

# Excerpts from Zhang Xichun's Materia Medica, in Chinese at Heart But Western Where Appropriate: Essays Investigating an Integrated Form of Medicine

YIXUE ZHONG ZHONG CAN XI LU, 1933

---



Introduced and Translated  
by Heiner Fruehauf

*Zhang Xichun (1860-1933) is one of China's great scholar-physicians. He is primarily remembered for his prominent role in spearheading the early movement of Chinese-Western medicine integration during the first three decades of this century. The depth of his knowledge and the broad range of his activities, moreover, distinguish him as one of the last of the classical cast of renaissance physicians. He was a clinician who specialized in the treatment of puzzling disorders; an educator who founded several colleges of traditional Chinese medicine; and a writer who produced passionate essays covering a wide range of topics, including new-yet-old interpretations of fundamental medical concepts and idiosyncratic insights into the materia medica (such as a systematic assessment of the energetic properties of Western drugs). In 1933, the last year of his productive career, Zhang's publications were collected under the programmatic title, Chinese at Heart but Western Where Appropriate: Essays Investigating an Integrated Form of Medicine. The following are representative excerpts from his at once theoretically profound as well as practical insights into some of the most common ingredients of the Chinese material medica.*

## EPHEDRA (MAHUANG)

### Ephedrae Herba

The nutritive essence of ephedra is slightly bitter and its functional nature is warming. It is the prime diaphoretic in the materia medica. There is not a single channel or organ network in the body that it does not penetrate, and its main therapeutic action is to expel wind cold from the taiyang layer. Therefore, *Shen Nong's Herbal* states that ephedra treats the symptom complex associated with wind invasion and cold damage accompanied by headache. It further says that it treats qi counterflow manifesting as coughing. Ephedra is therefore an excellent remedy to expel wind from the lung, and to drain the lung and calm asthmatic panting. The source further states that ephedra can break up masses and accumulations. On the one hand, it can thus reach the surface, going beyond the pores of the skin, while on the other hand it can penetrate deeply into pockets of accumulated phlegm and coagulated blood, particularly if used in combination with materials that eliminate masses and transform stasis. Furthermore, it is part of the functional nature of ephedra to disinhibit urination. It does therefore not only enter the taiyang channel, but also the taiyang bowel [bladder]. Via taiyang, ephedra can thus penetrate to the taiyin [kidney] layer (this is the reason why it can be used for shaoyin syndrome cold invasion). It can, moreover, treat pustules, skin ulcerations, and stubborn skin disorders of the yin [cold] type.

The taiyang layer is the outer corridor of the body. The term outer corridor refers to the skin, which is also governed by the lung. Once wind cold pathogens overcome a person, they do not only enter the taiyang layer, but also the hand taiyin lung channel, commonly manifesting in symptoms of coughing and slight asthmatic breathing. The fact that ephedra also enters the hand taiyin [lung] channel makes it a prime remedy for the expulsion of wind and cold. It is significant, therefore, that although there

are many other herbs that have a diaphoretic affect on the taiyang layer, the *Shanghan Lun* recommends Ma-huang Combination as the sole remedy for the treatment of taiyang cold invasion without sweat, since this remedy treats both the foot [taiyang bladder] channel and the hand [taiyin lung] channel at the same time.

Among the diuretic materials, the ones that are hollow inside can generally also induce sweat, such as akebia or polygonum. Among the diaphoretic herbs, the ones that are hollow inside can generally also disinhibit urine, such as ephedra and bupleurum. A wind cold invasion of the taiyang channel usually implicates the taiyang bowel (the bladder), preventing proper elimination of urine for many days. Ephedra, in sum, can thus treat both pathogens in the [taiyang bladder] channel and [bladder] bowel. The pathogens afflicting the channel are being relieved via the sweat, while the ones in the bowel are relieved via the urine. Later generations of physicians who self-assuredly began to replace ephedra with other materials were obviously oblivious of this double affect.

For patients suffering from wind swelling, the classic sourcebook *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* (Jingui Yaolue) recommends Ma-huang and Gypsum Combination (Yuebi Tang). This formula employs ephedra as the imperial herb, utilizing this double feature of diaphoretic and diuretic affect. Whenever I use this formula in clinical practice, the patient usually begins to sweat and the urination increases in frequency, and in this manner the swelling goes down. Since ephedra is paired with gypsum in this formula, a material that controls the strong affect of ephedra and thus may actually prevent some people from sweating, I have modified this method by having my patients first take 1 ½ tablets of aspirin with sugar water, something that will definitely induce sweating. Once the sweat breaks, I have them take Ma-huang and Gypsum Combination, which will increase both the sweating and urination.

Dr. Miura from Japan is known to frequently prescribe 10 grams of ephedra, decocted to yield 100 ml of liquid producing a daily dose that is taken at three different times throughout the day. He uses this method to treat chronic nephritis or atrophic kidneys accompanied by symptoms of inhibited urination. This method works sometimes, and sometimes it does not--depending on the individual degrees of hot, cold, deficiency, and excess that are at the root of the problem. If ephedra was used in combination with other substances, its beneficial affects could be utilized in a wide variety of circumstances. If we consult the chapter on "Water Qi" in the Essentials from the Golden Cabinet, we see that in the context of Ma-huang and Gypsum Combination ephedra is combined with gypsum, because the pulse is floating, indicating heat (a floating pulse usually indicates wind, but actually it may also indicate heat). In Ma-huang, Aconite, and Licorice Combination (Mahuang Fuzi Gancao Tang) ephedra is paired with aconite, because the patient's pulse is deep, indicating cold. So when using ephedra, it should always be prescribed flexibly according to the individual etiology of the patient involved.

Zou Run'an once said: "The fruit of the ephedra plant is black in the center and red on the surface; its stalks resemble vessels and joints that are red in the center and yellowish white on the surface (there is usually a subtle layer of white coloration on top of the joints). The fruit is prenatal, the stalks are postnatal. The prenatal influences the basic quality of things, affecting the energetic communication between the kidney and the heart. The postnatal influences the practical application of things, affecting the energetic communication between the heart and the spleen/stomach." The communication between kidney and heart refers to the kidney's action of being in charge of the five humors that enter the heart and turn into sweat; the communication between the heart and the spleen/stomach refers to the distribution of heart yang, which reaches out

to the bones and joints inside as well as to the muscles and skin at the surface, leaving no niche for stagnation in between. It is due to these properties that the ground on which the plant grows does not build up snow during the winter, demonstrating the ability of ephedra to draw yang qi into the realm of extreme yin and prevent stagnation caused by excessive cold.

Ancient formula primers usually note that when ephedra is decocted, the foam that develops after a few moments of boiling should be skimmed off the surface, and only then should the other materials of the respective formula be added. This precaution is taken because the diaphoretic affect of the foam is too intense, and after its removal the herb turns into a more harmonious substance.

Without removal of the joints, the diaphoretic affect of ephedra is somewhat weaker, whereas after removal of the joints, it is fairly strong. Nowadays, ephedra is most often available in unprocessed form without having had its joints removed. The root of the plant, by the way, astringes sweat and is thus entirely opposite in affect. This is a good example of how careful experimenting can reveal important details. Otherwise, how would one know that the functional nature of the root and the stalks in the same plant is different?

