

Flow of the Extraordinary Vessels 奇 經

(These Ruchū was reprinted from
book of Traditional Japanese Medicine)

(1) Dū Mài or Governing Vessel

Tokumyaku no Ruchū (督脈の流注)

The governing vessel begins at a point in the lower extremity [of the trunk], ascends the anterior aspect of the spine to GV-16, and then enters and joins with the brain. (*Nan Jing*, chapter 28)

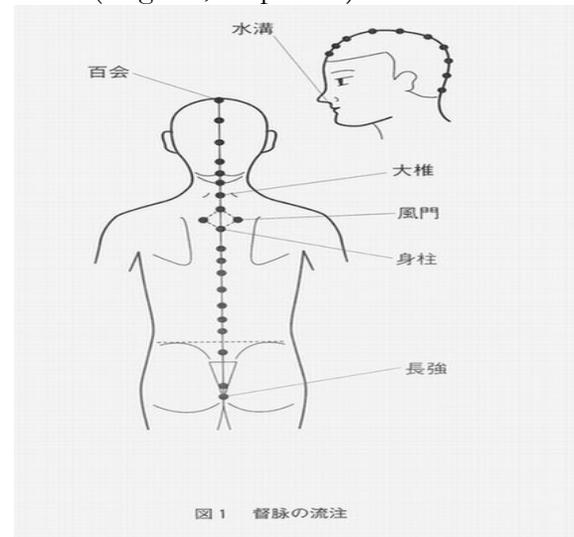
The governing vessel begins at a point in the lower extremity [of the trunk], ascends the anterior aspect of the spine to GV-16, and then enters the brain, ascends to the vertex of the head, and passes through the forehead to the bridge of the nose. It joins with the sea of yang vessels. (*Elaboration of the Fourteen Meridians*)

The governing vessel begins in the lower abdomen and descends to the center of the [pubic] bone. In women it enters and connects to the vagina, next to the urethral opening. The network vessel passes through the reproductive organs, [re]connects [to the primary channel] in the perineum [CV-1], and then [together they] continue past the anus. [Another network vessel] diverges to pass through the buttocks to the lesser yin [Kidney channel]. It connects to the network vessel of the greater yang [Bladder channel], ascends along with the lesser yin [Kidney channel] through the posterior aspect of the inner crotch, and passes along the [visceral side] of the spine to join with the Kidney.

(Another network vessel) starts along with the greater yang [Bladder channel] at the inner canthus of the eye, ascends the forehead to mingle at the vertex of the head, and then enters to encircle the brain. It reemerges, splits and descends the nape of the neck. It [descends] medial to the scapula, and passes

along the lateral edge of the spine to the lumbar region. It enters and passes through the buttocks to connect to the Kidney. In men it passes through the penis, and then descends to the perineum, the same as in women. From the lower abdomen it ascends straight up through the center of the navel, passes through the Heart, enters the throat, ascends the chin, circles around the lips, and then ascends to the area beneath the eye. (*Su Wen*, chapter 60)

The network vessel of the governing vessel is called Long Strong (GV-1). It ascends parallel to the spine, ascends the nape of the neck, spreads out at the vertex of the head, and then descends to the scapular bones. It diverges and along the greater yang [Bladder channel], and passes through the back. (*Ling Shu*, chapter 10)



Governing Vessel Explanation

The sub-section above presented passages from the classics that concern the governing vessel. The phrase "point in the lower extremity" from the *Nan Jing* and the *Elaboration of the Fourteen Meridians* refers to CV-1. Whereas those texts give CV-1 as the starting point, the *Su Wen* says that the governing vessel "begins in the lower abdomen." The point in the lower abdomen from which it starts should be CV-3. From CV-3 it passes through the "center of the bone"—

that is, through CV-2—to the perineum. From the anus it ascends along the midline of the back, but it also joins the Kidney and Bladder channels, entering at GV-1 and fusing with the Kidney.

There is a branch that does not just travel along the midline of the back. From GV-20 it descends through the nape of the neck, passes between the scapular bones, and flows down along both sides of the spine to meet again at CV-1.

There is a network vessel that ascends from the lower abdomen along the path of the conception vessel. But, this vessel can be thought of as flowing deep to the conception vessel.

In short, the governing vessel is closely related to the conception vessel, Bladder, and Kidney channels; and is a highly important channel in terms of treatment.

