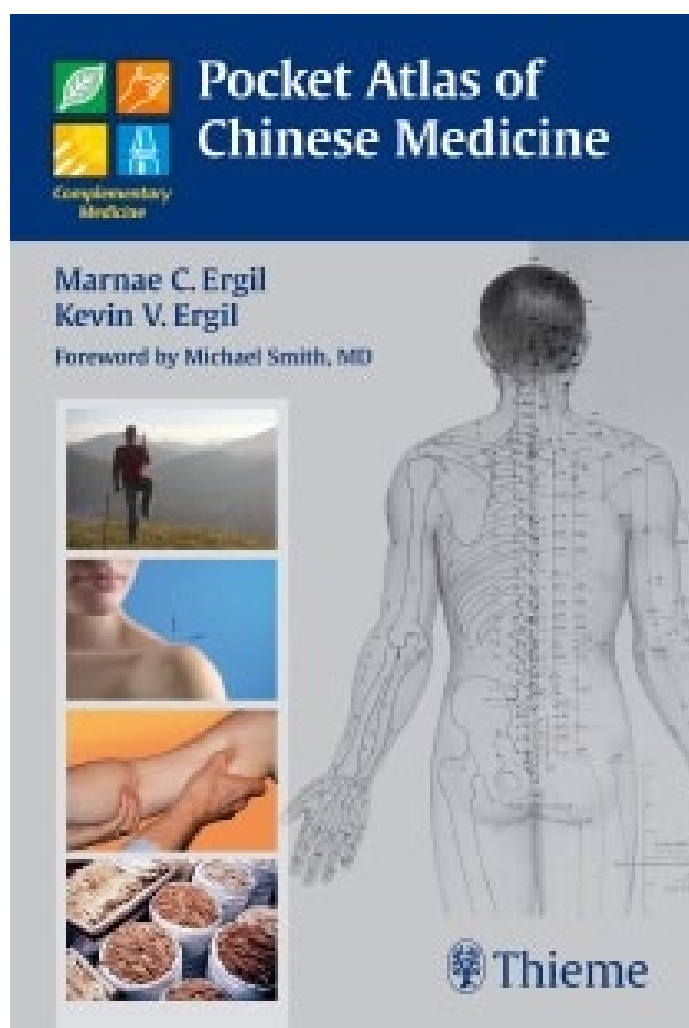




# Marnae C. Ergil **Pocket Atlas of Chinese Medicine**



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**by naturmed Fachbuchvertrieb**

Aidenbachstr. 78, 81379 München

Tel.: + 49 89 7499-156, Fax: + 49 89 7499-157

Email: [info@naturmed.de](mailto:info@naturmed.de), Web: <http://www.naturmed.de>

## Foreword

Chinese medicine belongs to all of us. People in all cultures value its perspectives. It is a distinctive treasure because its 2000 years of continuous—if often contrasting—commentary represent the best example of the subtlety and power emerging from the examination of human experience. Chinese herbalism is more sophisticated than other herbal traditions because the Chinese were persistent in observing and recording their experiences.

As Western society became familiar with Chinese medicine in the late 20th century, acupuncture was emphasized because it was an easy fit with the licensed, private practice professionalism characteristic of health care in the West. Related methods of acupressure, *qi gong*, and *tui na* were largely ignored. Acupuncture was progressively revised to emphasize the idea that mechanical action in a precise location creates a specific effect, a recasting of traditional acupuncture concepts into a linearity that felt comfortable to Westerners.

In actuality, acupuncture grows out of the profound nature of human touch and the relationship of vital energy between people. Locating points by touch is more effective than using purely anatomical guides, since the therapist feels the movement of *qi* just as a *qi gong* practitioner does, and is guided by the dynamic of sensation between patient and therapist.

Chinese medicine begins with an appreciation of life and vital energy (*qi*). When *qi* flows smoothly it provides balance and protection. Treatment enhances and facilitates the flow

of *qi*. In an acupuncture treatment we help patients help themselves, by inviting *qi* to move as it needs to. From this perspective, the location of stimulus and the timing of sensations are considered valid according to the perceptions of patient and practitioner, rather than according to a static chart.

I was born with a bilateral cleft palate. Consequently, I owe my life to Western technological medicine. Most aspects of technological medicine involve surgery, prostheses, and testing, all of which have clear practical value and are easily integrated into different cultural paradigms. However, a cultural contrast is revealed when we compare Chinese medicine and Western pharmaceutical medicine.

