance-conduit, ascends near the navel, and reaches the chest, where it dissipates” (Unschuld 1986, p327). And as noted in the *Su Wen* (Plain Questions), Chapter 60: “In disorders of the *chong/vitality* channel, the qi will rebel upward, causing acute abdominal pain and contracture” (Ni 1995, p209).

Li Shi Zhen further summarizes:

Surfacing and externalizing, it arises at Qi Thoroughfare (ST-30)...Here, it travels alongside and between the two channels of the foot yang brightness and lesser yin and proceeds along the abdomen, traveling upward to the pubic

bone. (The foot yang brightness [channel] is located two cun from the midline of the abdomen; the foot lesser yin [channel] is located five fen from the midline of the abdomen; the trajectory of the *chong* vessel travels between these two vessels) (Chase and Shima 2010, p123).

Li later continues, quoting [Wang] Qi-Xuan: "... 'Because the *chong* vessel lies beneath the spleen [channel], it is said that the *chong* is located beneath,' and it is called Greater Yin" (p125).

This demonstrates a strong connection between the *chong mai* and the Spleen and Stomach systems and a confluence in their channel pathways. Continuing from the anatomical perspective, it is also of note that the *chong mai* is said to travel around the mouth, which is the sense organ corresponding to the Spleen and Stomach.

It is also important to note that the *chong mai* is known as the Sea of the Five *Zang* and the Six *Fu*, as well as the Sea of the 12 Channels. According to the *Jia Yi Jing* (The Systematic Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion): 'The penetrating vessel is the sea of the five viscera and the six bowels. The five viscera and six bowels are dependent on it for nourishment' (Mi 2004, p55).^{vii} This is possibly related to its nature as the pivot between the fundamental polarity of *yin* and *yang* in the channel system, as represented by the *ren* and *du mai* (Richardson 2009a). Similarly, the Spleen and Stomach are said to be the Sea of the 12 *zangfu* and are also often referred to as the pivot within the internal organ system. For this reason the Spleen and Stomach are often depicted as the *taiji* symbol, as the central pivot of *yin* and *yang* that are basis of the other *zangfu*. The classical texts and earlier commentators have also noted this confluence between the *chong mai* and the Stomach and Spleen:

As stated in the *Su Wen* (Plain Questions), Chapter 44: 'Yangming is the source of nourishment for all the *zang fu* viscera. Only with this nourishment can the tendons, bones, and joints be lubricated. The *chong/vitality* channel is considered the reservoir of the twelve main meridians. It is responsible for the permeability of nutrients throughout the body and into the muscles. It works together with the yangming in this function. The yangming/stomach can be said to be the primary channel that is responsible for this' (Ni 1995, p164-165).

And Zhang Jing-Yue: '...the yang brightness is the sea of the five viscera and six receptacles, while the *chong* is the sea of the channels and vessels. Of these, one is yin and one is yang, but between them, they constitute the totality [of all the channels]' (as cited in Chase and Shima 2010, p250-251).

These statements offer further support to the perspective that the Spleen and Stomach (organs and channels) share a direct correspondence with the *chong mai*.

Above we examined the relationship between the *ren mai* as the Sea of *Jing* to the Lungs and the *po*. Within the paradigms of the three treasures and the three *dantian*, the *chong mai* may also be called the Sea of *Qi*^{viii} (corresponding to the middle *dantian*), and within the correspondences between the extraordinary vessels and the extraordinary *fu* it may be said to relate to the *mai* or

blood vessels. This, then, has an interesting correspondence to the function of the Spleen and Stomach to produce *qi* and blood, as well as the function of the Spleen to hold the blood in the vessels.