Just as is implied by the governing vessel being called the sea of yang channels, it always manifests signs of a yang disease. Symptom patterns often improve just by treating the areas where those signs appear.

There are many important points on the governing vessel. Its points on the lower back are effective for treating illnesses related to the urinary tract, prostate, anus, and uterus. The mid-section of the governing vessel can be used for treating digestive tract disorders. In nervous diseases such as insomnia the governing vessel section in the upper back will often show pain on pressure.

(2) Yang Qiao or Yang Heel Vessel

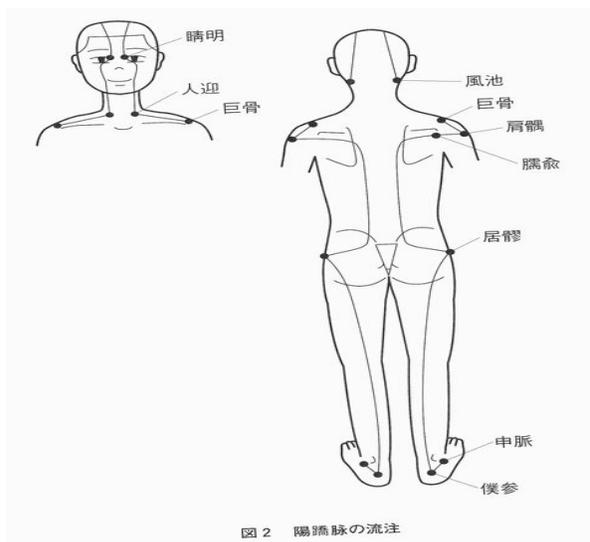
Yōkyōmyaku no Ruchū (陽蹻脈の流注)

The yang heel vessel starts in the heel, passes through the lateral malleolus, and ascends to enter GB-20. (*Nan Jing*, chapter 28)

The yang heel vessel starts in the heel, passes through the lateral malleolus, and ascends to enter GB-20. ...The heel vessels [qiāo mài] of both feet take as their root the

connecting vessel of the greater yang [channel]. They merge with the greater yang [channels] and their ki flows upwards. If their ki circulates well together, the eyes will be moistened. If their ki does not nourish [the channel], the eyes cannot be used. Men count the yang [heel vessel], and women count the yin [heel vessel]. The channel that is counted is taken to be the [primary] channel, and the channel that is not counted is taken to be the network vessel.

The heel vessel is 8 chǐ long. It originates at BL-62, and takes BL-59 as its cleft (accumulation) point, and BL-61 as its root. It merges with the foot lesser yang [channel]² at GB-29, merges with the hand yang brightness [channel] at LI-15 and LI-16, merges with the hand and foot greater yang [channels] and the yang linking [vessel] at SI-10, merges with the hand and foot yang brightness [channels] at ST-4, merges again with the hand and foot yang brightness [channels] at ST-3, and merges with the conception vessel and the foot yang brightness [channel] at ST-1. The above-mentioned points are the places where the yang heel vessel surfaces. This makes 20 points. (*Elaboration of the Fourteen Meridians*)



Yang Heel Vessel Explanation

According to the above arrangement, the yang heel vessel begins at BL-62, and reaches

to BL-61, BL-59, GB-29, SI-10, LI-15, LI-16, ST-4, ST-3, and ST-1. *Illustrations of the Three Powers in Japanese and Chinese*³ it says that the yang heel vessel also reaches to BL-1 and terminates at GB-20. This is most likely based on a consideration of passages from the *Nan Jing*.

In men, the yang heel vessel is the primary channel and the yin heel vessel is the network vessel. In women, the yin heel vessel is the primary channel and the yang heel vessel is the network vessel.

(3) Yang Wei or Yang Linking Vessel

Yōimyaku no Ruchū (陽維脈の流注)

The yang linking [vessel] links the yang. It starts at the meeting [point]¹ of the yang [channels]. Together with the yin linking [vessel] it links and connects the body. If [the yang linking vessel] cannot link yang and yang, then [one] becomes relaxed to the point that one cannot maintain one's posture. The channel ki emerges at BL-63 and diverges to GB-35, which is a cleft (accumulation) point. [The yang linking vessel] meets the hand and foot greater yang [channels] and the qiāo mài at SI-10, and meets the hand and foot lesser yang

