

NAN-CHING THE CLASSIC OF DIFFICULT ISSUES**Chapter Two: Conduits and Network Vessels (Difficult Issues 23-29)****THE TWENTY-THIRD DIFFICULT ISSUE**

Overview: Systematized presentation of the lengths and courses of the conduit vessels as sections of a large circulatory system. Also, reference to the significance of feeling the movement in the vessels at the wrists of both hands, and explanation of the concepts of "end" and "beginning."

二十三難曰(一)手足三陰三陽脈之度數可曉以不(二)然手三陽之脈從手至頭長五尺五六合三丈(三)手三陰之脈從手至胸中長三尺五寸三六一丈八尺五六三尺合二丈一尺(四)足三陽之脈從足至頭長八尺六八四丈八尺(五)足三陰之脈從足至胸長六尺五寸六六三丈六尺五六三尺合三丈九尺(六)人兩足躡脈從足至目長七尺五寸二七一丈四尺二五一尺合一丈五尺(七)督脈任脈各長四尺五寸二四八尺二五一尺合九尺(八)凡脈長一十六丈二尺此所謂十二經脈長短之數也(九)經脈十二絡脈十五何始何窮也(十)經脈者行血氣通陰陽以榮於身者也(十一)其始從中焦注手太陰陽明陽明注足陽明太陰太陰注手少陰太陽太陽注足太陽少陰少陰注手心主少陽少陽注足少陽厥陰厥陰復還注手太陰(十二)別絡十五(十三)皆因其原如環無端轉相灌溉(十四)朝於寸口人迎以處百病而決死生也(十五)經曰明知終始陰陽定矣何謂也(十六)然終始者脈之紀也(十七)寸口人迎陰陽之氣通於朝使如環無端故曰始也(十八)終者三陰三陽之脈絕絕則死死各有形故曰終也

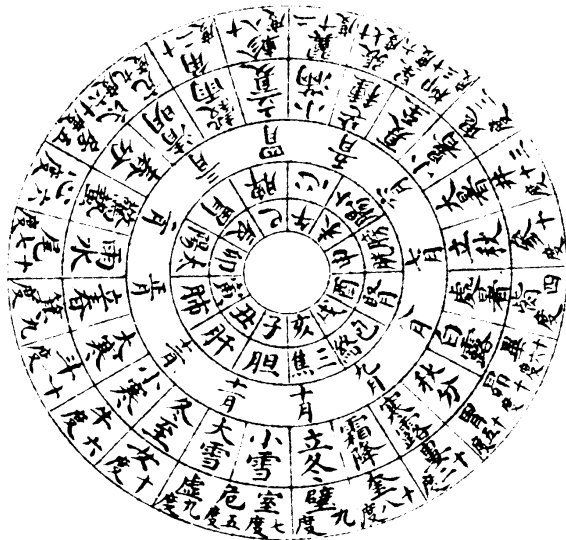
The twenty-third difficult issue: (1) Can one be instructed on the measurements of the three yin and three yang vessels of the hands and feet?

(2) It is like this. The vessels of the three hand-yang [conduits] extend from the hands to the head. They are five feet long. Five [feet] times six amounts to three chang. (3) The vessels of the three hand-yin [conduits] extend from the hands into the chest.¹ They are three feet five inches long. Three [feet] times six amounts to one chang eight feet; five [inches] times six amounts to three feet. Together this is two chang and one foot. (4) The vessels of the three foot-yang [conduits] extend from the feet to the head. They are eight feet long. Six times eight [feet] amounts to four chang and eight feet. (5) The vessels of the three foot-yin [conduits] extend from the feet to the chest. They are six feet five inches long. Six [feet] times six amounts to three chang and six feet; five [inches] times six amounts to three feet. Together this is three chang and nine feet. (6) Man has in both feet the walker-vessels; they extend from the feet to the eyes. They are seven feet five inches long. Two times seven [feet] amounts to one chang four feet; two times five [inches] amounts to one foot. Together this is one chang and five feet. (7) The vessel of the supervisor [conduit] and the vessel of the controller [conduit] are both four feet five inches long. Two times four [feet] amounts to eight feet; two times five [inches] amounts to one foot. Together this is nine feet. (8) All vessels together have a

length of sixteen chang and two feet. These are the so-called linear measurements of the twelve conduit-vessels.