The *Du Mai* and the Heart and Small Intestine

The last pairing we will examine in this section is the relationship between the *du mai* and the Heart and Small Intestine systems. As you may have noticed above in the discussion on general support, Houxi SI 3 was the only confluent point not mentioned as having some direct connection to the paired channels and *zangfu*. Although Houxi SI 3 is not a *luo*-connecting point or an exit point, there is another, more direct connection linking the *du mai* to the Heart and Heart function. The course of the *du mai* itself passes through the Heart, which is one of the only direct connections between an extraordinary vessel and a *zangfu* organ. As stated in the *Su Wen* (Plain Questions), Chapter 60, “The [Du] channel crosses the umbilicus, goes up through the heart into the throat and around the mouth, stopping below the eyes” (Ni 1995, p209). Also, as stated in the *Jia Yi Jing* (The Systematic Classic):

The branch [of the governing vessel] which travels straight upward from the lower abdomen runs through the center of the umbilicus, penetrates the heart, and enters the throat... If (the governing vessel) becomes diseased, there will be a surging ascension (of *qi*) from the lower abdomen into the heart and resultant (heart) pain and inability to defecate or urinate” (Mi 2004, p56).

In its course it also connects directly to the Kidneys, thus lending support to the theory that it may have a role in connecting the Heart and Kidneys to each other (as noted in Footnote 6).^{ix} These connections offer support to the theory that there exists a relatively direct relationship between the *du mai* and the Heart and Small Intestine primary channels and *zangfu*.

Besides these anatomical connections linking the *du mai* to the Heart and Small Intestine, there are a number of functional and relational correspondences between this extraordinary vessel and this *zangfu* and primary channel system. As noted previously, although the *du mai* is often called the Sea of Yang, it may also be called the Sea of *Shen* from the perspective of the three treasures and the three *dantian* (Richardson 2010b). Within this theoretical model, the *du mai* is seen as having an intimate relationship to the three *dantian* and the movement of *shen* between these centers of consciousness. Interestingly, the three *dantian* roughly correspond anatomically to the locations of the Small Intestine, Heart, and Brain.^x Related to this, it is noteworthy that the *du mai* is traditionally used to treat many disorders related to the *shen*, which is said (according to some sources) to reside in the Heart. Thus we see a clear correspondence between the Heart and Small Intestine systems and the *du mai*, as relates to the *shen*.

Continuing on the above discussion, different traditions have historically debated whether the Brain or the Heart was the residence of the *shen*. Here we have an elegant way to reconcile the discrepancy, through understanding this relationship between the *du mai*, the Heart and Small Intestine, and the Brain (remember that, in this model, the Brain is the extraordinary *fu* that is paired with the *du mai*).^{xi} Thus it may be that the *du mai*, through its intimate connections with

the Kidneys, spine and Brain as well as the Heart-Small Intestine system, is actually the Sea of *Shen* and regulates the movement of the *shen* in both systems.

The Heart and Small Intestine are also said to be the Emperor or Imperial Fire, as compared to the Ministerial Fire of the Pericardium and San Jiao.^{xii} The Emperor Fire corresponds relatively more to the vertical connection between Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, while the Ministerial Fire corresponds more to the horizontal connection between the inside and outside, and self and other (Richardson 2010c). Similarly, the *du mai* (as part of the quiescent state, along with the *ren mai* and *chong mai*) relates more to vertical integration and connection, while the *wei mai*, Pericardium, and San Jiao are relatively more associated with horizontal integration (as will be explored in Part 2). We also see this correspondence to vertical integration reflected in the first half of the *ying qi* cycle (as is explored below), and it is in this first half that we find both the Emperor Fire of the Heart-Small Intestine system as well as the confluent point of the *du mai*.

Lastly, the *du mai* also has a branch that connects directly to the tongue, which is the sense organ associated with the Heart and Small Intestine. As stated in the *Jia Yi Jing* (The Systematic Classic),

Loss of Voice Gate (Yin Men) [Du 15] is also known as Tongue's Horizontal (She Heng) and Tongue Repression (She Yan) and is located on the nape of the neck in a depression in the hairline. It enters to connect with the root of the tongue and is a meeting point of the governing vessel and the yang linking vessel (Mi 2004, p80).

