

Taoist Cosmology and the Eight Extraordinary Channel Pairings

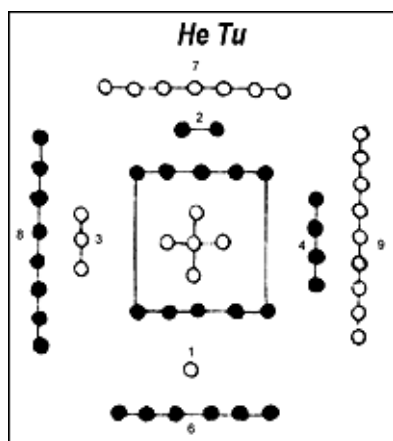
By David Twicken, DOM, LAc

This is the second and final article in this series on the Eight Extraordinary Channels and Taoist cosmology.

Traditional Chinese medicine primarily is based on systems of correspondences, which reveal the relationships between the universe and the human body.

Bridging the relationship between macrocosms and microcosms are classic Taoist cosmological diagrams, including the *He Tu* and *Luo Shu*. Each diagram has profound applications in the theory and clinical practice of Chinese medicine, including the classic pairings of the Eight Extraordinary Channels.

He Tu Diagram



Legend holds that Fu Xi found the *He Tu* diagram in the Xia dynasty. It is a profound diagram, with many applications in Taoist arts. This Taoist cosmological model contains energetic pairings that can be used to identify relationships in the practice of acupuncture. From an Eight Extraordinary Channel perspective, the *He Tu* provides the theory for "coupled pairs."

In the *He Tu*, the top south is Fire and 2/7; the west (to the right) is 4/9 and Metal; the bottom is Water-north and 1/6; and the east-Wood is 3/8 and to the left. Each cardinal direction contains two numbers - one yang, one yin, reflecting yin-yang in each direction.

In the center are five dots. Five represents the center, core, *yuan* or primordial; number patterns in each direction are multiples of five, which is the Earth element. This diagram reveals that all elements, numbers and directions originate from the center or earth. *He Tu* combinations relate to the number five (6-1=5; 9-4=5; 8-3=5; and 7-2=5).

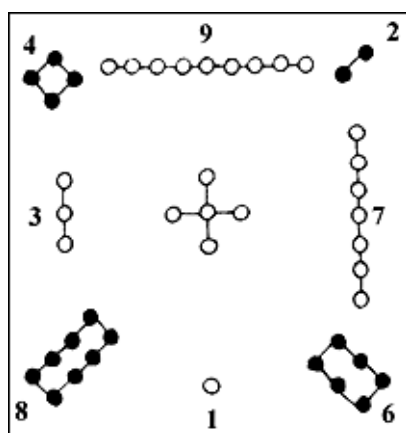
***He Tu* Pairs**

- 1-6 combine to create Water
- 3-8 combine to create Wood
- 2-7 combine to create Fire
- 4-9 combine to create Metal

These directions and their *He Tu* correspondences are the basis for the Eight Extraordinary Channel coupled pairs.

The *He Tu* is a Taoist model, which contains traditional Chinese medical theories of the systems of correspondences. Parts of the human body are grouped into pairs. For instance, *zang-fu*, ankle-wrist, elbow-knee and shoulder-hip are "coupled pairings," and have significant clinical applications.

Luo Shu



The following diagram is the *Luo Shu* or "Nine Palaces," and was introduced in the first part of this series. The *Luo Shu* presents an energetic sequence or pattern. In a

previous article on the meridian clock, the *Luo Shu* provided the energetic pattern for creating the order of the clock. The Eight Extraordinary Channels will be placed in this profound energy formation and paired according to the *He Tu*. The pairings based on the *He Tu* reveal the classic pairings of the Eight Extraordinary Channels presented by the legendary Xu Feng in the Ming dynasty. The essence of these relationships is that they are based on *He Tu* (coupled pairs) correspondences.

Eight Extraordinary Channel Pairings

He Tu, *Luo Shu* and the Early and Later Heaven *ba gua* comprise integral energy formations used in the eight branches of Tao. They also comprise tools and theories used to support the classic pairings of the Eight Extraordinary Channels and their opening/confluent points. The classic pairings passed down by Xu Feng are the *chong* and *yin wei* channels; *du* and *yang qiao* channels; *ren* and *yin qiao* channels; and *dai* and *yang wei* channels.