In medical school we learned that disease is an alien process that needs to be attacked. We learned that the body itself is frequently the source of disease. As a consequence of this philosophy, most pharmaceuticals are designed to suppress one or another of the functions of components of our body. Significantly, pharmaceuticals which are not suppressive of physiological function, such as penicillin and digoxin, are derived from herbal traditions and incorporated into Western medicine.

As a clinician, I have observed that pharmaceutical medicine and its implicitly adversarial model can drain its practitioners. In contrast, Chinese medicine seems to have an invigorating effect on practitioners, perhaps because it recognizes, and uses, the experiences of the patient and the intuition of the therapist in each treatment. The clinician partners with the patient. Increased self awareness of the therapist

can have a clear and beneficial impact on treatment outcome.

Western medical research seeks information about life by testing linear models of cause and effect. Greater accuracy depends on a lack of confounding variables, and a simple model: one action leads to one outcome. Only a limited number of variables can be traced statistically. While these analytical methods provide statistical power, they underestimate our body's complexity. The heart or lungs, which behave more like machines, are widely studied and well understood using this model. Parts of the body that have more layered functions, such as the liver and the flora of the intestinal lumen, are less well understood.

The Austrian philosopher Karl R. Popper asked us to focus on assertions that are specific enough so that it is possible to prove them false given the right kind of evidence. While this is appropriate in many settings, it does not apply to most biological situations, where the issues posed by high degrees of complexity challenge its reductive orientation. The evolution of life includes complexity and redundancy at every level and every moment of existence, posing real challenges to reductionistic models.

No survival traits could be more important than homeostasis, tissue repair, and the removal of toxins. We need to appreciate the body's healing intelligence as a product of evolution. Let me refer to my own clinical experience: I was asked to help a pregnant woman during an unproductive labor. I chose SP-6, a point on the lower leg commonly used to assist labor. I

needed it, hoping for stronger labor. Instead, the patient fell asleep for 4 hours, woke up and delivered the baby in 2 hours. I made a suggestion; the body adapted and prioritized its processes according to its needs.

To summarize, there are three significant contrasts between Chinese medicine and Western medicine:

- 1) Chinese medicine builds upon active homeostatic bodily function. Western pharmaceutical medicine seeks balance by suppressing certain components of physiological systems.
- 2) Western research focuses on linear models, while Chinese medicine accepts the challenge of our complex biological world.
- 3) Chinese medicine is a welcoming context for long-term change and self development.

The editors, authors, and publisher of this beautiful book felt it was important to present a full, well-rounded picture of Chinese medicine and its engagement with health and disease. In today's world, we need a health care model that focuses on more complex bodily needs. I believe that this book offers a unique window on the ways in which Chinese medicine understands the world and the body. Thank you, Thieme, Marnae, and Kevin Ergil for helping us find a more open path to the future.

*Michael Smith, MD*

Director, Lincoln Recovery Center  
Associate Professor of Psychiatry,  
Cornell University  
Founding Chairperson, National  
Acupuncture Detoxification Association  
Bronx, New York, USA

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## The 12 Channel Divergences (*Shi Er Jing Bie* 十二经别)

Channel divergences refer to branches of the 12 regular channels. They are distributed inside the body and have no points of their own. They are called divergences because they diverge from the regular pathway to make important internal linkages.

### Distribution

The 12 channel divergences separate from the regular channel near the elbows or knees. The internally/externally related pairs merge together and enter the trunk to travel to the viscera and bowels. Together, they emerge from the body at the neck. Finally, they merge with the regular *yang* channel of the *yin yang* pair.

The point where the channel divergences separate from the regular channel and where they merge with the regular *yang* channel are important points for treatment. Called the six joinings (*liu he* 六合) (A), they are used to treat disorders of the paired channels. With the exception of the triple burner, which runs from the vertex of the head, down the body to the middle burner, the channel divergences run from the extremities to the trunk, face, and head.

The *qi* flow from one channel divergence to the next is as follows:

BL → KI → GB → LR → ST → SP → SI →  
HT → TB → PC → LI → LU.

