

The Meridian Clock: A Taoist Cosmological Imaging System, Part One

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The meridian clock is a multidimensional energetic model used in the practice of Chinese medicine, but the depths of its theory and clinical applications have not been presented to the acupuncture community.

The meridian clock is a profound energy system, containing and integrating many principles found in the classic Taoist texts *I Ching* and *Nei Jing*. This article presents classic Taoist concepts and theories that explain the building blocks of the meridian clock and how it is the origin of foundational aspects of Chinese medicine.

All students of acupuncture are presented channel pairings on the legs and arms, but with no strong theory supporting the groupings. This article presents, in a step-by-step basis, how the meridian clock is a model supporting the channel groups of the three leg yang, the three leg yin, the three arm yin and the three arm yang channels. Additionally, a comprehensive meridian clock reveals why the Lung channel begins the clock flow at 3 a.m. through to 5 a.m.

As a cosmological imaging system, the meridian clock originates as a mirror image of the energetic flow of nature: yin descends and yang ascends, or the energetics of water and fire.

	Fire <i>Yang</i>	
	Water <i>Yin</i>	

Yin-yang expands to the Five Elements and their energetic flow. Below is a traditional presentation of the elements. Water and Metal are yin and descend, while Wood and Fire are yang and ascend. The positions and energetic flow of the four cardinal positions and their corresponding elements are presented. Notice in this presentation that the Earth element is in the central palace or position. It is the only palace that touches or connects to every other palace and element. It is the transformer, and will be further discussed in this article.

The Five Elements

	Fire <i>Yang</i>	
Wood <i>Yang</i>	Earth	Metal <i>Yin</i>
	Water <i>Yin</i>	

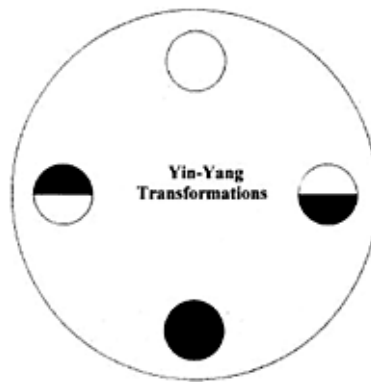
The following three diagrams contain integral correspondences that build the meridian clock.

Geographical Directions

	Fire <i>Yang</i> <i>South</i>	
Wood <i>Yang</i> <i>East</i>	Earth	Metal <i>Yin</i> <i>West</i>
	Water <i>Yin</i> <i>North</i>	

Daily Time Periods

	Fire <i>Yang</i> <i>Noon</i>	
Wood <i>Yang</i> <i>6:00 am</i>	Earth	Metal <i>Yin</i> <i>6:00 pm</i>
	Water <i>Yin</i> <i>Midnight</i>	



Twelve-Stage Growth Cycle The 12-stage growth cycle is an extension of yin-yang and the Five Phase cycle of expansion, peak, harvest, decline and regeneration, or waxing and waning. Each of the Five Phases represents a season, as well as certain months of the year. The 12-stage growth cycle is comprised of the 12 branches, or Chinese zodiac animals, which are classic Taoist tools that communicate the energetics of hourly patterns. The following table lists each of the Five Elements and their corresponding season.

Element	Season
Wood	Spring
Fire	Summer
Earth	Indian summer, or the transition times from season to season
Metal	Fall
Water	Winter

Wu Ji views life as one integrated whole. Yin-yang views the whole in two interdependent aspects. The 12-stage growth cycle views the same whole in 12 aspects or energetic phases, with each phase having a relationship to the whole, as well as the other phases. Yin-yang, the Five Phases and the 12-stage growth cycle can perceive and reveal different conditions within the same situation, offering a variety of analytical tools and treatment methods.

Listed below is a 12-stage growth cycle table and diagram. This cycle is one of the most important principles in Chinese astrology, feng shui, and numerous Taoist arts.

The 12-stage growth cycle identifies the growth and decline stages in a cycle. The most favorable and potent stages for many applications of the Taoist arts are stages four and five, or adult and prime (Wang). Every pattern has these cycles, which can provide opportunities. For example, in flying stars feng shui (*xuan kong fei xing*), we identify the Wang stars and activate them to generate auspicious and prosperous energies and influences. The 12-stage growth cycle is the energetic structure of the meridian clock. Numerous methods of identifying acupuncture and herbal treatment methods exist within this energy pattern.

Cycle Stage
1. Birth - <i>Chang Sheng</i> - needs energy
2. Childhood - <i>Mu Yu</i> - needs energy
3. Adolescence - <i>Guan Dai</i> - needs direction
4. Adulthood - <i>Lin Guan</i> - rising, growth
5. Prime - <i>Di Wang</i> - peak
6. Decline - <i>Sui</i> - harvest, decline
7. Aging - <i>Bing</i> - weakening
8. Death - <i>Si</i> - depletion
9. Dormancy - <i>Mu</i> - buried, storing
10. Void - <i>Jue</i> - preparation
11. Embryo - <i>Tai</i> - beginning
12. Pregnancy - <i>Yang</i> - new creation has begun

12-Stage Growth Cycle



In traditional Chinese medicine, the 12 branches (Chinese zodiac animals) correspond to the elements and directions. Table 1 (below) expands the previous diagram to include the 12 branches and their corresponding elements.