Lu Jiuzhi once said: "The common saying that ephedra has a diaphoretic affect if used in tiny amounts of several fen (0.6-1.2g) applies to Southerners only, not to people living in the North." This is because the climate in the South is warm, and people living there have only a thin layer of skin and muscles from which sweat can easily pour fourth; thus the common saying to not use more than one qian (3g) of ephedra in the Southern regions of the country. If a person lives as far North as Mongolia where the climate is usually cold and the peoples' skin and muscles are thick, and particularly if that person works outdoors where s/he is exposed to wind and frost, then at times of extreme cold

spells one often has to use 7-8 qian (21-24g) of ephedra before a diaphoretic affect can be achieved.

Again, it is the Tao of herbal medicine to always consider the time of year, the geographical location, and the individual constitution of the patient when designing a prescription, and work with these parameters in a very flexible manner. Otherwise we will not be able to overcome the disease. We should never use a static approach.



## CINNAMON TWIG (GUIZHI)

*Cinnamomi ramulus*

The nourishing essence of cinnamon is pungent and slightly sweet, and its functional nature is warming. It opens up the energy pathways, raises the ancestral qi upwards, descends counterflow of qi (such as flushing up, or liver qi flushing up), and disperses pernicious qi (as in wind cold situations).

Zhang Zhongjing's Atractylodes and Hoelen Combination (Ling Gui Zhu Gan Tang) employs cinnamon to treat shortness of breath, utilizing the herb's ascending properties. His Cinnamon Plus Cinnamon Combination (Guizhi Jia Gui Tang) employs cinnamon to treat running piglet syndrome, utilizing the herb's descending properties. And his Ma-huang Combination (Mahuang Tang), Cinnamon Combination (Guizhi Tang), and Minor Blue Dragon Combination (Xiao Qinglong Tang) all use cinnamon to treat external cold affliction, utilizing the herb's dispersing properties.

Defining the properties of cinnamon twig, *Shen Nong's Herbal Classic* states at the very beginning that cinnamon treats coughing and upward counterflow of qi, a fact that seems to underscore once more that it is really the

descending quality of cinnamon that is its specialty. However, rarely do we find that one of the other materia medicas emphasizes this descending quality. This came to foster a use of cinnamon which neglected its most outstanding feature.

Another example illustrating this point is the fact that in the context of Minor Blue Dragon Combination, ephedra and cinnamon are used side by side. For patients suffering from asthmatic breathing, the original source suggests to remove ephedra and add apricot seed, but not to remove cinnamon. The formula's author had apparently considered the *Herbal Classic* line that cinnamon treats "spitting breath," an ancient term for asthma, and thought that by removing cinnamon, the formula would not be able to treat this problem anymore. Since many physicians nowadays fail to read the *Herbal Classic*, they only know that ephedra can drain the lung and calm asthma, but are unaware of the fact that cinnamon can descend qi and calm asthma.

The cassia flowers blossom in mid-autumn, demonstrating that the plant's functional nature becomes activated as soon as it receives metal qi. At the same time, the nourishing essence of cinnamon is pungent, another indication that links it to metal. Cinnamon, therefore, is able to keep the upflaring tendency of liver wood in check. Also, the branches of the cassia tree grow in the form of a deer antler (tree forms are generally differentiated into deer antler form and crab claw form), going straight up without bending. Therefore, cinnamon twigs can regulate the straightforward quality of the liver, and moderate its tendency to become bogged down and depressed.

Since its essence is sweet, it is also a good herb to harmonize the spleen and the stomach, causing collapsed spleen qi to rise and rebellious stomach qi to descend. Once the spleen and the stomach are properly regulated and in harmony, accumulations of phlegm or

stagnating food will naturally disappear. Its circulating powers can also entice the force of the triple warmer to enter the bladder and thus disinhibit urination (do not use cinnamon, however, if there is disinhibited urination that is due to heat; you may, as some doctors do, use a little bit of cinnamon in combination with cooling herbs, in order to entice the herbal effects into the bladder). The only situation where cinnamon should be thoroughly avoided is heat in the upper burner, or patients who regularly suffer from bleeding disorders.

I should emphasize that cinnamon twig is not a sweat inducing herb, just as it is not a sweat astringing herb. Its circulating and surface dispersing force spirals in between the surface and the interior: it can thus harmonize ying and wei, warm the flesh and the muscles, and invigorate movement within the blood vessels. It is due to these actions, then, that wind cold resolves and surface paralysis opens up.

The essence of cinnamon is both pungent and sweet: the pungent flavor disperses, the sweet flavor tonifies. The function of cinnamon, therefore, is somewhere in between dispersing and tonifying. Let's say that somebody wants to take Cinnamon Combination for the purpose of inducing sweat, the source book suggests that s/he must take some hot porridge along with it. This addendum illustrates that Cinnamon Combination by itself does not have a strong sweat inducing effect. On the other hand, if somebody suffers from a situation of yin deficiency and yang excess, the administration of Cinnamon Combination will bring on an intense outbreak of sweat, proving that it is not really an anti-sweat remedy, either.

Once I saw a woman of twenty-some years of age who had been fighting with her husband, and in a fit of rage had swallowed a chunk of opium. At the time she had already been rescued, but now she was suddenly exhibiting signs of upward qi counterflow that manifested in the form of asthmatic breathing. She was

panting heavily, and sometimes her breath would stop altogether. About every ten breaths or so, her hands and feet would shake uncontrollably, and when it seemed that she had reached a point of sufficient accumulation, she would start panting as before, and the cycle would repeat itself. Recently, her state seemed to become more critical, but many of the doctors who had been consulted did not know what to make of this peculiar disease.

When I examined her, her left guan [liver] pulse appeared wiry and hard, while her right cun [lung] pulse appeared forceless. I contemplated this information for quite some time, and suddenly I had an inspiration: this must be a sign that her anger has stirred the liver/gallbladder fire, resulting in a situation where upflaring qi from the lower warmer causes counterflow of stomach qi. In its normal state, stomach qi descends, but now assailed by the liver/gallbladder qi, it was forced to push upwards, causing on its part a reversal of the [downward] movement of lung qi. This was the cause of her asthmatic panting. The counterflow of qi caused the chest and the diaphragm to become obstructed, thus expelling the ancestral qi from its proper residence in the chest and bringing about its downward collapse. Since the lung is suspended in the chest and uses the ancestral qi as the generating power behind its opening and closing action, the sudden absence of this qi in the chest will cause a sudden inability to breathe. This was the reason for the rhythmic interruption of her breathing. Once the ancestral qi had accumulated enough force again, it pushed its way through, reached up to the chest, and again stimulated the lung to carry out its breathing action--although still hampered by the detrimental affect of qi counterflow.

I thought that the only way to treat this disorder was to find an herb which ascends collapsed qi and descends the counterflow of qi at the same time. So I decided to prescribe 4 qian (12g) of the single herb cinnamon twig.

The medicine was decocted and given to the patient, who instantly resumed her normal mode of breathing.

Xu Lingtai once stated that the application of cinnamon in cases with wind heat syndrome may cause vomiting of blood. This is true indeed. I remember the case of a 60 year old woman who contracted a wind cold in spring. I prescribed a diaphoretic formula that contained several qian (6-12g) of cinnamon twig, and soon after taking the medicine she was cured. Her family members deemed this to be a good prescription and pasted it to the wall of their house. When she contracted another cold during the first month of summer, they decided to fill the prescription again and give it to her. Soon after taking the remedy she ejected blood, a situation that quickly came under control when treated. This happened because the first time she had suffered from a wind cold syndrome, while the second time she had contracted a wind heat condition. Cinnamon is indicated for the former, but contraindicated for the latter. One should definitely abstain from using cinnamon twig in warm diseases!