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二難十
三經尺
之丈脈
合數尺
文宿天
度始宿
從中始
焦流中
注圖



宿度每度
俱有零度
圖內止舉
其成數耳
不及備言
其零欲得
其詳必知
五星通軌
度分斯可
矣惟柳度
無零數也

(9) There are twelve conduit-vessels and fifteen network-vessels. Where does (the movement in these conduits) start and where does it end?

(10) It is like this. The conduit-vessels pass the blood and the influences, penetrating the yin and yang [sections of the organism], in order to provide nourishment to the body.

(11) The [blood and the influences] start from the central burner and flow into the hand-great-yin and [hand-]yang-brilliance [conduits. From the hand-]yang-brilliance [conduit] they flow into the foot-yang-brilliance and the [foot-]great-yin [conduits. From the foot-]great-yin [conduit] they flow into the hand-minor-yin and the [hand-]great-yang [conduits. From the hand-]great-yang [conduit] they flow into the foot-great-yang and the [foot-]minor-yin [conduits.

From the foot-]minor-yin [conduit] they flow into the hand-heart-master and the [hand-]minor-yang [conduits. From the hand-]minor-yang [conduit] they flow into the foot-minor-yang and the [foot-]ceasing-yin [conduits. From the foot-]ceasing-yin [conduit] they flow back again into the hand-great-yin [conduit].² (12) There are fifteen secondary network[-vessels]. (13) [The movement through] all of them returns [again and again] to its origin, as in a ring without end, with [the influences and the blood] pouring from one [conduit] into the next, thus revolving [through the entire organism]. (14) [All the influences and the blood] appear at the inch-opening and at the jen-ying; therefore, every illness can be located here and judgments can be made concerning [a person's] death or survival.

(15) The scripture states: A clear understanding of end and of beginning can be determined at the yin and yang [locations]. What does that mean?

(16) It is like this. End and beginning can be inferred from information provided by the [movement in the] vessels. (17) In the morning, the influences begin their passage at the inch-opening and at the jen-ying, [i.e.,] at the yin and yang [locations, respectively]. They cause [each other to flow through

the organism] as in a ring without end. Hence, [the text] speaks of [a continuous] "beginning." (18) In case of an "end," the [movement in the] three yin and three yang [vessels] is interrupted. Interruption entails death. Each [such situation of imminent] death has its [specific symptoms that appear in the patient's bodily] form. Hence, [the text] speaks of [an imminent] end.³

Unschuld's Footnotes

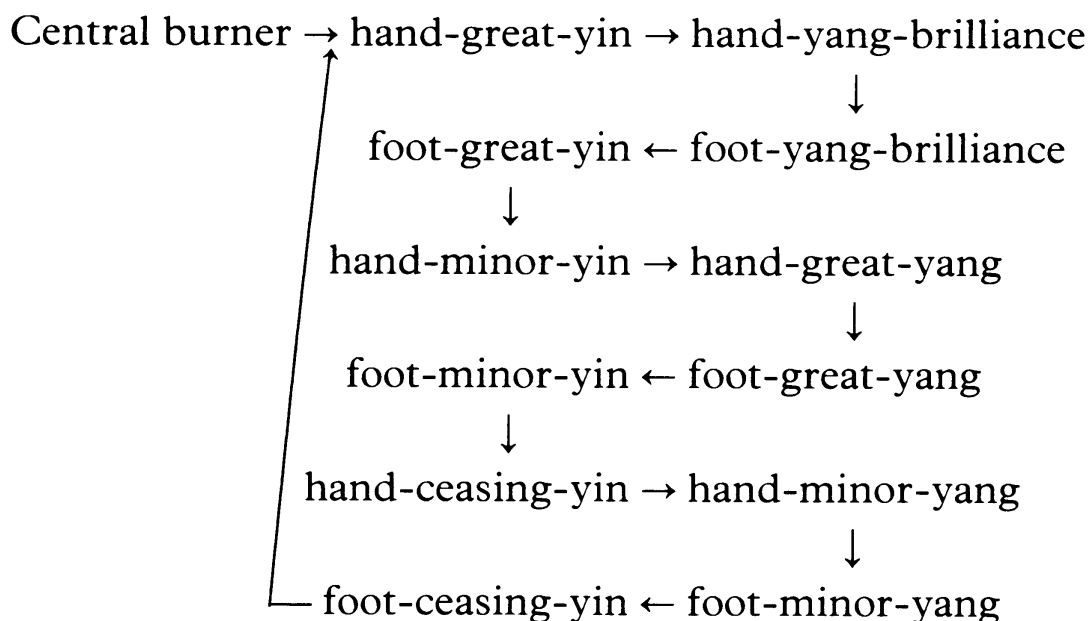
1. In a corresponding Nei-ching outline—in Ling-shu treatise 17, "Mai-tu"—the courses of the conduits take the same direction as is indicated here. It should be pointed out, however, that the conduit directions defined in the present paragraph and in the "Mai-tu" do not completely coincide with those defined elsewhere in the Nei-ching, (i.e., in Ling-shu treatise 10, "Ching-mai"), where the hand-yin and foot-yang conduits are assigned the opposite direction. That is, the former are said to extend from the chest into the hands, while the latter are said to extend from the head into the feet. Interestingly, the conduit directions outlined here in the Nan-ching and in the "Mai-tu" coincide completely with the oldest record extant on conduit therapy—namely, the *Tsu pi shih-i mo chiu ching*, a fragment of which was unearthed at Ma-wang-tui in 1973. Another fragment discovered at Ma-wang-tui, the *Yin-yang shih-i mo chiu ching*, relates the same overall structure with but two exceptions, as is illustrated by the following table:

Source		<i>Tsu pi shih-i mo chiu ching</i>	<i>Yin-yang shih-i mo chiu ching</i>	<i>Nei-ching</i> "Ching-mai"	<i>Nan-ching</i> ; <i>Nei-ching</i> "Mai-tu"
hand/arm	yin	hand → chest	hand → chest (or shoulder)	chest → hand	hand → chest
	yang	hand → head	hand → head (except great-yang: head → hand)	hand → head	hand → head
foot	yin	foot → thighs, or abdomen	foot → abdomen (except great-yin: abdomen → foot)	foot → chest	foot → chest
	yang	foot → head	foot → thighs, head	head → foot	foot → head

2. This pattern is identical with the sequence of the conduits outlined in the Nei-ching, for instance in Ling-shu treatise 15, "Ying-ch'i". The circulatory movement through the vessels can be illustrated as per the following diagram.

3. The twenty-third difficult issue marks the transition from a discussion of the diagnostic significance of the movement in the vessels to a discussion of the structure of the system of these vessels. As the commentaries indicate, it was not at all easy for some later authors to interpret the meaning of this issue—especially of sentences 14 through 18. The idea that it is sufficient to investigate the movement in the vessels at the two hands is expressed in the Nan-ching as a logical consequence of the recognition of a continuous circulation. It was difficult to assert this new idea, in

part because the technical terms used to transmit it were identical to those used in the Nei-ching; thus conservative authors interpreted them on the basis of their Nei-ching meanings.



THE TWENTY-FOURTH DIFFICULT ISSUE

Overview: Systematized presentation and prognostic evaluation of external symptoms indicating that a specific conduit-vessel has been cut off from the movement in the vessels.

二十四難曰(一)手足三陰三陽氣已絕何以爲候可知其吉凶不(二)然足少陰氣絕即骨枯少陰者冬脈也伏行而溫於骨體故骨髓不溫即肉不著骨骨肉不相親即肉濡而却肉濡而却故齒長而枯髮無潤澤者骨先死戊日篤己日死(三)足太陰氣絕則脈不榮其口脣口脣者肌肉之本也脈不榮則肌肉不滑澤肌肉不滑澤則肉滿肉滿則脣反脣反則肉先死甲日篤乙日死(四)足厥陰氣絕即筋縮引卵與舌卷厥陰者肝脈也肝者筋之合也筋者聚於陰器而絡於舌本故脈不榮則筋縮急筋縮急即引卵與舌故舌卷卵縮此筋先死庚日篤辛日死(五)手太陰氣絕即皮毛焦太陰者肺也行氣溫於皮毛者也氣弗榮則皮毛焦皮毛焦則津液去津液去即皮節傷皮節傷則皮枯毛折毛折者則毛先死丙日篤丁日死(六)手少陰氣絕則脈不通則血不流血不流則色澤去故面黑如梨此血先死壬日篤癸日死(七)三陰氣俱絕者則目眩轉目瞑目瞑目者爲失志失志者則志先死死即目瞑也(八)六陽氣俱絕者則陰與陽相離陰陽相離則腠理泄絕汗乃出大如貫珠轉出不流即氣先死旦占夕死夕占旦死

The twenty-fourth difficult issue: (1) When the [flow of the] influences through the three yin or three yang conduits of the feet and hands has been cut off, what could serve as an indicator [of which conduit is affected]? Is it possible to know whether such [a situation] will have a favorable or unfavorable outcome?

