
Qí Jīng Bā Mài | 奇經八脈 | Eight Extra Ordinary Channel System

In different places of the Nàn Jīng, the channels of the 奇經八脈, qí jīng bā mài are described. The eight extraordinary channel system, or the bā qí jīng mài, are connected with the water phase, the root of life, the source of the five phases, emanation zhēn. This system of qì is described in the Nàn Jīng as totally disconnected from all the other channel systems. Although being one of the most important systems for maintenance of life, there is not much written in ancient texts. As the regulator of autonomic processes, neurotransmitter functions in brain and nerve system, homeostasis of endocrine glands and hormones and processing basic mental and emotional events, this system is essential for life.

The character 奇, qí, is built of two radicals. The top one is a pictogram of a *human being*, 大. The lower one is 可, kě. The complete radical expresses *the sending forward of a breath, as a sign of wondering or approbation*. The breath comes from the mouth, which is the radical 口, kǒu, representing a *mouth*.¹

In ancient times, this character 奇, qí, was used in another way. In those days the Chinese did not ride horses, but saw the barbarian tribes from the north riding horses, and it looked very strange to them. In the character there is the radical of a *big man*, 大, on top of something that was describing a *horse*. The character 八, bā, stands for the *number eight*.

大【dà】	
可【kě】	horse.
口【kǒu】	mouth.
奇【qí】	extraordinary; wonder; strange; queer; rare.
經【jīng】	channels.
八【bā】	eight.
脈【mài】	vessels; arteries and veins; pulse.

The qí jīng bā mài or the eight extraordinary channels are responsible for the endocrine glands, production of hormones, the central and peripheral nervous system as well as the autonomic system, the sympathetic and the para-sympathetic, the neurotransmitters, thalamus, and pituitary. Furthermore, the eight extraordinary channels regulate the non-physical aspects as deep mental and emotional processes, in general seen as the instinct, to cope with daily life and behaviour of human beings. The supply of qì to this system is through the shèn (kidney) qì. The shèn stores the qì derived from food, and supports the eight extra channels. The surplus of shèn-yīn is transported to the bā qí jīng mài. Diminished qì on this level will cause diseases of hormonal origin, like hypothyroidism, diabetes, and gynaecological diagnoses as infertility, as well as psychological, mental, and psychiatric diagnoses. An invasion of an external climate (like viruses or prions) into this system could cause illnesses like autoimmune disease or cancer.²

¹ Dr. L. Wieger, Chinese Characters lesson 58.

² More information can be found in the book *Acupuncture - Celestial Treatments for Terrestrial Diseases - Causes and Development of Diseases & Treatment Principles and Strategies* - ISBN: 978-90-79212-08-8.

Qì Jīng Bā Mài Xuè | 奇經八脈穴 | Extraordinary Channel Points

There are two channels out of the eight which have their own points, the dū mài and the rèn mài. Their pathway is, respectively, on the midline of the back and of the front of the body. The dū mài consist of 28 points, and the rèn mài of 24. The six other extra channels consist of a combination of points, which actually belong to the main channels. A collection of points is forming a web all over the body, to apply a specific function.

Dū Mài

The starting point of the dū mài is Cv-1. From here, the direction of the flow of qì is upwards along the vertebrae, up to Gv-16. There is also a descending flow of qì within the dū mài. This descending flow is part of the flow of yíng qì (nutritive), the main direction of flow of qì is downwards. From Liv-13, there is an internal branch towards Cv-18 (front point of liver organ), up to Gv-20 (top of the head), which continues via the brain to Gv-16 and descends to Gv-1. The first function of the dū mài, is to nourish the brain and the central nerve system, maintaining its proper function. In physiology the CSF, cerebral spinal fluid is the main provider of the brain and spinal cord. The ascending and descending direction of flow of this fluid, is describe above.

Another function of the dū mài, is to collect all the yáng qì. All the yáng main channels, have an internal branch that connects with the dū mài. In the area of the shoulder, each of the bilateral main channels has a connection with Gv-14. The collected yáng qì is transported internally, via the shū (transportation) points, to nourish the zàng fǔ. This collected yáng qì is also transported to the kidneys, via Gv-4.

One of the internal branches of the dū mài, penetrates the heart organ, which will give the yáng power to the circulatory system and the connection of the brain and heart, the two houses of the shén (spirit).