On the other hand, even though Master Xu was apparently well aware of the fact that cinnamon can induce vomiting of blood, we find the following case in his book, *Huixi's Case Histories* (Huixi Yian): A woman suffered from phlegm related asthma in the aftermath of a cold. Ordinarily, this patient suffered from a bleeding disorder that came and went, and when it came she always suffered from slight coughing (from this we can deduct that she was probably suffering from hemoptysis). Since presently the asthma was the more serious issue at hand, he decided to first treat her acute discomfort, prescribing Minor Blue Dragon Combination, which cured the problem.

Note: Minor Blue Dragon Combination is designed to treat phlegm related asthma in wind cold situations. According to the original instructions, one should remove ephedra and

add apricot seed, but in this particular case one should really remove cinnamon and keep the ephedra. Also, one should employ one of the original modifications suggested for Minor Blue Dragon Combination in the *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* (Jingui Yaolue), and add gypsum as a safeguard against potential side effects. I suggest this because both ephedra and cinnamon twig are known to calm asthmatic breathing. Cinnamon, however, may cause bleeding, whereas ephedra will not. Therefore, it would be best to remove cinnamon and keep the ephedra, while at the same time adding the cooling and settling gypsum to prevent erratic blood movement. This would be a plan that covers all contingencies. When Master Xu talked about using this formula, he did not mention whether he modified it or not. Does that mean that he modified it, but chose not to mention it? Or does that mean that he used Minor Blue Dragon Combination in its unmodified form? If he really used the original formula, one must say that although he managed to cure the disease, he sure was guilty of taking a serious risk by putting all of his eggs in one basket!



## BUPLEURUM (CHAIHU)

Bupleuri radix

The nutritive essence of bupleurum is slightly bitter, and its functional nature is neutral. It is imbued with the shaoyang qi of upstarting movement and growth. In terms of season, the qi of bupleurum corresponds to spring, and in terms of the five phases, it corresponds to wood. Bupleurum is therefore the primary herb for the treatment of the foot shaoyang [gallbladder] channel. It should be emphasized that it can also treat the foot jueyin [liver] channel. If the liver qi is not circulating freely within the body, bupleurum can ease its movement. If there is exuberant gallbladder fire, bupleurum can disperse it. And in situations where an external

affliction has invaded the shaoyang layer, bupleurum can assist the shaoyang “hinge” function by outthrusting the diaphragm and pushing the pernicious intruder upwards and outwards. *Shen Nong's Herbal Classic* (*Shen Nong Bencao Jing*), therefore, states that bupleurum treats sensations of alternating cold and heat. This symptom, in particular, is indicative of a shaoyang syndrome that is due to the invasion of external influences. The classic further states that bupleurum treats entangled qi in the heart, the abdomen, the intestines, and the stomach, as well as food accumulations. This particular function has been deduced from the law of relationship among the five phases, according to which wood can course earth. If bupleurum, which stimulates the flow of shaoyang wood qi, is used, then the body's shaoyang qi can naturally course the stagnation of stomach earth, and consequently cause the entangled qi or food accumulation to dissolve. According to the *Herbal Classic*, bupleurum treats sensations of alternating heat and cold, but it should be pointed out that the same action is also ascribed to cornus (*shanzhuyu*). The type of alternating heat/cold indicated for bupleurum is the presence of an external pernicious influence in the shaoyang layer, as is the case in malaria, a condition which should be resolved by prescribing bupleurum. The type of alternating heat/cold in which cornus is indicated is an internal injury to the jueyin [liver] system, as is the case in situations of extreme liver deficiency manifesting in sudden sensations of heat, sudden sensations of cold, and a life-threatening loss of sweat; for this condition, cornus should be used to tonify and astringe. Even though both symptoms appear to be the same, the causative factors behind them are worlds apart. In clinical practice these conditions should be carefully differentiated, in order to prevent that the wrong medicine is prescribed. Bupleurum is not really a diaphoretic herb, but if used in large doses, it is quite capable of inducing sweat. Minor Bupleurum Combination (*Xiao Chaihu Tang*) has traditionally often been prescribed with 8

liang of bupleurum. Transposed into modern amounts, and considering the fact that ancient doctors used to divide the yield from the first decoction into three doses, this means that it is proper to use up to 8 qian (24g) of bupleurum in one daily dose. This heavy use of bupleurum in Minor Bupleurum Combination is specifically employed for the purpose of ascending the shaoyang pathogens, that means pushing them over and beyond the diaphragm, and forcing them to go up and out. If one uses the herb too excessively, however, then this momentum gets out of hand and produces sweat, resulting in a weakening of the uplifting force. For this reason it is best to decoct Minor Bupleurum Combination more than just once, in order to minimize its diaphoretic force.

When using bupleurum to treat shaoyang pathogens of external origin, the key symptom of alternating heat/cold sensation does not necessarily have to be there. It is enough to know that the patient has an external affliction and shows signs of nausea and vomiting; this is sufficient evidence that the disease is in the shaoyang layer, availing itself of the pivotal shaoyang “hinge” quality by outthrusting the diaphragm and moving upwards. If this condition is treated with Minor Bupleurum Combination, one will always achieve immediate results. This is what is called overtaking the upward tendency of the disease. Also, there are some people who neither experience alternating heat/cold sensations, nor exhibit signs of nausea, but who frequently spit out accumulations of sticky saliva. This can also be diagnosed as a shaoyang syndrome, and be addressed with Minor Bupleurum Combination. Once a patient of more than 40 years of age came to me with intense subcostal pain, saying that he had had no bowel movement for 7-8 days. A doctor had prescribed Major Rhubarb Combination (*Da Chengqi Tang*) for him, a treatment that did not induce elimination, but only increased the pain. His pulse was wiry and forceful, indicating an exuberant activity of liver qi and

gallbladder fire. So I prescribed a formula of my own, namely Melia Purge the Liver Decoction (Jinling Xiegan Tang), consisting of melia (15g), frankincense (12g), myrrh (12g), zedoaria (9g), sparganium (9g), and licorice (3g), and further added bupleurum (12g) and gentiana (12g). Evacuation occurred only a short while after he took this remedy, and the subcostal pain disappeared. This particular affect is due to the function of bupleurum which has been described in the *Herbal Classic* in the following terms: “Bupleurum treats food accumulations in the stomach and intestines, pushing out the old and generating the new.” These, truly, are no empty words. Bupleurum, moreover, cannot only facilitate smooth bowel movements; as many medicinal source books report, it is often used to foster proper urination. I have used the herb for this particular purpose quite often myself, and have achieved excellent results. This is because uninhibited urination is intimately linked to the proper functioning of the hand shaoyang triple warmer network. And the qi dynamics of the triple warmer are such that qi descends only if it is allowed to rise first. Bupleurum, therefore, cannot only ascend the qi of the foot shaoyang [gallbladder], but also of the hand shaoyang [triple warmer].



## RHUBARB (DAHUANG)

Rhei rhizoma

The nutritive essence of rhubarb is bitter, its qi is fragrant, and its functional nature is cooling. It enters the blood layer where it cracks all forms of stagnating blood. Since its qi is fragrant, it can also enter the qi layer. Therefore, if used in small amounts, rhubarb can regulate qi and treat pain that is caused by qi stagnation. Since its affect unfolds on a deep rather than on a superficial layer, it is used to offensively clear the way and purge all kinds of masses and accumulations. It can also treat mania by opening the epigastric region and

resolving phlegm heat; it can drain heat excess from the stomach and intestines downwards to resolve dry accumulations; and its fragrant orifice opening affect can disinhibit urination (the color of rhubarb becomes reflected in the urine immediately after intake, demonstrating this particular affect).