二十難四陰氣之圖
絕陽難



(2) It is like this. When the foot-minor-yin [conduits] are cut off from the [movement of the] influences, the bones wither. The minor-yin [conduit] is a vessel [associated with] winter; its course lies [deeply] hidden, and it provides warmth to the bones and their marrow.¹ Hence, when the bones and the marrow are not supplied with warmth, the flesh will not remain tightly attached to the bones. When the bones and the flesh are no longer close to each other, the flesh will be soft and will shrink. When the flesh is soft and shrinks, the teeth grow long and wither, [and one's hair will lose its glossiness and moisture].² When the hair lacks its glossiness and moisture, [that is an indication that] the bones have already died. [Such an illness will be] severe on a wu day; death will occur on a chi day.³

(3) When the foot-great-yin [conduits] are cut off from the [movement of the] influences, the [movement in the] vessels will no longer supply the mouth and the lips of that [person with influences]. Mouth and lips represent the basis of the flesh. When the [movement in the] vessels no longer supplies [mouth and lips], the flesh will no longer retain its smoothness and moisture. When the flesh is no longer smooth and moist, the flesh will be full. When the flesh is full, the lips will curl back. When the lips curl back, this [indicates that] the flesh has died already. [Such an illness will be] severe on a chia day; death will occur on an i day. (4) When the foot-ceasing-yin [conduit] has been cut off from [the movement of] the influences, the muscles will shrink, drawing in the testicles and rolling back one's tongue. The ceasing-yin [conduit] is a vessel [associated with] the liver. The liver and the muscles represent one unit. The muscles assemble at the sexual organ and are tied to the base of the tongue. Hence, when they are not supplied by the [movement in the] vessels, the muscles will shrink. When the muscles shrink they draw in the testicles and the tongue. Thus, when the tongue is rolled back and when the testicles are drawn in, [that is an indication that] the muscles have already died. [Such an illness will be] severe on a keng day; death will occur on a hsin day. (5) When the hand-great-yin [conduits] are cut off from the [movement of the] influences, the skin [and its] hair will be scorched. The great-yin [conduit is associated with the] lung. It transports influences and warmth to the skin [and its] hair. When the skin [and its] hair are not supplied with influences, they will be scorched. When the skin [and its] hair are scorched, the liquids leave. When the liquids leave, the skin and the joints will be harmed. When the skin and the joints are harmed, the skin will wither

and the hair will break. Hence, when the hair breaks, [that is an indication that] the hair has died already. [Such an illness will be] severe on a ping day; death will occur on a ting day. (6) When the hand-minor-yin [conduits] are cut off from the [movement of the] influences, the [blood] vessels are blocked. When these vessels are blocked, the blood does not flow. When the blood does not flow, one's complexion and glossiness fade away. Hence, when the color of one's face has turned black, resembling a pear, [this is an indication that] the blood has died already. [Such an illness will be] severe on a jen day; death will occur on a kuei day. (7) When the three yin [conduits] are cut off from the [movement of the] influences at the same time, one's vision will be dizzy. One's eyes will turn uncontrolled or will be closed. When the eyes are closed one loses one's mind. When one has lost one's mind the mind has died. When it has died, one's eyes are closed. (8) When the six yang [conduits] are cut off from the [movement of the] influences at the same time, the yin and yang [sections of the organism] are separated from each other. When the yin and yang [sections of the organism] are separated from each other, the pores will be drained. Sweat will appear intermittently, resembling a string of pearls. [These pearls] roll out [of the skin] but there is no flow. [This is an indication that] the influences have already died. If it occurs in the morning, one may foretell death for the night; if it occurs at night, one may foretell death for the morning.⁴