## Functions of the Channel Divergences

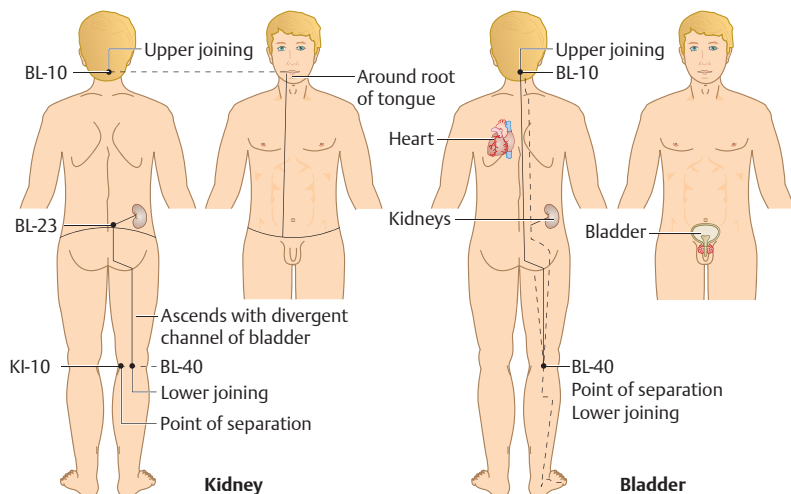
The channel divergences, which contain only defense *qi*, supply defense *qi* to the organs, and act as a secondary line of defense against the invasion of evil. If an evil invades the body and gets past the defense *qi* in the sinew channels, it passes to the regular channels. From here it may go directly into the organs or it may diverge and enter the channel divergences. By entering the channel divergence, it continues to battle with the defense *qi*, and thus is further weakened. From the channel divergence the evil may be pushed out of the body or it may enter the organs, but in a more weakened form.

The channel divergences strengthen the connection between *yin yang* paired organs and *yin yang* paired channels. They integrate areas of the body that are not covered by the main pathways, thus explaining the functions of certain points. For example, the urinary bladder channel divergence connects with the rectum and anus, reinforcing the BL regular channels' connection to that area (B).

The channel divergences share the same pathology as the regular channels. Because the channel divergences contain defense *qi* and the strength of the defense *qi* waxes and wanes, when disease enters the channel divergences, the symptoms are often intermittent or cyclic and one-sided.

Channels	Lower Joining	Upper Joining
Urinary bladder and kidney	Popliteal fossa/BL-40 area	Nape of the neck/BL-10
Gallbladder and liver	External genitalia/CV-2 area	GB-1 area/lateral aspect of eye
Stomach and spleen	ST-30 area/pubic bone	BL-1 area/medial aspect of eye
Heart and small intestine	Axilla (HT-1/SI-10 area)	Non-specific face area
Triple burner and pericardium	Non-specific middle or upper burner	Mastoid process
Lung and large intestine	Supraclavicular fossa/ST-12 area	LI-18/cheek

**A The divergent channel meeting points.** Lower joining: where the paired channels meet; upper joining: where the divergent channel meets the regular *yang* channel.



**B The divergent channel pathways of the kidney and urinary bladder.**

## Qi-rectifying Medicinals

To rectify *qi* is to correct its counterflow or stagnant movement (see p. 132). Counterflow lung *qi* manifests as cough. Counterflow stomach *qi* presents with belching, nausea, and vomiting. Because cough-suppressing medicinals are classified with the phlegm-transforming substances, medicinals in this group mainly downbear counterflow stomach *qi*. Persimmon calyx (*shi di*) treats hiccough. Its neutral temperature permits use in counterflow stomach *qi* due to heat or cold.

Qi-moving medicinals focus primarily on the stomach and spleen, or the liver. Signs of *qi* stagnation include fullness, distension, and pain. Qi-rectifying medicinals frequently have an acrid flavor, which disperses *qi*. Tangerine peel (*chen pi*) (A) moves *qi* in the spleen and stomach. Its acrid and aromatic properties move depressed *qi*. Its warmth supports the spleen and stomach. Its bitterness dries dampness and phlegm. Cyperus root (*xiang fu*) enters the liver and gallbladder and moves liver *qi*. It is used in the treatment of gynecological problems due to liver depression *qi* stagnation.

## Blood-rectifying Medicinals

To rectify blood involves staunching bleeding, or quickening, transforming, or breaking static blood (see p.132). Blood-staunching medicinals may be cool or warm. Sanguisorba root (*di yu*) is cold, bitter, and sour. It cools the blood, astringes, and stops bleeding. It

treats rectal bleeding due to damp heat in the lower burner. Mugwort leaf (*ai ye*) is bitter, acrid, and warm. When charred, it enters the spleen, liver, and kidney channels and treats gynecological bleeding due to cold. Some of these substances simultaneously quicken blood and stop bleeding. Static blood blocks the vessels and causes blood to extravasate. When the congealed blood is moved, extravasation will stop. Noto-ginseng root (*san qi*) (B) treats injuries from contusions or falls. It stops bleeding and dissipates stasis to stop pain.