Although the functional nature of rhubarb tends to move downwards, it is also a good herb to clear heat in the upper warmer. It is, therefore, considered to be a prime remedy for all situations of pain in the eyes and the oral cavity. It is also an excellent material to resolve heat toxins that manifest in the form of carbuncles, and is thus particularly important in the treatment of furuncles (in cases of severe furunculosis when no other remedy seems to help, rhubarb should be used heavily to disinhibit bowel movements; once constipation resolves, the problem will disappear naturally). Another function of rhubarb is to descend stomach heat and entice stomach qi to move downwards. Therefore, it is an excellent substance to control the vomiting of blood. The classic formula designer Zhang Zhongjing used Coptis and Rhubarb Combination (Xiexin Tang) for conditions of nosebleed or vomiting of blood, that is rhubarb in combination with scutellaria and coptis.

*Shen Nong's Herbal Classic (Shen Nong Bencao Jing)* states that rhubarb can “drain the old and generate the new,” and thus it is often referred to as “the yellow benefactor.” For the treatment of the blood obstruction type of taxation fatigue Zhang Zhongjing recommended Rhubarb and Eupolyphaga Formula (Dahuang Zhechong Wan) or One Hundred Taxation Pill (Bailao Wan). Both formulas include rhubarb, demonstrating the designer's profound understanding of its function of “draining the old and generating the new.”

Note: Coptis and Rhubarb Combination from the classic source book *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet (Jingui Yaolue)* is often

considered to be an excellent formula for the vomiting of blood or for nosebleeds, but it should only be prescribed to patients whose pulse exhibits signs of excess heat. If the pulse appears to indicate only a little bit of heat, I often use 3 qian (9g) of rhubarb, and have the patient take the decocted liquid along with 4-5 qian (12-15g) of finely ground kaolin powder. If there is no heat whatsoever detectable in the pulse and the patient reports no heat sensations in the chest or epigastric region, I often use 6-7 fen (2g) each of ground rhubarb and cinnamon bark powder, to be taken along with warm water. This method usually cures the problem.

All herbs with a strong flavor should not be boiled for a long time, and this rule especially applies to rhubarb. Rhubarb becomes soft after immersing it in water for a while, and all of the medicinally active force will be released as soon as the liquid is brought to a boil. When used in combination with other herbs, therefore, rhubarb should be added to the decoction at the very end of the boiling process. It is also possible to just steep it in freshly boiled water for a while. If taken in powder form, the force of 1 qian (3g) of rhubarb powder is superior to that of a decoction made from 4 qian (12g) of crude rhubarb.

The force of rhubarb is admittedly brute, but some diseases require intense action, and then it should be used heavily. In cases of mania accompanied by a clear excess pulse profile one can use up to 2 liang (60g) of rhubarb, and for furunculosis with signs of intense toxic heat, I see no reason why it could not be used up to the amount of about 1 liang (30g). When prescribing medicine, one has to always adhere to the necessities of the individual situation; otherwise disease cannot be overcome. Therefore, one has to muster up the courage in these situations and prescribe this herb heavily.

During my time in the region of Ji, I once went to Haifeng in Lin County to see patients. At this place, the Chengzi River joins the Yellow

River on its way toward the ocean, and many ocean-going ships anchor there. There lived the young wife of a Mr. Yang who suffered from a strange disease. She layed under her mosquito net all day long without a stitch of clothes on; her back was swollen and felt so intensely hot that if a single thread would touch her body she felt overcome by an unbearable burning sensation, and no remedy seemed to make much of a difference. Later on, a Southerner who traveled northward to take the government examinations stopped by this place. Since he was skilled in the art of medicine, he was asked to take a look at her. He said that this was a typical case of yang poison, and prescribed ten pounds of rhubarb. He had the rhubarb decocted into ten large bowls of liquid that was to be imbibed in large amounts. In a couple of days the liquid had all been ingested, and the disease appeared to be completely cured. Since this is such a wondrous incident, I feel compelled to record it here.



## COPTIS (HUANGLIAN)

*Coptidis rhizoma*

The nutritive essence of coptis is intensely bitter, and its functional nature is cold and drying. Bitter is the flavor of fire, and drying is the nature of fire; therefore, it primarily enters the heart and clears heat. Once the heat in the heart has been cleared, all other forms of heat that may be present in the upper warmer will be cleared. It is thus a good herb to treat meningitis, cerebral hemorrhaging, occasional dizziness, eye diseases involving swelling and pain, canthus outcrop creeping over the eye (do not use it, however, for cases with nebulous eye screen), and bright red and rapidly spreading swelling of the skin in the upper half of the body [erisypelas].

The color of coptis is a pure yellow, and it can therefore enter the spleen and eliminate excess

heat. By doing so, it can increase appetite (in the West, coptis is actually being used as a stomachic; this is because if there is heat in the stomach, there will be symptoms of nausea and poor appetite, and since Westerners generally have a strong constitution and eat plenty of meat that gives rise to heat accumulation in the stomach, coptis is an appropriate remedy). By way of the stomach, it can also reach the intestines, treating intestinal grime syndrome manifesting in diarrhea containing pus and blood. Since the functional nature of coptis is cool and drying, it can also treat damp heat that is stagnating below the heart, causing epigastric discomfort and fullness (this is the reason why coptis is a major component in Zhang Zhongjing's Minor Trichosanthes Combination [Xiao Xianxiong Tang] and the various types of Pinellia Combination [Xiexin Tang]), as well as inflammations and ulcerations in the vagina that are due to damp heat.

Xu Lingtai once said the following about coptis: "Bitter is the nutritive essence of fire, and the nature of bitter materials should usually be hot. Coptis, however, is extremely bitter and therefore comes out to be extremely cold. It thus contains the nutritive essence of fire and the functional nature of water. It is for this reason that it can resolve disorders that involve a chaotic interaction between fire and water. Eye pain that is caused by upflaring hot qi, injuries to the canthus of the eye, excessive tearing, and unclear vision, all of these are damp heat symptoms manifesting in the upper warmer. Intestinal grime syndrome, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, all of these are damp heat symptoms manifesting in the middle warmer. Swelling and pain in the vagina is a damp heat symptom manifesting in the lower warmer. In other words, coptis can remove damp heat from all three burning spaces of the body. It should be noted that herbs that remove dampness usually increase heat, and the ones that dispel heat usually cannot eliminate dampness. It is only coptis that can dry damp by virtue of its bitter flavor, and at the same time eliminate heat by virtue of its cold quality."