Unschuld's Footnotes

1. T'i ("body") appears to be a mistake for sui ("marrow"). Most later editions have corrected this mistake.
2. The passage in brackets corresponds to the general structure of argumentation in this paragraph. It was added by later editions.
3. Wu and chi are two of the so-called Ten Celestial Stems (t'ien-kan). Like the Twelve Earth Branches (ti-chih), they represent ancient astronomical patterns. The Celestial Stems are used here, on the basis of their association with the Five Phases, as prognostic devices to define days on which the patient's condition worsens and turns fatal. Thus, "wu day" may indicate here the fifth day after the onset of the illness, since wu is the fifth Celestial Stem. The usual sequence of the Celestial Stems is; chia, i, ping, ting, wu, chi, keng, hsin, jen, kuei.
4. This difficult issue is one of the relatively few that closely adhere to the text of the Nei-ching, in this case to Ling-shu treatise 10, "Ching-mai". Yet it is not clear whether the meaning expressed is identical. The Nan-ching appears to assign specific physiological functions to the individual conduits—functions which can be fulfilled only if the respective conduits are passed by the circulatory movement of the influences. That is, the Nan-ching regards the influences themselves as neutral; they serve, for instance, as great-yin influences only as a result of being utilized by the great-yin section of the circulatory system to fulfill its physiological functions. This concept marks a final departure (1) from the idea that there are eleven unrelated conduits, each filled with its own specific contents, as appeared in the Ma-wang-tui texts of around 200 B.C., and (2) from the transitional idea, expressed in the Nei-ching, of specific yin and yang influences circulating through a system of yin and yang conduits. As the Nan-ching states, an individual conduit-section—or groups

of conduit-sections—can be cut off from the movement of the influences, which means that smaller cycles of circulation are possible, bypassing those single or grouped conduit-sections.

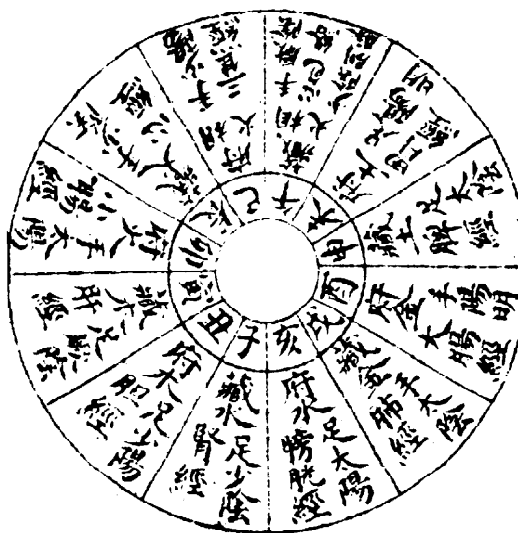
THE TWENTY-FIFTH DIFFICULT ISSUE

Overview: Explanation of the concept of "twelve conduits" in the presence of only five depots and six palaces through the introduction of the concepts of "heart-enclosing network" and "Triple Burner" as carrying a name (i.e., fulfilling a function) without having a form (i.e., an anatomical substratum).

二十五難曰(一)有十二經五藏六府十一耳其一經者何等經也(二)然一經者手少陰與心主別脈也(三)心主與三焦爲表裏(四)俱有名而無形故言經有十二也

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圖 經 之 十 二 難 五 十



The twenty-fifth difficult issue: (1) There are twelve conduits, but the [body's] five depots and six palaces [add up to only] eleven. Of what nature is the one [missing] conduit?

(2) It is like this. One of the conduits encompasses the hand-minor-yin [vessel] and the heart-master [vessel] as separate vessels. (3) The heart-master and the Triple Burner represent outside and inside. (4) Both have a name but no form. Hence, one speaks of twelve conduits.¹

Unschuld's Footnotes

1. This difficult issue marks the beginning of a controversy that has not been settled even today. The heart-master, also called heart-enclosing network, may originally have been a concept developed to meet the number six for the depots, if they were to correspond to the three yin and three yang subcategories.

The Triple Burner may have been conceptualized in correspondence to environmental symbolism. In the last centuries B.C., the entire physiological organism was seen as a mirror image of the state and its economy. The terms "depot," "palace," "conduits," the bureaucratic hierarchy of the organism, and so on reflect this understanding. In this context the assumption of some heating device in the organism— corresponding, for instance, to the most important economic functions of the saline and iron works—may have been a stringent consequence. See also *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*, chapter 3.3. Obviously, it was apparent even during the Han era that no anatomical entity corresponded to the concepts of "heart-master"/"heart-enclosing network" and "Triple Burner" in the

same way that a real liver corresponds to the concept of the liver. Hence, the compromise approached here assigned a function to the heart-master/heart-enclosing envelope and to the Triple Burner, but no anatomical substratum.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DIFFICULT ISSUE

Overview: Remarks on the fifteen network-vessels.