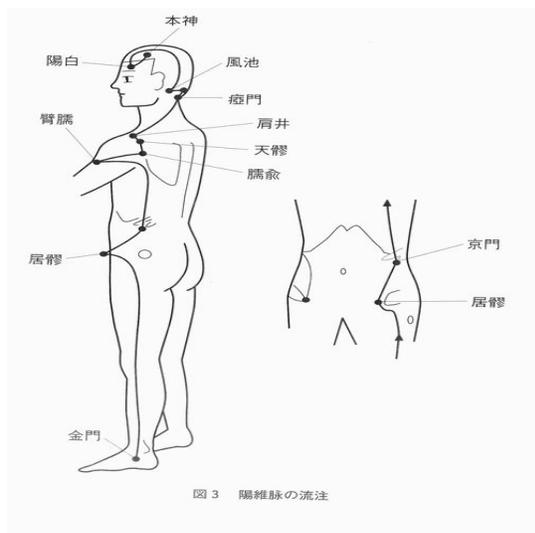


図3 陽維脈の流注

¹ BL-63.

² That is, they become bloated like a water sack

[channels] at TW-15 and then again at GB-21. The part [of the channel] that goes to the head meets the foot lesser yang [channel] at GB-14, ascends [through] GB-13 and GB-15, ascends to reach GB-17, passes through GB-19, and then descends to reach GB-20. The places where [the yang linking vessel] meets with the governing vessel are GV-16 and GV-15. The *Nan Jing* says, “[During] a yang linking disease [the patient] suffers from [alternating] chills and fever. The channel ki of the yang linking [vessel] emerges at about 24 points. (*Elaboration of the Fourteen Meridians*)

Explanation of the Yang Linking Vessel

Illustrations of the Three Powers in Japanese and Chinese it is written that the Yang Linking Vessel passes through BL-63, GB-35, GB-29, LI-14, SI-10, TW-15, GB-21, GV-15, GV-16, GB-20, and GB-13. However, there are different views on this. For instance, the *Book of Illustrations of the Transport Points on the Copper Man* says that the yang linking vessel also passes through GB-24.

There is no need to get hung up about the acupuncture points. The yang linking vessel is principally related to the lesser yang channel, and is used when there is an aggravation of heat during a lesser yang illness.

(4) Dai Mai or Girdle Vessel

Taimyaku no Ruchū (帶脈の流注)

The girdling vessel starts at the free ribs and encircles the body. (*Nan Jing*, chapter 28)

The girdling vessel starts at the free ribs and encircles the body. [During] an illness of the girdling vessel the lumbar and abdominal [regions] become so slack as to resemble a water sack.² The area where the channel ki [of the girdling vessel] emerges is one cun eight fēn inferior to the free ribs. It is aptly called the

that is full of water.

girdle vessel since it circles around the body like a girdle. Moreover, it meets the foot lesser yang [channel] at GB-28. The girdling vessel emerges at about four points. (*Elaboration of the Fourteen Meridians*)

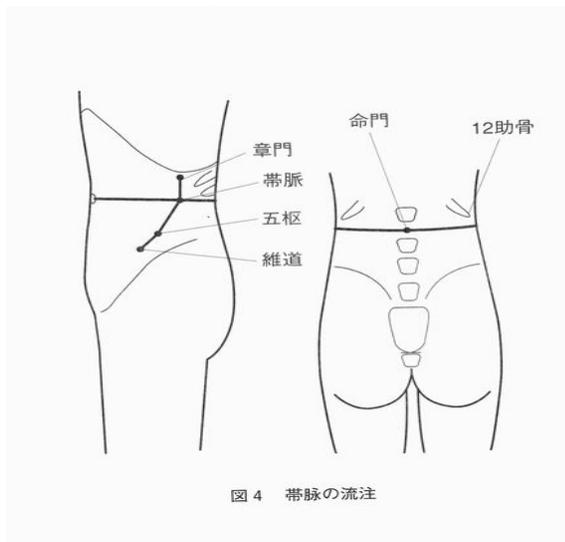


図4 帶脈の流注

Explanation of the Girdling Vessel

The girdling vessel is undoubtedly connected with the Gallbladder channel, and among the other channels is mainly connected with the Kidney and Stomach channels. Almost all cases of low back pain are related to the girdling vessel. In cases of low back pain, it is necessary to treat the Kidney and Stomach channels, and not just the Gallbladder and Liver channels. Indeed, in the case of a Liver deficiency pattern all these channels are naturally chosen as treatment locations, and so there is no need to worry much about channel selection.