Chong Mai

The *chong mai* is referred to as the sea of blood, sea of arteries and veins, sea of 12 primary channels, sea of *yuan qi*, primordial channel, ancestral channel, blueprint of life and thorough way channel.

Du Mai

The *du mai* is referred to as the sea of yang, governor and supervisor.

Ren Mai

The *ren mai* is referred to as the sea of yin, conception and directing channel.

Dai Mai

The *dai mai* is referred to as the girdle, belt, holding and binding channel, as well as the sea of *ming men*.

Yin Wei

The *yin wei* is referred to as the yin linking channel.

Yang Qiao

The *yang qiao* is referred to as the yang heel, accelerator of yang and yang walker vessel.

Yin Qiao

The *yin qiao* is referred to as the yin heel, accelerator heel and yin walker.

Yang Wei

The *yang wei* is referred to as the yang linking channel, preserver of yang and vessel of yang keeper.

Eight Extraordinary Channel Pairings Theory

This theory begins by sequencing the evolution of the Eight Extraordinary Channels as an energy network; it's their energetic unfolding. In a similar way in Taoist cosmology and *I Ching* theory, Wu Ji births Yin-Yang, which produces the Four Forces, which birth the Eight Trigrams. (For more information, see the author's articles on *I Ching* acupuncture.)

Four Seas (Four Core Channels)

- *Chong Mai* - yuan channel, sea of 12 primary meridians, primordial channel
- *Du Mai* - sea of yang, initiator of yin-yang dynamic
- *Ren Mai* - sea of yin, activated when yang initiates
- *Dai Mai* - binding channel, holds energy of the channels

Four Transporters (Transports and Assists the Core Channels)

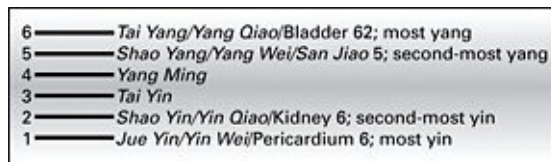
- *Yin Wei Mai* - most yin of the four transporters
- *Yang Qiao* - most yang of the four transporters
- *Yin Qiao* - second-most yin
- *Yang Wei* - second-most yang

Note that the pattern flows from yin-yang.

1. *Chong* is the center and represents *wu ji*.
2. *Du* is most yang.
3. *Ren* is most yin.

4. *Dai* is second-most yang.
5. *Yin wei* is second-most yin (Pericardium 6 is *jue yin*).
6. *Yang qiao* is third-most yang (Bladder 62 is *yang qiao*).
7. *Yin qiao* is third-most yin (Kidney 6 is *yin qiao*).
8. *Yang wei* is fourth-most yang (*San Jiao* is *shao yang*).

Below is a hexagram from the *I Ching* and the corresponding positions of the Eight Extraordinary Channels.



This pattern is integrated into the classic *Luo Shu* and *He Tu*.

Yang Wei SJ 5 <u><i>Eighth</i></u> South East-4 4	Dai G 41 <u><i>Fourth</i></u> South-9 9	Yang Qiao BL 62 <u><i>Sixth</i></u> South West-2 2
Yin Qiao K 6 <u><i>Seventh</i></u> East-3 3	Wu Ji <u><i>Beginning</i></u> 5	Du Si 3 <u><i>Second</i></u> West-7 7
Ren Lu 7 <u><i>Third</i></u> North East-8 8	Yin Wei P 6 <u><i>Fifth</i></u> North-1 1	Chong Sp 4 <u><i>First</i></u> North West-6 6

In this theory, place the Eight Extraordinary Channels into the *Luo Shu*. The pattern begins in the center palace with the number 5, then northwest (6), west (7), northeast (8), south (9), north (1), southwest (2), east (3) and southwest (4). Place the Eight Extraordinary Channels into the *Luo Shu* in the exact sequence listed above.

Follow the order of first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth.