二十六難曰(一)經有十二絡有十五餘三絡者是何等絡也(二)然有陽絡有陰絡有脾之大絡(三)陽絡者陽躄之絡也陰絡者陰躄之絡也故絡有十五焉

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二十難有六絡之圖



The twenty-sixth difficult issue: (1) There are twelve conduits and fifteen network[-vessels]. Of what nature are the additional three network [-vessels] ?

(2) It is like this. They include the yang network[-vessel], the yin network[-vessel], and the great network[-vessel] of the spleen. (3) The yang network[-vessel] is the network[-vessel] of the yang walker [conduit]; the yin network[-vessel] is the network[-vessel] of the yin walker. Hence, there are fifteen network[-vessels].¹

Unschuld's Footnotes

1. This difficult issue briefly refers to the concept of the fifteen network-vessels. A detailed discussion of their nature and courses had been presented by Ling-shu treatise 10, "Ching-mai."

It was pointed out there that each of the twelve main conduits has a network—or "separate" (pieh)—vessel, branching off from the respective main conduit at a specific point. These points are holes on the main conduits, and the network-vessels are designated with the names of these holes. In addition, three further network-vessels are named—those branching off from the controller and from the supervisor vessel, and one that is called the "great network[-vessel] of the spleen." The courses of the main conduits and of the network-vessels differ, in that the former are said to proceed hidden in the body, invisible to the human eyes (except for the foot-great-yin conduit passing the outside of the outer ankle), while the latter proceed below the skin and can be seen. Hence, the accumulation of evil influences in the network-vessels is treated mechanically; the Ling-shu recommends opening them and letting the "entire blood" flow out. In contrast, illnesses in the main conduits are, in general,

treated functionally, in that the insertion of needles stimulates depots, palaces, or conduits to fulfill their respective physiological roles. This difficult issue differs from the account in Ling-shu treatise 10 in referring to network-vessels of the two walker conduits instead of to those of the supervisor and controller vessels. As usual, the early commentators accepted this replacement, while the conservatives of the second millennium either rejected it as a mistake or tried to reconcile it with the contents of the Nei-ching.

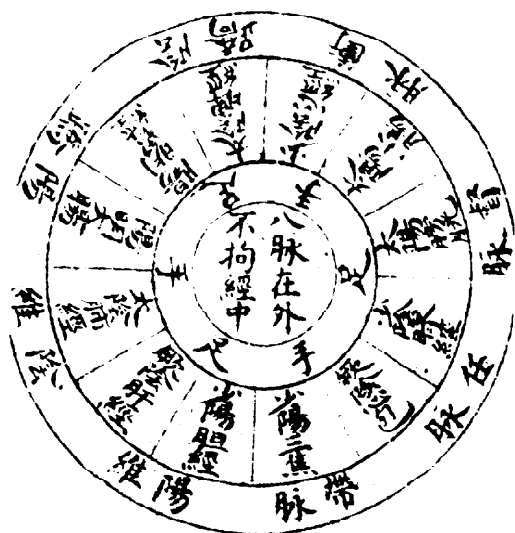
THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DIFFICULT ISSUE

Overview: Introduction of the term "eight single-conduit vessels," and of the concept that they function as "ditches and reservoirs" absorbing surplus contents of the main conduits.

二十七難曰(一)脈有奇經八脈者不拘於十二經何謂也(二)然有陽維有陰維(三)有陽蹻有陰蹻(四)有衝(五)有督(六)有任(七)有帶之脈(八)凡此八脈者皆不拘於經(九)故曰奇經八脈也(十)經有十二絡有十五凡二十七(十一)氣相隨上下何獨不拘於經也(十二)然聖人圖設溝渠通利水道以備不然(十三)天雨降下溝渠溢滿當此之時霧霈妄行聖人不能復圖也(十四)此絡脈滿溢諸經不能復拘也

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二十 七 難 別 經 八 脈 之 圖



The twenty-seventh difficult issue: (1) Among the vessels are the eight single-conduit vessels which are not touched by the [movement of the influences circulating through the] twelve [main] conduits. What does that mean?