The girdling vessel passes through the lower back at the level of the navel, but in the abdomen it is suspected that it dips down through the inguinal region. That is why pain on pressure appears in the inguinal region during most cases of a Liver deficiency pattern or a Kidney deficiency pattern. In those who have pain on pressure in the superior aspect of the inguinal region on the right side, most will have pain in the right side of their lower back. The same holds true for the left side. In

considering various cases in terms of clinical practice, it seems that the girdling vessel is anything but formulaic.

(5) Ren or Conception Vessel

Ninmyaku no Ruchū (任脈の流注)

The conception vessel starts below CV-3 and ascends toward the [pubic] hairline, passes through the inside of the abdomen, ascends through CV-4, and up to the throat. (*Nan Jing*, chapter 28)

The connecting vessel of the conception vessel is called Tail Shadow [CV-15]. It starts at CV-15 and descends to disperse in the abdomen. (*Ling Shu*, chapter 10)

The conception vessel starts below CV-3 and ascends toward the [pubic] hairline, passes through the inside of the abdomen, ascends through CV-4, and up to the throat. It ascends the chin, passes through the face, and enters the eyes. (*Su Wen*, chapter 60)

The connecting vessel of the uterus is connected to the Kidney. (*Su Wen*, chapter 47)

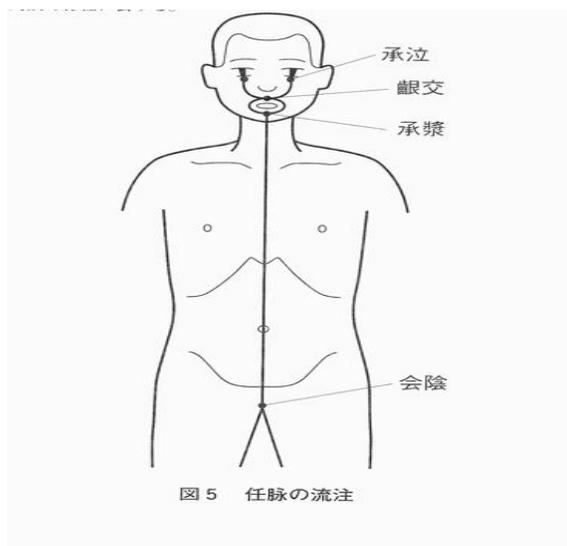


図5 任脈の流注

Conception Vessel Explanation

The conception vessel is a channel that ascends from the perineum up through the midline of the abdomen. Moxibustion should

be used on its points in the lower abdomen when the lower warmer is deficient and there is a condition of cold. On the other hand, blood stasis is indicated when there is resistance and excess in these points.

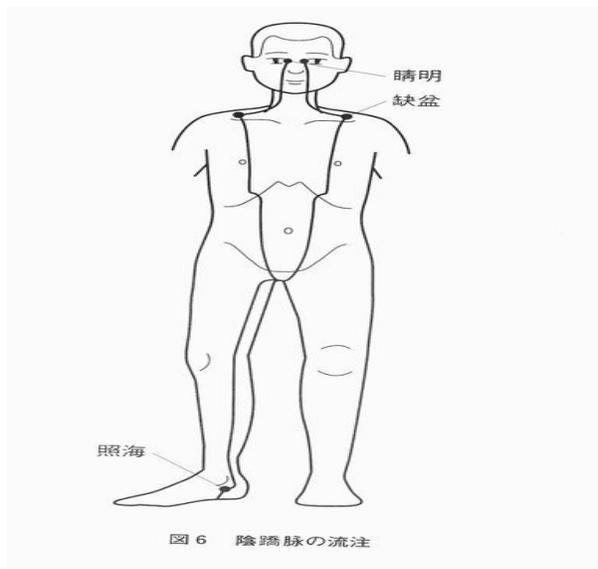
Points on the conception vessel in the upper abdomen are fundamental points in relation to digestive tract disorders. It is absolutely essential to use CV-12 when the Spleen and Stomach are deficient. CV-14 often reveals resistance and pain on pressure when the patient has consumed too many liquids and foods with a high liquid content. Or, CV-14 can also manifest resistance and pain on pressure when there is Kidney deficiency.

CV-17 is a very important point in the thoracic region. Heat builds up in the chest when there is a heat pattern of Kidney deficiency or Liver deficiency. At that time the chest will feel hot to the touch and will reveal pain on pressure in an area centering on CV-17.