And as noted in the footnote, “This implies that the governing vessel starts from this point to connect to the root of the tongue” (p113).

Vertical integration: Heaven, Earth and Humanity

In summary, there may be a deep relationship between the first three pairs of interior-exteriorly related primary channels and *zangfu* and the three extraordinary vessels that form the quiescent state. There are many correlations suggesting a relationship between the Lungs/Large Intestine and the *ren mai*, the Spleen/Stomach and the *chong mai*, and the Heart/Small Intestine and the *du mai* when the three pairings are examined individually. Alternatively, we can also look at these three systems as a whole (as the *ren-chong-du mai* are said to be three branches of one vessel), to reveal further insight to the relationship between these extraordinary vessels and their corresponding primary channels/*zangfu*.

One of the most important correspondences of these two separate systems—*ren-chong-du mai* and Lungs-Spleen-Heart—is the connection they share to the vertical axis and Daoist conceptions of cosmogenesis. The vertical axis corresponds not only to the manifestation and unfoldment of the oneness into the triad of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, but also to the transcendence of duality and the return to oneness. We can see these two separate processes both represented in the first half of the *ying qi* cycle. On the one hand, we see the process of manifestation, as represented by the movement from the Lungs to the Spleen to the Heart (when we follow the flow of the *ying qi* cycle through the first six primary channels of the horary clock). Within these three *zang*, the Lungs correspond to Heaven above, the Spleen corresponds

to Earth, and the Heart corresponds to the level of humanity.^{xiii} Thus we have the movement from Heaven to Earth to Humanity, which corresponds to the process of manifestation in the evolution of consciousness.^{xiv}

On the other hand, we also have the process of internal alchemy, of transcending duality to reconnect with the oneness, as represented by the movement from the *ren mai* (lower *dantian/jing*-Essence/Uterus) to the *chong mai* (middle *dantian/qi/mai*) to the *du mai* (upper *dantian/shen/Brain*).^{xv} This is a reflection of the transformation of *jing* to *qi* and *qi* to *shen*, and is an ascension along the *zhong mai* (Central Channel) or *taiji* pole.^{xvi} This is fitting, as it is the *zangfu* and primary channels that correspond relatively more to the day-to-day activity associated with manifestation and living in the mundane world at the level of humanity, whereas it is the extraordinary vessels that help to take us beyond the mundane, to reconnect to the source and remember where we come from. See the table below for further illustration of these processes.

Table 2. *The Ying Qi Cycle and the Processes of Manifestation and Transcendence*

<i>Ying Qi</i> Cycle	<i>Zangfu</i>	Process of Manifestation	Extraordinary Vessel	Process of Transcendence
LU-LI	Lung	Heaven	<i>Ren mai</i>	Earth/Lower <i>dantian</i>
ST-SP	Spleen	Earth	<i>Chong mai</i>	Humanity/Middle <i>dantian</i>
HE-SI	Heart	Humanity	<i>Du mai</i>	Heaven/Upper <i>dantian</i>

Conclusion

It is well known that the extraordinary vessels are reservoirs for the primary channels, and that they assist in connecting and integrating the primary channel system into a cohesive whole. Yet it is possible that there exists a more direct, one-to-one correspondence between each extraordinary vessel and each internally-externally related primary channel pair and *zangfu* organ system, beyond these general relationships. In this paper I explored the first three sets of pairings; in the next issue of Chinese Medicine Times I will continue this exploration by examining the ways in which the *qiao mai* relate to the Kidney and Bladder system, the *wei mai* relate to the Pericardium and San Jiao system, and the *dai mai* relates to the Liver and Gall Bladder system. Further, we will also continue to examine the ways in which these relationships have a relation to concepts of vertical and horizontal integration, Daoist cosmology, and the evolution of consciousness.