Method

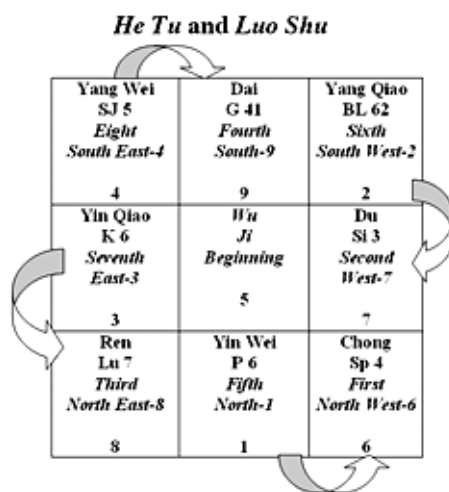
Place the Eight Extraordinary Channels in the *Luo Shu* and use the *Luo Shu* sequence.

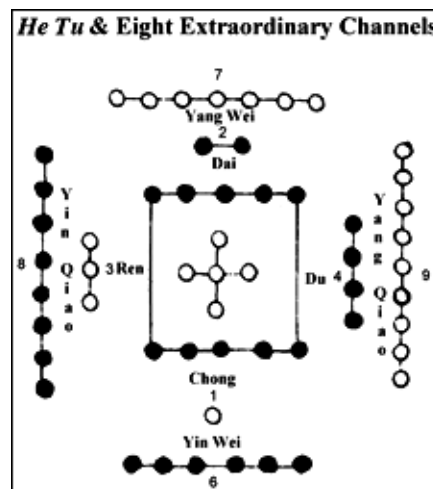
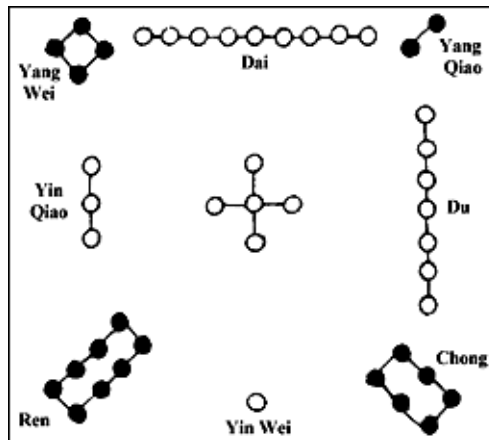
1. The center (5) is the origin of the *Luo Shu* and all channels; it is empty.
2. *Chong Mai* is placed in the northwest (6).
3. *Du Mai* is placed in the west (7).
4. *Ren Mai* is placed in the northeast (8).
5. *Dai Mai* is placed in the south (9).
6. *Yin Wei* is placed in the north (1).
7. *Yang Qiao* is placed in the southwest (2).
8. *Yin Qiao* is placed in the east (3).
9. *Yang Wei* is placed in the southeast (4).

Once the Eight Extraordinary Channels are placed in the *Luo Shu* based on the sequence listed, they are paired according to the *He Tu* pairs. Note the *He Tu* partners form the classic coupled pairings of the Eight Extraordinary Channels.

He Tu pairings reveal the Eight Extraordinary Channel pairings:

1. 1/6, north and northwest: P 6 and Sp 4
2. 3/8, northeast and east: Lu 7 and K 6
3. 4/9, southeast and south: SJ 5 and GB 41
4. 2/7, southwest and West: BL 62 and SI 3





Classic Pairings and He Tu

- 1-6 is *Chong Mai* and *Yin Wei*
- 3-8 is *Ren Mai* and *Yin Qiao Mai*
- 4-9 is *Yang Wei* and *Dai Mai*
- 2-7 is *Yang Qiao* and *Du Mai*

Training in all branches of the Tao arts was common for legendary doctors of Chinese medicine, providing theory to support many principles and applications in Chinese medicine. Training in Taoist alchemy, *qi gong*, feng shui, the Chinese calendar, Chinese astrology, *I Ching* and acupuncture are guides to realizing the classic Eight Extraordinary Channel pairings are based on the *Luo Shu* and *He Tu*. These two Taoist cosmological models are integral systems of correspondences, revealing relationships between the Eight Extraordinary Channels and their applications in clinical practice.

Xu Feng was a master of acupuncture in the Ming dynasty and contributed to popularizing systems of correspondences, including the Eight Extraordinary Channel pairings and the time-based systems *Ling Gui Ba Fa* and *Zi Wu Liu Zhu*. These methods are sophisticated acupuncture applications that integrate macrocosms and microcosms. Their principles are found in the classic Chinese medical text, the *Nei Jing*, a profound book of cosmology.

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