(6) Yin Qiao or Yin Heel Vessel

Inkyōmyaku no Ruchū (陰蹻脈の流注)

The yin heel vessel also starts in the heel and passes through the lateral malleolus. It ascends to the throat, merges with the penetrating vessel, and then [together they] pass [through the throat]. (*Nan Jing*, chapter 28) The heel vessel diverges at the connecting [vessel] of the lesser yin [channel] posterior to KI-2 and ascends above the medial malleolus. It ascends directly, passing through the inner thigh and enters the groin. It ascends through the inside of the chest and emerges at ST-12. Then it ascends anterior to ST-9 and enters the nose. It connects to the inner canthus of the eye and merges with the greater yang [channel]. In women the [yin heel vessel] is the primary channel, and in men it is the network vessel. The qiāo mài [heel vessel] of each foot is 8 chǐ long. However, the cleft (accumulation) point of the yin heel [vessel] is KI-8. (*Elaboration of the Fourteen Meridians*)



Yin Heel Vessel Explanation

The yin heel vessel passes through KI-2, KI-6, KI-8, ST-12, and BL-1.

Based on the primary function of the extraordinary vessels, the yin heel vessel is effective in treating the symptoms that appear after a febrile disease. After the flow of the channels becomes hyperactive due to the stagnation of yang ki caused by the febrile disease, even though the original symptoms of the febrile disease may have disappeared, it is possible that the flow in the meridians, which became hyperactive, has not returned to normal. Consequently, ki and blood overflows in the extraordinary vessels, where they stagnate and manifest in specific symptoms.

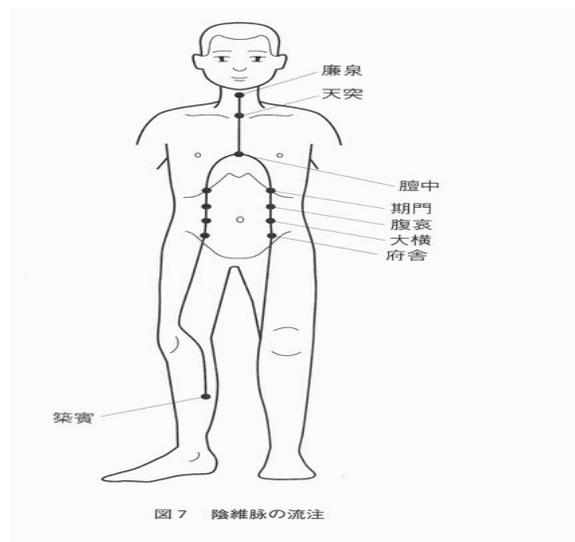
(7) Yin Wei or Yin Linking

Inkimyaku no Ruchū (陰維脈の流注)

The yin linking [vessel] links the yin. The channel starts at the crossing [point]³ of the yin [channels]. If [the yin linking vessel] cannot link yin and yin, then [one] loses [his/her] will in a state of stupefaction. The place where the channel ki emerges is the cleft (accumulation) point of the yin linking [vessel]. It is called “Guest House” (KI-9). [The yin linking vessel]

³ KI-9.

meets the foot greater yin [channel] at SP-16 and SP-15. It again meets the foot greater yin [channel] and reverting yin [channel] at SP-13 and LR-14, and meets the conception vessel at CV-22 and CV-23. The *Nan Jing* says, “[During] a yin linking disease [the patient] suffers from heart pain. The channel ki of the yin linking [vessel] emerges at about 20 points. (*Elaboration of the Fourteen Meridians*)



Explanation of the Yin Linking Vessel

- ① The yin linking vessel starts at KI-9 and passes through the Spleen channel at SP-13 and SP-14. Therefore, considering this, one can see that the yin linking vessel is inseparably connected to the Kidney and Spleen channels. Consideration of symptom pattern also shows that the yin linking vessel has its focal point on the Kidney channel.

(8) Chong or Penetrating Vessel

Shōmyaku no Ruchū (衝脈の流注)

The penetrating vessel starts at ST-30, [ascends] parallel to the foot yang brightness channel, ascends past the side of the navel, and continues up to the chest where it disperses.