Zou Run'an once said: "The classic herbal source book, *An unofficial Biography of Renowned Physicians* (Mingyi Bielu), states that coptis regulates the stomach and thickens the intestines. These differentiated actions should therefore not be lumped together in the generic phrase 'coptis thickens both the stomach and intestines' (as has become the standard terminology in most later books)." This is very meaningful, because both the stomach and the intestines have a greasy lining protecting and assisting them throughout the process of sliding down the dregs. If there is damp heat present within this lining, then it begins to disintegrate and becomes discarded along with the dregs. This is what has been called intestinal grime syndrome in ancient times, and what was later referred to as intestinal scrape diarrhea or intestinal filth. The stomach body is wide enough for the processing of filthy and impure substances, and even though they might stay there for a while, they usually do not scrape off the lining. Therefore, the only measure that needs to be executed in order to protect the stomach from an injury to its borders is harmonization, and that is where the term 'to regulate' has its origins. The intestines, on the other hand, are extremely windy, and in their pockets damp qi can more easily accumulate. Consequently, heat due to the damp obstruction can easily develop, along with a disintegration of the protective lining due to the local stagnation of heat. Once these obstructions are removed, the cause for the disintegration has been eliminated and the thinned intestinal walls can now become thick again, therefore the term 'to thicken.' This is an excellent example for the highly precise nature of ancient medical terminology; not one word is superfluous.

When used in the treatment of eye disorders, coptis does not necessarily have to be taken internally. Whenever I treat distention and pain in the eyes, I usually steep coptis in water, heat up the liquid and apply some to the afflicted eye with a cotton ball. I generally continue the treatment until the person feels

a bitter sensation in the throat, at which point the distention and pain tends to decrease immediately. For the treatment of red, swollen, and painful eyes, moreover, I grind coptis into a fine powder and mix it with sesame oil. Then I have the person hold up this mixture to his/her nose and sniff in the scent, and this method also tends to work right away.



## LICORICE (GANCAO)

*Glycyrrhiza uralensis* Fisch.

The functional nature of licorice is slightly warming, and its nourishing essence extremely sweet. It is the herb which assimilates earth qi in the most complete manner. Everything grows from earth, and everything returns to earth for transformation. Therefore, licorice can neutralize the effects of all toxins.

Sweet stands for harmonizing action; licorice thus has the ability to regulate and harmonize the spleen and stomach. Sweet also stands for moderating action; licorice thus builds the spleen and stomach without tonifying it too intensely. If the herb is honey baked, its tonifying aspect becomes pronounced, and many formula books therefore advise against taking it in cases with abdominal distention. The unprocessed herb, however, particularly if ground and taken as a powder, has an almost opposite effect by disinhibiting both stool and urine and eliminating abdominal distention. The raw herb is also indicated in cases of boils and furuncles; a decoction of the raw herb would also work for this condition.

Since licorice bark bears a trace of red, the herb also enters the heart. Zhang Zhongjing's Pinellia and Licorice Combination (Gancao Xiexin Tang), therefore, uses scutellaria, coptis, and pinellia to purge "pi" [a subjective feeling of discomfort] from the epigastric region, while at the same time employing licorice to protect

the heart and to prevent that the body's chief of staff becomes injured by the affects of the other herbs.

In the context of Gypsum Combination (Baihu Tang), the sweet and modulating function of licorice is utilized to moderate the purging effect of the cold herbs in the formula. In the context of Licorice, Aconite, and Ginger Pulse Combination (Tongmai Tang) and Aconite and G.L. Combination (Sini Tang), the sweet and modulating function of licorice is utilized to moderate the upwardly mobile tendency of the hot herbs in the formulas.

In combination with peony, licorice can nourish yin, relieve central burner aggravation, and control pain. In Zhang Zhongjing's work, therefore, we find Peony and Licorice Combination (Shaoyao Gancao Tang). When paired with dry ginger, licorice is capable of holding on to the warming power of the ginger, drawing out its effect over a prolonged period of time. Zhang Zhongjing, therefore, devised Licorice and Ginger Combination (Gancao Ganjiang Tang). In combination with pinellia and asarum, licorice can moderate the pungent and numbing essence of these herbs, causing them to affect the body in a milder and more harmonious manner. Licorice combines well with all other herbs, with the exception of *euphorbia pekinensis* (daji), *daphne* (yuanhua), *euphorbia kansui* (gansui), and *sargassum* (haizao), with which it is incompatible.

There is an ancient treatment method for the early stage of pulmonary abscess: decocting 4 liang (120g) of the single herb licorice and drinking it. The effect has been said to be very reliable.

With the basic gist of this treatment in mind, I regularly prescribe raw licorice for the early stage of pulmonary tuberculosis, or for bronchial phlegm exhibiting a slightly foul odor. For these conditions, 1 ½ qian (5g) of the powdered herb should be taken three times

daily, along with a decoction made from 3 qian (10g) of lonicera. I consistently achieve good results with this method.

If the lung condition is chronic, or if there is puss or blood in the phlegm, it is possible to prescribe a daily dose of 3 qian (10g) of licorice powder, 1 ½ qian (5g) of fritillaria powder, and 1 ½ qian (5g) of notoginseng powder, again to be washed down with lonicera decoction. If there is heat sensation involved, it is possible to add several qian of scrophularia to the decoction. The type of licorice that should be used for these conditions is called “fen gancao,” characterized by its yellow bark, and its neutral and non-warming function. This type of licorice is most suitable for use in anti-toxin and fire clearing formulas.

During the first month of winter in 1919, there was a cholera epidemic in Liaoning, and the minister of finance, Liu Haiquan, called on physicians to devise and publish formulas in the newspaper to help relieve the suffering. I created two formulas and made them available in the paper. One was Rescue and Revival Pellet (Jijiu Huisheng Dan), composed of a mixture of powdered licorice (1 qian, 3g), cinnabar powder (1 ½ qian, 4.5g), borneol (3 fen, 1g), and menthol (2 fen, 0.7g). The daily dose was to be divided into three portions, to be taken in half hour intervals. The other formula was Protect Life and Prevent Epidemic Treasure Pellet (Weisheng Fangyi Baodan), composed of fine licorice powder (10 liang, 300g), fine asarum powder (1 ½ liang, 45g), fine angelica powder (1 liang, 30g), menthol (4 qian, 12g), and borneol (2 qian, 6g), to be mixed with water, manufactured into small pills the size of dryandra seeds, and coated with 3 liang (90g) of cinnabar; 80-120 pills were to be taken each time. Both formulas have saved many lives in Liaoning.

Another time, Shi Hanren's friend Yuan Shuangpu, the magistrate of Gucheng District in Hebei, wrote me to ask for a cholera formula.

Again, I suggested these two formulas to him. He ended up using Rescue and Revival Pellet, and reported that 260 doses of the remedy cured 260 people. And when there was another cholera epidemic during the following year, Mr. Yuan had six large batches of Protect Life and Prevent Epidemic Treasure Pellet made up, curing a thousand people. At the same time, he publicized this formula throughout the surrounding districts, where even more people were saved. Licorice features prominently in both of these formulas, demonstrating the type of effect that this herb has.

I should emphasize that this high degree of effectiveness is primarily due to the fact that the herb was administered in powdered, unprocessed form, without having been honey baked or boiled. In general, all epidemic diseases are due to the spread of toxic qi, and if we use licorice in its unprocessed form, then its anti-toxin effect will be pronounced.

One can further say that if processed, the tonic properties of licorice become enhanced, while if left unprocessed, it not only tonifies the center, but also disinhibits. It is therefore appropriate for the treatment of cholera. The theory that raw licorice has a disinhibiting effect can easily be proven in clinical practice.

I once treated the child of a Mr. Wang from Kaiyuan. Endowed with a weak spleen and stomach, the boy suffered from serious indigestion and kept throwing up his food. Also, his urination was inhibited, producing edema in virtually every part of his body, as well as a large and distended belly. I prescribed fine licorice powder, to be mixed with an equal amount of the Western drug Pepsinum. I had him take one qian (3g) of this mixture three times per day. After several days, the vomiting stopped, the urination returned to normal, and the swelling and distention disappeared.