The dū mài forms a couple with the yáng qiào mài, both having the same master- and couple point. Furthermore, the dū mài forms a couple with rèn mài, both of which regulate the circulation and the balance of the yīn and yáng qì, between the two sides of the body. The dū mài has a strong connection in its function with the chōng mài. The dū mài, rèn mài and chōng mài, emerge from the same source, the same point, Cv-1, to ascend to the upper part of the body.

Yáng Qiào Mài

The yáng qiào mài, departs on the lateral side of the heel. Some sources (Nàn Jīng and Li Shi Zhen), mention that this extra channel is detaching from the zú tài yáng (bladder) channel. The yáng qiào mài is seen as a secondary vessel of the zú tài yáng, or only as being present in male and only present on the left side of the body. In clinical practice, the terminal point of the yáng qiào mài, Bl-1, is punctured on the left side, to make a distinction with the yīn qiào mài. The channel flows from the heel to the head, to terminate at the inner cantus of the eye.

The yáng qiào mài is seen as the accelerator of all the yáng qì in the body, which is flowing downwards. Therefore, it is involved with any movement of the body, especially the lower limbs. Furthermore, this extra channel is responsible for the rhythm and the equilibrium between day and night, and the flow of xuè and qì. At the moment of awakening, of opening the eyes, the yáng qiào mài supports the wèi qì (defensive). It envelopes all the external parts of the body during the day and regulates the internal part of the body during the night. It is mentioned that the yáng qiào mài is in charge of opening the eyes.

The dū mài is the collector of the yáng, while the yáng qiào mài is the supporter of the dū mài to regulate the yáng qì. They cooperate as a team in the regulation of all the yáng qì. The yáng qiào mài cooperates also with the yīn qiào mài. They have the opposite functions in the sense of yáng and yīn. Both terminate at Bl-1 (respectively left and right side).

Rèn Mài

The starting point of the rèn mài is Cv-1. From here, the direction of the flow of qì is upwards along the abdomen, up to Cv-24. At Cv-22 there is an anatomical structure in the form of a pool. Here all the yīn qì is collected, to be transported to the main channels via the window of heaven points. From Cv-24, there is a connection with the dū mài, to connect these two circulations. Cv-24 is located in the centre of the fold between the chin and lower lip.

The first function of the rèn mài, is to collect yīn qì derived from the internal organs. The yīn qì emerges on the surface at the mù points. The internal organs are supported with qì through the transformation of food, and this qì is released to the surface into the main channel system. On the other hand, the main channel system brings in cosmic qì, via the yáng jǐng (well) points, into the depth of the body, towards the organs. All the main channels have an internal branch, which connects with the rèn mài. In the area of the abdomen and chest, each of the bilateral main channels has a connection with the rèn mài.

The rèn mài forms a couple with the yīn qiào mài, both have the same master- and couple point. Furthermore, the rèn mài forms a couple with dū mài, they both regulate the circulation and the balance of the yīn and yáng qì between the two sides of the body. The rèn mài has a strong connection in its function with the chōng mài. The dū mài, rèn mài and chōng mài, emerge from the same source, the same point, Cv-1, ascending to the upper part of the body.

Yīn Qiào Mài

The yīn qiào mài, departs on the medial side of the heel, from Kid-2. Some sources (Nàn Jīng and Li Shi Zhen), mention that this extra channel is detaching from the zú shào yīn (kidney) channel. The yīn qiào mài is seen as a secondary vessel of the zú shào yīn (kidney), or only as being present in female and only present on the right side of the body. In clinical practice, the terminal point of the yīn qiào mài, Bl-1, is punctured on the right side, to make a distinction with the yáng qiào mài. The channel flows from the heel to the head, to terminate at the inner cantus of the eye.

The yīn qiào mài is seen as the accelerator of all the yīn qì in the body, in upward direction. Therefore, it is involved in the gathering of qì, and to support the yíng qì (nutritive). Furthermore, this extra channel is responsible for the rhythm, the equilibrium between day and night, and the flow of xuè and qì. At the moment of falling asleep, of closing the eyes, the yīn qiào mài supports the wèi qì (defensive). The wèi qì cleans all the yīn organs, during sleep, from physical and emotional pollution. The yīn qiào mài envelopes all the external parts of the body, during the day, and regulates the internal part of the body, during the night. It is mentioned that the yīn qiào mài is in charge of closing the eyes.

The rèn mài is the collector of the yīn, while the yīn qiào mài is the supporter of the rèn mài to regulate the yīn qì. They cooperate as a team in the regulation of all the yīn qì. The yīn qiào mài cooperates also with the yáng qiào mài. They have the opposite functions in the sense of yáng and yīn, opening and closing of the eyes. Both terminate at Bl-1 (respectively right and left side).