(*Nan Jing*, chapter 28)

The penetrating vessel starts at CV-4 and ascends directly up along the abdomen. (*Su Wen*, chapter 39)

The penetrating vessel is the sea of the [twelve] channels. It is in charge of permeating and irrigating every nook and cranny. It merges with the yang brightness [channel] in the ancestral sinews. The yin [penetrating vessel] and yang [yang brightness channel] preside over the convergence of the ancestral sinews. [They] converge at ST-30, and the yang brightness [channel] is the leader [in their work]. They join with the girdling vessel and connect to the governing vessel. (*Su Wen*, chapter 44)

The penetrating vessel starts at ST-30, ascends parallel to the lesser yang channel past the sides of the navel, and up to the chest where it disperses. (*Su Wen*, chapter 60)

The penetrating vessel is the sea of the five zang and six fu organs, which are all [moistened and nourished] by it. The ascending channel emerges on the upper mandible, and spreads to the yang [areas on the face] and pours into the yin⁴ [areas on the face]. The descending channel pours into the great network vessel [KI-4] of the lesser yin [channel]. [First] it emerges at ST-30 and passes along the medial thigh. It enters the popliteal crease and passes concealed through the posterior aspect of the tibia, then descends to reach the posterior aspect of the medial malleolus, where it joins [with the greater network vessel of the lesser yin channel] and then disperses. [This] descending channel runs parallel to the lesser yin channel and then spreads out to the three yin channels. The channel that continues along passes deep and then emerges at the ankle [at the superior aspect of the calcaneal tubercle], descends through the dorsum of the foot, enters between the big toes [the first and second toes], and spreads out to the connecting vessels [in the area] to warm the flesh. (*Su Wen*, chapter 38)

The penetrating vessel is the sea of the twelve channels. It starts from the Kidney

⁴ The original text says, "pours into the essences."

The *Jiǎ Yì* says that 'essences' is a mistake for 'yin'.

along with the great network vessel of the lesser yin [channel]. It descends to emerge at ST-30, passes through the inner thigh, enters the popliteal at an angle, passes along the medial posterior aspect of the tibia parallel to the lesser yin channel to enter [the area] posterior to the medial malleolus, and then enters the sole of the foot. A branch enters the inner malleolus at an angle, emerges and joins with the dorsum of the foot, enters between the big toes [the first and second toes], and pours into the network vessels, thereby warming the feet and lower legs. (*Ling Shu*, chapter 62)

[In women] the penetrating vessel and conception vessel both start from the uterus and ascend along the visceral side of the spine, becoming the sea of the meridians. The [branches] that float up to the surface pass through the right-side [and left-side]⁵ of the abdomen, ascend to meet at the throat, and then diverge to encircle the mouth. (*Ling Shu*, chapter 65)

The penetrating vessel and conception vessel both start from the uterus and ascend along the visceral side of the spine, becoming the sea of the meridians. The [branches] that float up to the surface pass through the abdomen, ascend and meet at the throat, and then diverge to encircle the mouth. Thus it is said: The penetrating vessel starts at ST-30, parallels the foot lesser yin channel, passes along the side of the navel, and ascends to the chest, where it disperses. Diseases [of the penetrating vessel] cause people to have abdominal cramping with counter-flowing ki. The *Nan Jing* says: “[The penetrating vessel] parallels the foot yang brightness channel. [However,] if one thinks about the [acupuncture] points, [it is like this]: The foot yang brightness [channels] ascend two cun from both sides of the navel. The foot lesser yin [channels] ascend 5 fēn from both sides of the navel.” According to the acupuncture classic⁶ the penetrating vessel starts along with

the governing vessel at CV-1 and passes through the following 22 points⁷ on the abdomen: KI-21, KI-20, KI-19, KI-18, KI-17, KI-16, KI-15, KI-14, KI-13, KI-12, and KI-11. These [points] all belong to the foot lesser yin [channel]. Therefore it is clear that the penetrating vessel parallels the foot lesser yin channel. (*Elaboration of the Fourteen Meridians*)

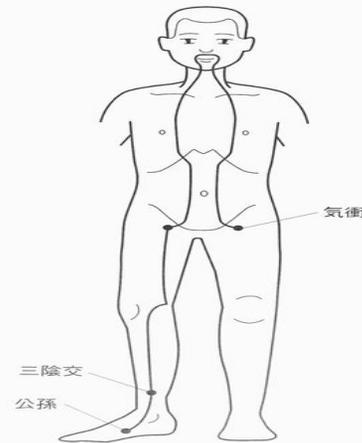


図8 衝脈の流注

Explanation of the Penetrating Vessel

As can be seen from the above description, there are many different explanations concerning the penetrating vessel. The *Nan Jing* simply says that the penetrating vessel starts at ST-30, and ascends parallel to the yang brightness channel to the chest, where it disperses. A similar passage is given in chapter 60 of the *Su Wen*. However, in this case the penetrating vessel ascends parallel to the lesser yin channel.