Another time, my friend Wei Ziba from Tieling organized a business meeting in

Tongliao County. They produce a lot of licorice over there, and Ziba made it a habit to put some licorice in his teapot every day, pour hot water over it, and drink it like a tea. After about ten days, he noticed that both his stool and his urination started to get quite busy, and he stopped drinking the licorice water. When he saw me later, he related this to me and asked why an herb that is usually thought of as a tonic can disinhibit urination and bowel movements. I answered: "When cooked or processed, licorice tonifies; when used unprocessed, it disinhibits. Even though you put the herb into a teapot with hot water, it never got cooked. Therefore, its effect was still close to the raw herb, and therefore could disinhibit."

Yet another time, my student Li Zibo told the story of a child suffering from abdominal pain. The problem was treated by applying an umbilicus warming plaster, but soon thereafter ulceration occurred at the application site. The doctor said that frequent consumption of licorice decoction could cure the problem. Because the patient drank too much of the licorice decoction, urination became inhibited and symptoms of edema and abdominal distention emerged. He therefore switched to another doctor who also was not able to help. The boy lived close to the train station, where there were always wagons loaded with licorice. His sister often brought some of it home so they could chew on it, and as this became a daily habit, his edema and distention gradually disappeared.

These examples demonstrate that the functions of unprocessed licorice and processed or cooked licorice are fundamentally different. When working with licorice, therefore, shouldn't we always consider the raw or processed/cooked state of the herb as an integral part of the prescription?



## ACONITE (FUZI)

Aconiti tuber

The nutritive essence of aconite is pungent, and its functional nature is intensely warming. It is a prime herb to tonify and assist the body's original yang. Its force can both ascend and descend, and reach the deepest crevices of the body's interior as well as disperse its affect to the surface. Due to these properties, aconite can resolve all situations of chronic and deeply entrenched cold that has coagulated in the organ networks, inhibited the tendons and bones, and obstructed the channels, collaterals, and blood vessels. It can open up and restore proper movement in all of these crucial passage ways.

Within its action of warming and opening, aconite also has a strong astringing affect. It can therefore be used to treat profuse sweating with signs of yang-collapse (profuse sweating should always be differentiated into yang-collapse and yin-collapse; the yang-collapse patient exhibits a cold body, while yin-collapse cases exhibit signs of heat, and the importance of distinguishing the two in clinical practice cannot be emphasized enough. If there is yang-collapse with cold, use aconite with cornus and ginseng; if there is yin-collapse with heat, use raw rehmannia with cornus and ginseng), diarrhea due to intestinal cold, yang deficiency in the lower warmer accompanied by signs of escaping yin, and cold essence syndrome manifesting in the form of spontaneous seminal emission. Also, the ancient sources state that aconite is an excellent material to tonify the ministerial fire that lodges within the vital gate of life; it is this strong boosting affect on both the imperial and ministerial fire which accounts for its ability to cause the heart to beat faster.

Once it is planted, the aconite root will develop lateral offsprings in the course of one year. In this fashion the original aconite seedling turns into what is called wutou in pharmacological terms. Wutou is not as hot

as the more commonly used offspring (fuzi), but its ability to open up the body's passage ways is stronger. It is for this reason that the classic source book *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* recommends Wu-tou Combination (Wutou Tang) for severe and migratory arthralgia; for heart pain that radiates toward the back, it recommends Wu-tou and Kaolin Formula (Wutou Chishizhi Wan); and for intense abdominal pain it recommends Wu-tou Formula (Wutou Jian) or Wu-tou and Cinnamon Combination (Wutou Guizhi Tang).

If the aconite root is planted, but does not produce any offsprings, and if it is only the original root that grows--very much like a clove of garlic that grows bigger by itself without producing any seedlings—then the final medicinal product is called tianxiong. Since tianxiong did not have to divide its power, its warming and tonifying affect is particularly strong, and it is for this reason that among the three aconite products it is this one that has been labeled “xiong” [fierce]. When trying to find tianxiong in contemporary pharmacies, one should look for the pieces of black fuzi that are larger and a little darker than the regular fuzi. Since the power of tianxiong is greater, its color is usually different from regular aconite. Fuzi, wutou, and tianxiong are all incompatible with pinellia.

Chen Xiuyuan once described aconite in the following way:

Aconite can relieve all types of cold damp conditions. Particularly Zhang Zhongjing's method of using aconite to relieve cold damp disorders is amazing. Yang is the force behind our procreation and growth, and if yang collapses (wang yang), we will die. The pictogram that is most often pronounced 'wang' can actually be read in two ways: one being 'wang,' meaning to escape; that is how the term is being used in the phrase 'chu

wang' [escape outwards] in the ancient text, *Autumn and Spring Annals*.

The other possibility is to pronounce it as 'wu,' meaning nothing, and this is how Confucius used the term in his *Analects* when he said 'there is something because there is nothing,' or Mencius when he wrote that there was 'nothing superfluous.'

In a situation where diaphoretics were prescribed incorrectly, bringing about profuse sweating and yang-collapse, Zhang Zhongjing recommends Aconite and G.L. Combination (Sini Tang), Vitality Combination (Zhenwu Tang), or other remedies of this kind. In cases where excessive vomiting or diarrhea is causing markedly cold extremities, Zhang Zhongjing recommends Licorice, Aconite, and Ginger Pulse Combination (Tongmai Sini Tang) or Ginger and Aconite Combination (Jiang Fu Tang) to urgently address this situation.

In case the surface yang of the taiyang system floats precariously on the outermost surface producing fever, aconite has the ability to link it with the astringing energy of the shaoyin system and the heat symptoms will naturally disappear. If the inner core of the shaoyin network is diseased, aconite can entice the energy to come up from below and make the pulse reappear; it opens up the entire body and eliminates the cold crisis.

In combination with the bitter peony and the sweet licorice aconite can tonify deficiency; in combination with the bitter peony and the bland hoelen it can warm and stabilize--with a wondrous force that can not be emphasized enough.

I would like to note that Zhang Zhongjing's use of aconite seems to differ from the way that the herb was first introduced in *Shen Nong's Herbal Classic*. Does this mean that he made up these properties of aconite? The fact is, the *Herbal Classic* states that the nutritive essence

and the qi of aconite are warming and intensely toxic, and these words appear to have alerted Zhongjing to the intense affect of aconite. “Warm” means that it contains the energy of wind wood in the East; the extreme of warm, moreover, is hot, and this is what is meant in the Inner Canon when it states that “above, shaoyin is ruled by the imperial fire.” Pungent is the flavor of dry metal in the West; the extreme of dry is moist, and it is this principle that the Inner Canon refers to as “use pungent flavors to moisten this condition.” The point is that if the functional nature of anything is carried to an extreme point, it will be toxic, and when it is so extreme that it cannot become intensified any more, then it is called intensely toxic. By looking at the label “intensely toxic” we know therefore that the warming affect and the pungentness of aconite is extreme.