Bio

Thomas Richardson, licensed acupuncturist, currently lives and practices acupuncture in Boulder, Colorado. For more information on Extraordinary Chinese Medicine, as well as our acupuncture clinics in Boulder, CO, please visit www.ExtraordinaryChineseMedicine.com. Thomas is available to teach seminars on Neoclassical Pulse Diagnosis and Extraordinary Chinese Medicine, and can be contacted at tomasrichardson@hotmail.com.

ⁱ As such, throughout this paper there will be many references to previous articles, terminology, and theories related to building this perspective. For more information on this model, as well as access to previous articles relating to the extraordinary vessels and the evolution of consciousness, visit: www.ExtraordinaryChineseMedicine.com.

ⁱⁱ Grouping the extraordinary vessels in this way is not in any way intended to diminish the importance of the *yin* and *yang* components of the *qiao* and *wei mai*; rather, it is merely shifting the organization of the eight extraordinary vessels to allow for a more easily-understandable and logically consistent model.

ⁱⁱⁱ This overlap may also shed further light on the 27th Difficult Issue: “Here [in the organism], when the network-vessels are filled to overflowing, none of the [main] conduits could seize any [of their contents, and it is only then that the surplus contents of these vessels flow into the single-conduit {i.e. extraordinary} vessels]” (Unschuld 1986, p322). If it is the extraordinary vessels that are responsible for absorbing surplus from the *luo*-connecting (i.e. network) channels, it then becomes clear why several of the extraordinary vessel confluent points overlap with *luo*-connecting points. In needling that point, one is simultaneously addressing the imbalance in the *luo* while accessing an extraordinary vessel that may be able to help regulate the *luo*. And, as *luo*-connecting points are the connection between interior-exterior paired primary channels, the extraordinary vessels thus may directly regulate the *luo* of the primary channels and *zangfu* where their confluent points are found.

^{iv} The term ‘quiescent state,’ in this model, refers to the triad of the *ren mai*, *chong mai*, and *du mai* and their relationship to the lower *dantian* and the oneness as it divides into three. For more information on the quiescent state and the relationship of the *du*, *ren*, and *chong mai* to the triad of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, see: Richardson (2009a).

^v Also see Yang’s commentary on the 28th Difficult Issue and the meaning of the character for *ren*: “*Jen* 任 (‘controller’) stands for *jen* 妊 (‘pregnancy’). This is the basis of man’s [coming to] life and nourishment” (Unschuld 1986, p329).

^{vi} It is important to note that the three extraordinary vessels that form the quiescent state (*ren*, *chong*, and *du mai*) are said to be “three branches of one vessel” and all three have a deep, intimate relationship to the lower *dantian* and the Kidneys. Thus it is not surprising that they would each have strong connections to the Kidneys as well as their respective *zangfu* and primary channels as proposed in this paper. It is even plausible that they are able to thereby connect the Kidneys with their respective *zangfu* (e.g. it may be that the *chong mai* helps to connect the Kidneys with the Spleen and Stomach). For example, see Chase and Shima (2010, p237): “The *chong* vessel may be understood as the axis by which the stomach channel communicates earthly qi, and the kidney channel communicates heavenly qi, throughout the body.” This will be touched on again later on.

^{vii} See Li Shi-Zhen: “The *chong* is the sea of the channels and vessels. It is also called the sea of blood” (Chase and Shima 2010, p123); and later: “The *chong* vessel is the sea of the five yin viscera and the six yang receptacles” (p125).

^{viii} The *chong mai* is known as the Sea of Blood and the Sea of the 12 Channels, as seen above. However, in an earlier article (Richardson 2010b) I explored the relationship of the *ren*, *chong*, and *du mai* to the three treasures and the three *dantian*; in this model the *chong mai* also corresponds to the level of *Qi* within the three treasures. Thus the *ren mai* may be referred to as the Sea of *Jing* (corresponding to the lower *dantian*), the *chong mai* may be considered the Sea of *Qi* (corresponding to the middle *dantian*), and the *du mai* may be called the Sea of *Shen* (corresponding to the upper *dantian*).