Chōng Mài

The departure point of the chōng mài is Cv-1, together with the dǔ mài and rèn mài. The chōng mài has a partner, through the same master- and couple points. This is the yīn wéi mài, the protector of all yīn.

The pathway of the chōng mài can be divided into seven branches. The central point where many branches meet, is St-30, located in the groin. To emphasise the function of the chōng mài, the translation is, *sea of the twelve channels* and *sea of blood*, as found in literature. These are not direct translations, yet give an impression of the functions of the chōng mài. Furthermore, the chōng mài has strong connections with the *sea of qì* at the centre of the chest, and with the *sea of nourishment*, through St-30.

There are two pathways on the abdomen, one rising, and one descending. The rising branch is connected with the descending main channel of the zú yáng míng (stomach), while the ascending branch is connected with the rising zú shào yīn (kidney) channel. This part of the chōng mài is responsible for a proper function of the five hormonal centres located in the neck, chest, and abdomen. Those five centres are thyroid, thymus, pancreas, adrenals, and gonads (ovaries and testicles). The central regulation by the pituitary and hypothalamus, emphasises the cooperation between the chōng mài and the dǔ mài.

Both chōng mài and wèi (stomach), are called the *sea of the five zàng and six fu*. The wèi is in charge of the renewal of the essence, through transformation of food, while the chōng mài is responsible for distribution.

The chōng mài has a strong connection in its function with the rèn mài, especially in the process of fertilisation. The dǔ mài, rèn mài and chōng mài, emerge from the same source, the same point, Cv-1, to ascend to the upper part of the body.

Yīn Wéi Mài

The yīn wéi mài is departing from Kid-9. From Kid-9, three branches ascend into the direction of the chest and neck. Each of these branches is connected with one of the three leg yīn channels, the zú jué yīn (liver), zú tài yīn (spleen-pancreas), and the zú shào yīn (kidney). The yīn wéi mài is the protector of all yīn, and cooperates with the yáng wéi mài, the protector of all the yáng.

The yīn wéi mài (and the yáng wéi mài) maintain the order of yīn and yáng, internal and external. The three channels of the yīn wéi mài, protect the interior and support the inward movement of the qì. Due to this protection of the interior of the body, it has a connection with the yíng qì (nutritive). Situations of overflowing, or over accumulation of yīn qì, are prevented by the yīn wéi mài.

Furthermore, the yīn wéi mài cooperates with the chōng mài, in the homeostasis of the hormones in the body. They have a connection through the same master- and couple points, and their regulating function on hormones.

Dài Mài

The dài mài is called the belt channel. It encircles the abdomen and back and connects all the main channels, as well as most of the extraordinary channels with each other. The starting point of the dài mài is in the area of the last rib, which receives qì from Liv-13, and this point is, in some texts (like Nàn Jīng), seen as the departure point. From the area of the last rib, there are three channels flowing over the abdomen, connecting all the passing main channels. At the back,

there is one branch connected to the points of the zú tài yáng (bladder), with two extra points level with Bl-52(47), Bl-23, and Gv-4.

Through its connection with all the main channels, and with the kidneys through Gv-4, it is a mediator between the source of the qì (shèn - kidneys) and the main channels. As the chōng mài is the connector between the shèn (kidneys) and the wèi (stomach), the dài mài is the connector between the shèn (kidneys) and the pí (spleen-pancreas). This last relationship is in charge of the distribution of the fluids and liquids. Through the relationship with the shèn (kidneys) the chōng mài and the dài mài have a strong connection, to regulate hormones production. This last connection is also seen as the proper functioning of the bāo gōng (uterus) and the prostate.

Yáng Wéi Mài

The yáng wéi mài is departing from Bl-63. From Bl-63 there is a web of many yáng points divided all over the body and mainly the head. The yáng wéi mài is the protector of the entire yáng, the wèi qì (defensive qì) and cooperates with the yīn wéi mài, the protector of the entire yīn.

The yáng wéi mài maintains the order of the yáng. The web of points is protecting the interior and supports the outward movement of the qì, as wèi qì. Due to this protection of the exterior of the body, it has a connection with the wèi qì (defensive qì). Situations of overflowing or of accumulation of yáng qì are prevented by the yáng wéi mài.

Furthermore, the yáng wéi mài does cooperate with the dài mài in its physiological function, which connects all the main channels. They are related through the connection of the master- and couple points.

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