Zhang Zhongjing has two ways to utilize the warming affect of aconite: one is to combine it with hoelen, peony, and licorice, the other with rehmannia and alisma. During the winter, the warming affect of aconite can be complemented with the heat of ginger and cinnamon, or the intensity of ephedra and asarum, but these combinations should be avoided during the summer months. There are, moreover, three classic ways to employ the pungentness of aconite: Cinnamon, Aconite, and Ginger Combination (Guizhi Fuzi Tang), Cinnamon, Aconite, and Ginger Minus Cinnamon Plus *Atractylodes* Combination (Guizhi Fuzi Qu Gui Jia Baizhu Tang), and Licorice and Aconite Combination (Gancao Fuzi Tang) are pungent and drying, designed to expel wind damp; Aconite Combination (Fuzi Tang), Peony, Licorice, and Aconite Combination (Shaoyao Gancao Fuzi Tang) are pungent and moistening to tonify the water organ; Leek, Ginger, and Aconite Combination (Baitong Tang), Licorice, Aconite, and Ginger Pulse Combination (Tongmai Sini Tang) plus Urine and Pig Gallbladder Combination (Renniao Zhudanzhi Tang) utilize the astringing quality of the autumn qi in the West, thus restoring and strongly stabilizing original yang.

Zou Runan described aconite in the following way:

Wutou represents the mother yin which is already depleted of the procreative force. Tianxiong represents the solitary yang which is unable to procreate by itself. Fuzi is the seedling of wutou and tianxiong, and thus contains both yin and yang. Since the process of procreation has already been completed in the mother yin, it is hollow inside and utilizes qi to get its affect. The solitary yang that is unable to procreate is solid inside and uses its essence to cause its affect. Qi is in charge of dispersing, essence is in charge of astringing and storing. The dispersing aspect can reach the pores at the body surface, and therefore treats situations of wind strike with aversion to wind, continuous sweating, and coughing. The astringing and storing aspect can reach the bones and tendons internally, and therefore treats migratory arthralgia, cramping, unfirm bones and tendons, and a heavy feeling in the body with an inability to walk. However, since the nutritive essence of both wutou and tianxiong is pungent and their functional nature intense, both materials are used in very much the same manner, such as dispelling damp obstruction due to wind cold or breaking up accumulations and noxious qi.

Fuzi contains the qi of both of these materials. It is solid on the inside, strong and firm on the outside, and grows by virtue of its qi rather than reliance on its mother plant. Therefore, disorders such as coughing due to wind cold above, masses and accumulations in the center, or atrophy, cramping, and knee pain below—there is not one of them that fuzi could not reach and cure. Because fuzi contains the essence of both wutou and tianxiong, and since

it can manifest the advantages of both, its use is much wider than any one of them.

One could ask why, since all yang things have a tendency to float upwards, aconite has the ability to entice fire downward. It may be useful in this context to borrow the image of two candles that are lighted with their lower ends put against each other. If the lower flame becomes extinguished, there will inevitably be a streak of thick smoke that rises upwards and enshrouds the upper candle. Consequently, part of the upper flame will bend down the smoke trail and light up the lower candle again. Since the nutritive essence of aconite is pungent and intense and its qi fiercely strong, and since it tends to work via its qi, its action can appropriately be compared to the smoke that rises after extinguishing a flame--both can entice the fire to return downwards and stabilize it. The only thing to worry about is that if the burning fuel down below is already exhausted and the fire has nowhere to return, then it could entice the upper flame to go rampant and flare out of control. We should thus be aware that if the burning fuel is spent the fire will gather, and if the fire gathers symptoms of upward steaming will invariably develop.

I once treated a young woman who suffered from a symptom complex characterized by fullness and stuffiness in the upper burner, restlessness, poor appetite, a hard, board-like tension around her umbilicus, and the absence of her menses for two months. Her pulse was fine and wiry on both sides. Zhongjing has said that a wiry pulse on both sides indicates cold, and that a wiry pulse on only one side is evidence of phlegm-rheum. Her pulse profile, therefore, suggested to me beyond doubt that there was cold rheum in the upper warmer, and that there was cold accumulation below. The restlessness was caused by the abundance of cold qi in the abdominal region, forcing the original yang to float up. I prescribed my own Regulate Rheum Decoction (Liyin Tang),

modifying it by removing cinnamon and adding 3 qian (9g) of aconite, and increasing the amount of peony to 5 qian (15g). After one dose the fullness and restlessness had completely disappeared. After one more dose, her appetite increased, and she felt that there was something very cold in her belly. I therefore decided to remove the peony and increase the aconite to 5 qian (15g). After that, I decreased the amount of dry ginger by half and kept increasing the aconite to 8 qian (24g). While the patient imbibed more than ten doses, she experienced bowel movements 4-5 times per day, excreting white colored cold accumulations. She continued to take one dose per day, until the cold accumulations had all been drained out, and after five days the frequent stools stopped naturally. After that I examined her pulse again and found a slippery pulse, particularly in the third [kidney] position, so I suspected that she was pregnant. I told her to stop taking the medicine for a while, and it turned out that she was indeed pregnant. So, even though aconite is usually said to harm the fetus, in this situation--even though the herb was taken in such high amounts and frequency--it appeared to have a stabilizing affect on the fetus.



## ATRACTYLODES (BAIZHU)

*Atractylodes Rhizoma*

The functional nature of atractylodes is warming and drying, and its qi is fragrant but not penetrating. Its nutritive essence is bitter and slightly sweet and pungent, accounting for its fortifying affect on the spleen and stomach, and its action of eliminating phlegm and controlling diarrhea. Atractylodes is an excellent herb to treat abdominal distention caused by spleen deficiency, thirst caused by spleen damp, and weakness--or if severe, pain--in the extremities caused by a dilapidated spleen.

In combination with cooling and moistening herbs, it can also tonify the lung. In combination with rising and dispersing herbs, it can regulate the liver. In combination with sedating herbs, it can nourish the heart. In combination with materials that moisten the yin, it can tonify the kidney system. Since it contains all the energetic properties of earth, atracylodes is a prime tonic for the physical aspect of post-natal nourishment. It therefore has a tonic affect on the metal, wood, water, and fire organ networks as well.

I once treated a woman who was 30-some years old. She had suffered from chronic diarrhea for six months, and no medicine seemed to help. Her pulse was weak and deficient, particularly in the middle (guan) position on the right. This indicated to me that her spleen/stomach system was deficient, and I decided to prescribe unprocessed atracylodes that were to be ground up, baked, and made into cookies by mixing the powder with 6 liang (180g) of cooked jujube meat and drying the dough in the oven. I had the patient eat those cookies as a frequent and carefully chewed snack, and the problem was cured before she had finished the batch.

Another woman came to me with excessive uterine bleeding in the aftermath of her period. For the last ten days she had taken all kinds of medicines, but nothing seemed to work and now she was in quite a critical state. When I examined her pulse, I found that it was floating and moderate, and that it disappeared when pressed down. When I inquired, I heard that she also suffered from indigestion and diarrhea. I knew then that her spleen/stomach system was extremely weak, resulting in an inhibition of the transformative and containing functions of the middle burner, and consequently an instability and leakage in the transformative process of the lower burner. I therefore decided to add 1 liang (30g) of atracylodes and 1 liang (30g) of nei-chin to a variety of standard herbs that control bleeding, and the bleeding stopped

after one dose. For purposes of stabilizing her condition, I had her take several more doses.

A young, unmarried girl once came to see me for severe leg pain. The pain was so bad that she could barely walk. I treated her with Build and Move the Spleen Decoction (Jianyun Tang: astragalus, codonopsis, tang-kuei, ophiopogon, anemarrhena, frankincense, myrrh, zedoaria, sparganium). The following year, her old problem flared up again, and this time she was also suffering from lumbar pain. The previous treatment failed to work this time. When I examined her pulse, I found that the middle position on the right was extremely soft and weak, and when I heard that her appetite was decreased, I used atracylodes (18g), tang-kuei (6g), citrus (6g), magnolia bark (4.5g), frankincense (4.5g), and myrrh (4.5g). After taking this, her appetite increased, and after a little bit more than 10 days, her leg and lumbar pains had disappeared completely.