^{ix} See *Su Wen* (Plain Questions), Chapter 60: “It then travels around the anal area and branches again through the thigh, where it connects with the foot shaoyin/kidney channel. It combines with the *luo*/collateral of foot taiyang and foot shaoyin to converge in the buttocks. It travels upward from there, penetrating the spine and finally connecting with the kidneys” (Ni 1995, p209).

^x Along these lines, it is of note that Guanyuan RN 4, one of the primary acupuncture points associated with the lower *dantian*, is also the front-*mu* point of the Small Intestine. Continuing further, the location of the lower *dantian* corresponds anatomically to the Uterus (which, in this model, is paired with the *ren mai*) in women and the Small Intestine (which is paired with the *du mai*) in men. Thus, although the lower *dantian* is the source of *ren mai*, *chong mai*, and *du mai*, which are three yet one, it may be associated slightly more with the primary yin meridian (*ren mai*) for women and the primary yang meridian (*du mai*) for men through these correspondences.

^{xi} For a more in-depth discussion of this pairing between the *du mai* and the Brain, and their relation to the *shen*, see (Richardson 2010b). See also Liao P’ing’s commentary on the 28th Difficult Issue: “Of each conduit it is said: ‘It is tied to that-and-that [vessel] and constitutes [together with it] outside and inside, and it belongs to that-and-that [depot], which represents its basic depot.’ Here it is said that the [supervisor vessel] belongs to the brain. Well, if the supervisor vessel belongs to the brain, it must be the conduit-vessel of the brain” (Unschuld 1986, p329).

^{xii} “...purely from a Five-Element perspective, the Pericardium pertains to the Minister Fire (with the Triple Burner) compared to the Emperor Fire of the Heart” (Maciocia 2005, p167).

^{xiii} This can be seen just by imagining the anatomical placement of these three organs—the Lungs are Heaven above, the Spleen and Stomach are Earth, and the Heart, at the level of Humanity, is perfectly placed between the Spleen/Stomach system below and the Lungs above. Also notice the relationship of their associated sense organs—as stated by He-Shang Gong: “Dark refers to Heaven. In man, this means the nose, which links us with Heaven. Womb [female] refers to Earth. In man, this means the mouth, which links us to earth” (as cited in Chase and Shima 2010, p66). Thus the Lungs (as the nose is the flowering of the Lungs) are a reflection of Heaven, and the Spleen (as the mouth is the flowering of the Spleen) is a reflection of Earth. In various practices of qigong, meditation, and internal alchemy, one places the tongue (the flowering of the Heart) against the roof of the mouth, thus helping to connect Heaven above (the nose/Lungs) with Earth below (the mouth/Spleen).

^{xiv} “One” corresponds to Heaven, “Two” corresponds to Heaven and Earth, and “Three” corresponds to Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. This is the order of unfoldment/manifestation in Daoist cosmology. Also see Chapter 42 of the Dao De Ching: “Dao gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, three gives birth to the ten thousand things.” For a fuller discussion on this process, also see the discussion of the etymology of the character 王 (*wang*) in Richardson (2010c).

^{xv} For the background and a more complete exploration of these associations between the *ren*, *chong*, and *du mai* with the three treasures, the three *dantian*, and the extraordinary *fu*, as well as their relation to this process of internal alchemy, see Richardson (2010a and 2010b).

^{xvi} Interestingly, this may shed further light on Luo Dong-Yi’s discussion of the ‘grand thoroughfare’. See Chase and Shima (2010, p318-319): “One common theme in Luo’s use of the term is that the grand thoroughfare is invariably associated with the transmission of prenatal qi...the direction of this transmission is always upward from below...Luo Dong-Yi explains that the grand thoroughfare may also be used as a collective term for the *chong*, *ren*, and *du* vessels.”

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