In the other explanations the penetrating vessel does not simply disperse in the chest, but rather reaches up to the throat and mouth. Some explanations say that the penetrating vessel starts at ST-30 while others say it starts at CV-4 or from the uterus. Thus, it must circulate through these areas as well.

The penetrating vessel also flows through

⁵ The original text gives the right side only. Most translations pass over this point since it is unclear.

⁶ That is, the *Ling Shu*.

⁷ Eleven points on each side of the abdomen.

the lower limbs. It passes through the same area as the Kidney channel and reaches all the way to SP-6, LR-3, and KI-1.

Cold feet and hot flashes, palpitations, and a clogged feeling in the throat indicate Kidney deficiency, but also indicate an abnormality of the penetrating vessel. Considering these symptom patterns, it is easy to see how it can be said that the penetrating vessel ascends the lower limbs along with the Kidney channel, passes over the Stomach channel at ST-30, entwines itself in the perineum and at CV-4, touches the chest, and then reaches to the mouth from the throat.

On the one hand the Penetrating Vessel is called the sea of the twelve channels, and on the other hand is called the sea of the five zang and six fu organs. So this may seem like this is a contradiction. However, there are many such statements in the classics. This should be understood as an indication of the importance of the Penetrating Vessel.

➤ **Super 8 points**

(9) Leg Yang Ming or yang brightness

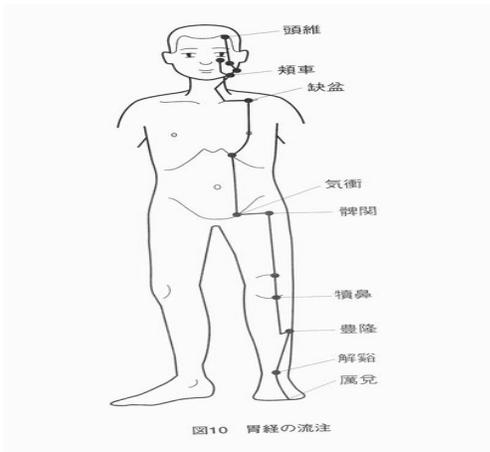


圖10 胃經の流注

(10) Hand Yang Ming or yang brightness

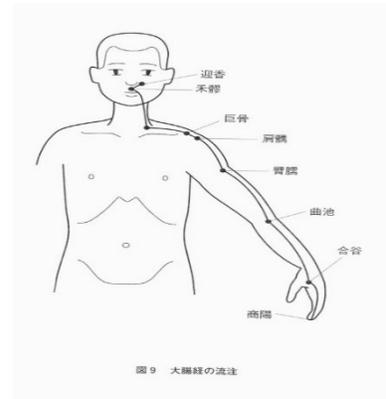


圖9 大腸經の流注

(11) Leg Jue Yin or reverting yin

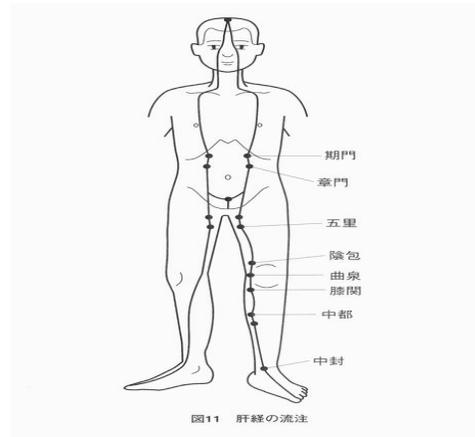


圖11 肝經の流注

(12) Hand Shao Yin or lesser yin

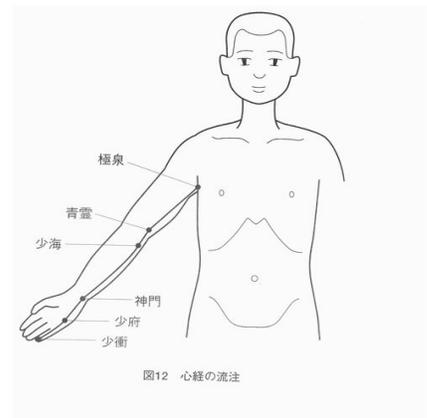


圖12 心經の流注