These animals and their associated acupuncture channels (presented below) have numerous relationships. A key relationship is referred as a trinity or "harmonic" relationship. Select any animal, and count in patterns of four palaces or positions. They comprise three animals, and have many relationships. For example, the Rat is located at the bottom. Count four palaces or spaces, and you will arrive at the Dragon. Count four more palaces, and you will arrive at the Monkey. The Rat, Dragon and Monkey comprise the Water frame, as the Rat is Water (and the other two contain a hidden element of Water). These pairs are used in Chinese astrology as potential romantic partners. In acupuncture, they reveal the three leg yang channels, or the Gallbladder, Stomach and Bladder.

The Meridian Clock and Daily Time Periods Water or Rat is yin and represents the winter solstice. Fire is Horse and yang, and represents the summer solstice. These two poles set the noon-midnight axis, flowing in a clockwise pattern. Each branch relates to a 2-hour time frame.

Table 1						
	Snake - 6 Yang Fire	Horse - 7 Yin Fire	Sheep - 8 Yin Earth			
Dragon - 5 Yang Earth		<i>South Fire Summer</i>		Monkey - 9 Yang Metal		
Rabbit - 4 Yin Wood	<i>East Wood Spring</i>		<i>West Metal Fall</i>	Cock - 10 Yin Metal		
Tiger - 3 Yang Wood		<i>North Water Winter</i>		Dog - 11 Yang Earth		
	Ox - 2 Yin Earth	Rat - 1 Yin Water	Pig - 12 Yang Water			

Notice the Five Phase flow from Rat-Water to Rabbit-Wood to Horse-Fire and Cock-Metal. The Five Phases are an integral aspect of the clock.

The four Earth branches or animals are in the four corners; they transform the *qi* of one element to a different element. This clock clearly shows that key Earth function.

The Meridian Clock and the Internal Organs The internal organs correspond to the Five Phases and 12 branches. When matching the Five Phases, 12 branches and time periods to the internal organs, the traditional meridian clock is constructed.

Table 2					
	Snake - 6 Yang Fire 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.	Horse - 7 Yin Fire 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Sheep - 8 Yin Earth 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.		
Dragon - 5 Yang Earth 7 a.m. - 9 a.m.		<i>South</i> <i>Fire</i> <i>Summer</i>		Monkey - 9 Yang Metal 3 p.m. - 5 p.m.	
Rabbit - 4 Yin Wood 5 a.m. - 7 a.m.	<i>East</i> <i>Wood</i> <i>Spring</i>		<i>West</i> <i>Metal</i> <i>Fall</i>	Cock - 10 Yin Metal 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.	
Tiger - 3 Yang Wood 3 a.m. - 5 a.m.		<i>North</i> <i>Water</i> <i>Winter</i>		Dog - 11 Yang Earth 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.	
	Ox - 2 Yin Earth 1 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Rat - 1 Yin Water 11 p.m. - 1 a.m.	Pig - 12 Yang Water 9 p.m. - 11 p.m.		

In the December 2004 issue of *Acupuncture Today*, I presented the *Luo Shu* as the origin of the meridian clock channel flow and its exact sequence. Please refer to that article, and note the theory for the Lung channel initiating the clock. The next step is to understand why the Lung begins at 3 a.m.

1. In most traditional Chinese astrology and feng shui systems, the Tiger month (February) is the beginning of the new year, as it is yang wood and represents the energy of ascending and growth, and the beginning *qi* of a new cycle.

2. The *Luo Shu* revealed that the Lung is the first channel in the meridian clock.
3. Combining the above two patterns, the Lung as the first channel of the meridian clock is matched with the beginning branch of the energy cycle, which is yang wood. Uniting these two reveals the Lung is matched to the Tiger/ yang wood, which corresponds to 3 a.m. to 5 a.m. Place the remaining channels in the exact order of the *Luo Shu*, and the meridian clock pattern is revealed.
4. According to I Ching theory, heaven created the myriad things with *zhen*, which is the trigram for yang wood and is located in the East, the location where the sun rises and what signifies the beginning of a new day, season and year. Yang wood corresponds with the Tiger and is the energetic beginning of a cycle.
5. Also note that the meridian clock begins with the Lung-*Po* soul and ends with the Liver-*Hun* soul. *Hun* and *Po* are united. Yin and yang, or *po* and *hun*, are inseparable.

Table 3					
	Snake - 6 Yang Fire 9 a.m. - 11 a.m. Spleen	Horse - 7 Yin Fire 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. Heart	Sheep - 8 Yin Earth 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. Small Intestine		
Dragon - 5 Yang Earth 7 a.m. - 9 a.m. Stomach		<i>South</i> <i>Fire</i> <i>Summer</i>		Monkey - 9 Yang Metal 3 p.m. - 5 p.m. Bladder	
Rabbit - 4 Yin Wood 5 a.m. - 7 a.m. Large Intestine	<i>East</i> <i>Wood</i> <i>Spring</i>		<i>West</i> <i>Metal</i> <i>Fall</i>	Cock - 10 Yin Metal 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. Kidney	
Tiger - 3 Yang Wood 3 a.m. - 5 a.m. Lung		<i>North</i> <i>Water</i> <i>Winter</i>		Dog - 11 Yang Earth 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. Pericardium	
	Ox - 2 Yin Earth 1 a.m. - 3 p.m. Liver	Rat - 1 Yin Water 11 p.m. - 1 a.m. Gallbladder	Pig - 12 Yang Water 9 p.m. - 11 p.m. San Jiao		

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