(2) It is like this. [The eight single-conduit vessels] include the yang tie vessel and the yin tie vessel, (3) the yang walker vessel and the yin walker vessel, (4) the through-way vessel, (5) the supervisor vessel, (6) the controller vessel, (7) and the belt vessel. (8) None of these eight vessels is touched by the [movement of the influences circulating through the main] conduits. (9) Hence, they are called the eight "single-conduit" vessels.

(10) There are twelve [main] conduits and fifteen network[-vessels], twenty-seven altogether. (11) The influences move up and down [through these conduits and network-vessels], following their respective courses. What [does it mean when it is said that] only [the eight single-conduit vessels] are not touched by the [movement of the influences circulating through the main] conduits?

(12) It is like this. The sages [of antiquity] devised and constructed ditches and reservoirs and they kept the waterways open in order to be prepared for any extraordinary [situation]. (13) When rains poured down from heaven, the ditches and the reservoirs became filled. In times like that, when the rainfloods rushed wildly, even the sages could not make plans again; [hence, they had to be prepared]. (14) 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 vessels].¹

Unschuld's Footnotes

1. The preceding difficult issue briefly referred to the network-vessels. Their functions had already been elucidated, in detail, in the Nei-ching, and obviously the Nan-ching did not deem it necessary to add any new insights. In contrast, the functions of the eight single-conduit vessels are neither recognizable from their common designation, nor had they been outlined by the Nei-ching. Ling-shu treatise 65 ("Wu yin wu wei) and Su-wen treatises 41 ("Tz'u yao-t'ung lun") and 60 ("Ku-k'ung lun") refer to the names of these vessels, to their courses [with the exception of the yin tie], and to their illnesses, but the term "eight single-conduit vessels" appears to be an innovation introduced by the Nan-ching. Similarly, the idea that the single-conduit vessels act as "ditches and reservoirs," absorbing surplus contents of the main conduits, was expressed first in this book. The term chü appears in this paragraph with two different meanings. This discrepancy may have led Hua Shou to state that "single-conduit vessels" in the first sentence might stand for "network-vessels." In that case, the meaning of chü in sentences 1 and 11 on the one hand, and in sentence 14 on the other hand would, of course, be identical.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DIFFICULT ISSUE

Overview: Description of the courses of the eight single-conduit vessels in the organism.

二十八難曰(一)其奇經八脈者既不拘於十二經皆何起何繼也(二)然督脈者起於下極之俞並於脊裏上至風府入於腦(三)任脈者起於中極之下以上毛際循腹裏上關元至咽喉(四)衝脈者起於氣衝並足陽明之經夾齊上行至胸中而散也(五)帶脈者起於季脇迴身一周(六)陽蹻脈者起於跟中循外踝上行入風池(七)陰蹻脈者亦起於跟中循內踝上行至咽喉交貫衝脈(八)陽維陰維者維絡于身溢畜不能環流灌溉諸經者也(九)故陽維起於諸陽會也陰維起於諸陰交也(十)比于聖人圖設溝渠(十一)溝渠滿溢流于深湖故聖人不能拘通也(十二)而人脈隆盛入於八脈而不環周故十二經亦不能拘之(十三)其受邪氣畜則腫熱(十四)砭射之

The twenty-eighth difficult issue: (1) If the eight single-conduit vessels are not touched by the [movement of the influences through the main] conduits, from where do they originate and where do their courses continue?

二十難八奇經八脈之圖



(2) It is like this. The supervisor vessel originates from the transportation [hole] at the [body's] lower end; it continues inside the backbone and moves upward toward the wind palace, where it enters the brain. (3) The controller vessel originates from below the chung-chi [hole] and moves upward toward the [pubic] hairline. It proceeds inside the abdomen, ascends to the kuan-yüan [hole], and reaches the throat. (4) The through-way vessel originates from the ch'i-ch'ung [hole], parallels the foot-yang-brilliance-conduit, ascends near the navel, and reaches the chest, where it dissipates. (5) The belt vessel originates from the smallest rib and circles around the body. (6) The yang walker vessel originates in the heel; it proceeds along the outer ankle, ascends upward, and enters the feng-ch'ih [hole].