Fixed and stabbing pain is a clear sign of blood stasis. Blood-quickeners are used where pain is due to blood stasis. In common with *qi*-rectifying medicinals, many blood-quickeners are acrid, bitter, and warm. Acridity moves and disperses, bitterness frees and opens the channels, and warmth invigorates *yang qi*, thus supporting movement.

The blood-quickeners vary in the areas on which they act and the strength of their stasis-dispersing effects. Chuanxiong rhizome (ligusticum) (*chuan xiong*) moves upward, and treats blood stasis in the head and chest. Cyathula root (*chuan niu xi*) descends and is used for blood stasis in the lower limbs. Salvia root (*dan shen*) is a mild quickening agent that both quickens and nourishes the blood. It is frequently used for blood stasis in the chest. Carthamus (*hong hua*) (C) and peach kernel (*tao ren*) are more forceful stasis-transforming agents often used to treat gynecological conditions.

**A Qi-rectifying medicinals either move *qi* in the middle burner or in the liver or both.** Tangerine peel is representative of the middle burner *qi*-moving substances. It also transforms phlegm and is an important ingredient in the basic phlegm-eliminating prescription Two Matured Ingredients Decoction.



**B Notoginseng root is a very special and rather expensive medicinal: it not only moves blood but it also stops bleeding.** It is a superior medicinal for the treatment of cases that present with stasis and bleeding at the same time. Because of its price, it is usually not decocted but swallowed as a powder with the decoction.



**C Carthamus flower is a typical representative of the blood-quickenning medicinal category.** It can be applied for most types of blood stasis problems, externally as well as internally.



## The Heart and Pericardium

The heart and pericardium (A) are two distinct, but closely related organs. The heart is the emperor, governing the movement of blood and the conduct of the organs, and housing consciousness or spirit. The pericardium is the heart's intermediary, acting as the portal through which the spirit engages the world.

Two critical principles stated in *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine* present the fundamental role of the heart: "The heart is the great governor of the five viscera and the six bowels and is the abode of the spirit." "The heart governs the blood and vessels of the body." The heart ensures that the body is nourished and all organs are supplied with blood.

In its role of storing spirit, the heart is the seat of consciousness. It "governs the spirit light" and is the place from which consciousness encounters the world. Spirit refers to clarity of consciousness and the strength of the mental faculties. The role of the pericardium is that of a minister or courier who permits the transmission of information between the heart/spirit and the greater world. "The pericardium holds the office of minister and courier; from it joy and pleasure emanate." The pericardium is not generally a subject of direct clinical interest unless there are severe alterations of consciousness produced by an obstruction of the pericardium. Clinically these

conditions can involve patterns such as phlegm clouding the pericardium or heat entering the pericardium. The channel pathways and acupuncture points associated with the pericardium are frequently used in treating a variety of conditions.

The function of the heart is dependent on the vital substances of the body. Abundant *qi* and blood ensure a regular heartbeat and a moderate and forceful pulse. Insufficiency of heart *qi* and blood can produce an irregular beat, lusterless complexion, palpitations, even clinical signs of blood stagnation such as green-blue complexion, especially where heart *yang* is insufficient. Where heart blood or *yin* becomes insufficient the ability of the heart to store the spirit properly can be affected, producing insomnia and dream-disturbed sleep.

The *yin* heart is paired with the *yang* organ, the small intestine. This relationship is diagnostically and therapeutically relevant since close channel relationships allow heat to flow out of the heart via the small intestine.

The tongue is the sprout of the heart and while clinical signs of the heart's status are found primarily on the tip of the tongue, the color and quality of the tongue, and the ability to speak clearly all point to the health of the heart. Because the heart governs the other organs and manifests in the tongue, the tongue can be used to investigate the status of all the organs.

Yin viscus: heart  
 Yang bowel: small intestine  
 Yin viscus: pericardium  
 Yang bowel: triple warmer



### Critical Principles

“The heart governs the blood and vessels of the body.”

“All blood is subordinate to the heart.”

“The heart stores the spirit.”

“The heart governs the spirit light.”

“The tongue is the sprout of the heart.”

“The bloom of the heart is in the face.”

“The heart governs speech.”

### A The heart and the pericardium.

### Fire Phase Correspondences



Season	Summer
Climate	Heat
Direction	South
Development	Growth
Color	Red
Taste	Bitter
Viscus	Heart
Bowel	Small intestine
Sense organ	Tongue
Tissue	Vessels
Mind	Joy
Odor	Scorched
Vocalization	Laughing
Body fluid	Sweat
Manifestation area	Complexion