(7) The yin walker vessel also originates in the heel; it proceeds along the inner ankle, ascends upward, and reaches the throat, where it joins the through-way vessel. (8) The yang tie and the yin tie vessels are tied like a network to the body. When they are filled to overflowing, [their contents] stagnate; they cannot [return to the] circulating [influences] by drainage into the [main] conduits. (9) Hence, the yang tie [vessel] originates from a point where all yang [vessels] meet each other, and the yin tie [vessel] originates from a point where all yin [vessels] intersect. (10) This can be compared to the planning and construction of ditches and reservoirs by the sages of antiquity. (11) When the ditches and reservoirs are full, [their surplus contents] flow into deep lakes because [even] the sages were unable to [find other means to] seize [these contents and ensure the continuation of a circulatory] flow. (12) Similarly, when the [conduits and network-vessels] of man are filled [to overflowing, their surplus contents] enter the eight [single-conduit] vessels—where they are no longer part of the circulation—because the twelve [main] conduits cannot seize this [surplus]. (13) When the [single-conduit vessels] receive evil influences which stagnate in them, swellings and heat will result. (14) In this case one has to hit [the respective vessel] with a sharp stone.¹

Unschuld's Footnotes

1. Sentences 10 through 14 have been transferred, in Ting Chin's edition, to follow the text of difficult issue 27.

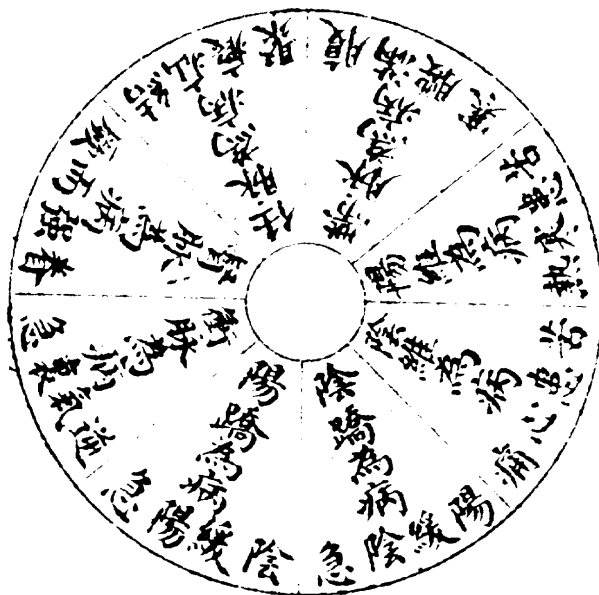
THE TWENTY-NINTH DIFFICULT ISSUE

Overview: List of signs and symptoms caused by illnesses in the eight single-conduit vessels.

二十九難曰(一)奇經之為病何如(二)然陽維維於陽陰維維於陰(三)陰陽不能自相維則悵然失志溶溶不能自收持(四)陽維為病苦寒熱(五)陰維為病苦心痛(六)陰蹻為病陽緩而陰急(七)陽蹻為病陰緩而陽急(八)衝之為病逆氣而裏急(九)督之為病脊強而厥(十)任之為病其內苦結(十一)男子為七疝(十二)女子為瘕聚(十三)帶之為病腹滿腰溶溶若坐水中(十四)此奇經八脈之為病也

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二十九難八脈為病之圖



The twenty-ninth difficult issue: (1) What is it like when the single-conduits have an illness?

(2) It is like this. The yang tie is tied to the yang [conduits]; the yin tie is tied to the yin [conduits]. (3) When the yin and yang [tie vessels] cannot maintain their respective ties, one feels uncomfortable and loses one's mind. One is weak and cannot support one's [stature]. (4) When the yang tie has an illness, one suffers from [fits of] cold and heat. (5) When the yin tie has an illness, one suffers from heartache. (6) When the yin walker[-vessel] has an illness, the yang [walker-vessel] is relaxed while the yin [walker-vessel] is tense. (7) When the yang walker[-vessel] has an illness, the yin [walker-vessel] is relaxed while the yang

[walker-vessel] is tense. (8) When the through-way [vessel] has an illness, the influences move contrary to their proper course and tensions occur inside [the abdomen]. (9) When the supervisor [vessel] has an illness, one's back is stiff and [it is bent] backward. (10) When the controller [vessel] has an illness, one suffers from internal knots. (11) Males will develop the seven accumulation ill; (12) females will develop concentration ill. (13) When the belt [vessel] has an illness, the abdomen will be full, and the loins will be bloated as if one were sitting in water. (14) That happens when the eight single-conduit vessels have an illness.