Another time, an old woman of more than 60 years of age came to me with immobilizing leg pain. At night the pain became so bad that she was unable to sleep. Her left hand pulse was large and wiry, and her right hand pulse was large and floating. On a deeper level, the pulse appeared to have force, but then again, no real force. I inquired whether there were any cool or hot sensations in the epigastric region, and when I heard that there were none, I could be sure that this was not a fire pulse. Its large and floating quality was due to a severe deficiency of the spleen and stomach causing the true qi to escape outwards. Its large and wiry quality was due to a disharmony in the liver/gallbladder, with exuberant wood invading earth. I treated this woman with the same formula as the previous case, and added several qian (6-12g) of each of ginseng, peony, and cornus. In this manner, I tonified the underlying spleen/stomach deficiency, complemented it with herbs controlling the liver/gallbladder exuberance, and the problem was cured after several doses.

A 22 year old patient was suffering from severe asthma. His pulse was rapid, up to seven beats per breath, but the prescription of yin tonics plus herbs that specifically aid qi absorption showed no results. Then I began to add several qian (6-12g) of atractylodes to the formula. When the decoction process had just been finished, his asthma reached a climactic point and he was unable to take the medicine. So we ended up having to warm up the liquid three times and then force him to drink it. After one dose, the asthma decreased, and after several doses the problem was gone. Ever since, I have often employed this method to treat intense cases of asthma, and have usually achieved good results.

Another young person was suffering from a frequent sensation of dryness in the throat, and the drinking of water could not bring relief. When I examined his pulse I found that it was feeble, weak, slow, and soft, so I thought that this should be interpreted as cold damp afflicting the spleen, resulting in the spleen's failure to transport and execute its ascending action in the process of energy transformation. I decided to use Four Major Herb Combination (Si Junzi Tang) plus dry ginger and cinnamon. I used atractylodes particularly heavily, in a dose of 1 liang (30g) or more, and the sensation of constant thirst disappeared after one dose.



## HOELEN (FULING/FUSHEN)

Poria

The nutritive essence of the different types of hoelen is bland, and its functional nature is neutral. It is an excellent substance to regulate the spleen/stomach. This is because the spleen/stomach network belongs to the earth phase, and the original flavor of earth is bland (Xu Lingtai has elaborated upon the earth phase's affinity for bland flavors in great detail). The Inner Canon (Neijing) had already mentioned

that “bland flavors enter the stomach;” also, the Five Texts on Observing Pliantness (Shenrou Wushu), inspired by the Inner Canon, has stated that bland flavors nourish the spleen yin.

The functional nature of fuling transforms stomach phlegm-rheum into useful body fluids, which then can be transported to the lung via the spleen, and finally descend to the bladder along the water way of the triple burner. Therefore, it is the main substance that is used for the purpose of percolating damp and disinhibiting phlegm. Its function, moreover, is of a purely benevolent nature--there is always a tonifying aspect within its draining action. So, even though it is a percolating and disinhibiting substance, it can actually bank up earth and engender metal and thus have a beneficial affect on both the spleen/stomach and the lung networks.

It is significant that hoelen receives the superfluous qi of the pine root, and that it remains hidden underneath the earth without appearing at the surface in the form of sprouting growth. It is therefore an excellent material to astringe floating heart qi and calm both the hun and po spirits. At the same time, it can eliminate palpitations by draining water-rheum from the region below the heart. For these reasons, it is also considered to be an important herb addressing problems of the heart channel. Its subterraneously hidden quality, moreover, can turn outwardly escaping water qi turn around and entice it downwards, thus counteracting excessive sweat loss. Therefore, it is also an important remedy to control sweating. The term fushen refers to the type of hoelen that is unprocessed and still embraces the root branches of the pine tree. In comparison to fuling, fushen has a stronger nourishing affect on the heart.

Liu Qianjiang once said the following about hoelen: “Hoelen is really a material coagulation of the spirit of the old pine tree, a tree about which Lu Ziyao has once said that it does not

drive out its essence through and out its leaves, but that it spirals it down into the opposite direction, all the way down into its heels--very much comparable to the energetic breath of a Taoist master. So, if one only looks at this herb as a damp disinhibiting substance, then this is too bad. The pine tree does not become exhausted and sheds its needles during the icy winter months; is that not proof that it receives the energetic quality of true yang? The qi of the pine tree qi enters the earth, where after a long time it forms hoelen. The material quality of hoelen, therefore, is formed by yin qi, while it has been conceived by yang. The Taoist hermit and herbalist Tao Hongjing pointed out that hoelen never rots and is devoured by parasites, and that if placed under the earth for thirty years, it will not even change its color. Is not all of this evidence of the marvelous nature of hoelen?"

If prepared in decoction form, the big chunks into which hoelen is usually cut will still not be thoroughly cooked after having been on the fire all day. Hoelen should therefore be cut into thin slices, or be crushed into a coarse powder. Only then can the decocting force penetrate all the way to the center.

My friend Zhu Zhixi once related the following story to me: "In Sheng County [in Zhejiang Province] the earth is massive and builds up to form many mountains, including one called Gexikou in the Eastern part of the county. At this place a layer of small pointed mountains pile up into a wide mountain screen. At a place close to where the water rushes down from its peaks, a Mr. Wu has chosen to settle his clan. Now there are about 40-50 families living there, who all make a living by cultivating hoelen. Their method of cultivating hoelen is secret, and is not even related to visiting relatives. All of the hoelen that is sold in the herb shops of Sheng County originates there. During spring time, Mr. Wu's daughter in law fell ill. One month post-partum she contracted a high fever accompanied by thirst but no real desire for

drink, uncontrollable sweating, and palpitations and insomnia. I was asked to treat her. Upon examination, the patient's face appeared red and the pulse was slippery, so I immediately made up a prescription composed of licorice, ophiopogon, lopatherum, alpinia, wheat, and jujube. The remedy was decocted and imbibed, but failed to produce any results. So, next I used Zizyphus Combination (Suanzaoren Tang) without the cnidium and plus wheat, but this method also did not work. Then I used Ginseng and Longan Combination (Guipi Tang) plus oyster shell, dragon bone, and cornus, but again the patient failed to respond. At this point I really felt that I had run out of options. All of the sudden somebody suggested to use some "tonic herbs" to approach this problem. I thought that this idea was quite unfounded and that the person did not know what he was talking about, but I kept up an encouraging facade. This happened at night time when everybody was about to go to bed. When I got up the next morning, the old man came running to report that his daughter in law 'had been cured last night by tonic herbs.' I was not quite sure whether to believe him or not, especially since I could not figure out what it was exactly that he referred to as 'tonic herbs.' So the old man brought over the decocted dregs for inspection, and there at the bottom of the pot were 4-5 liang (120-150g) of hoelen. Eh, hoelen--why on earth did he refer to this as a tonic? I was dumbfounded for a moment. After composing myself and pondering this case for a while, I concluded that any disease is curable as long as there is a thread of life left in a person. Hoelen is indeed traditionally considered to be a prime remedy to treat palpitations, while at the same time being a prime herb for the treatment of excessive sweat loss. Zhang Zhongjing, for instance, used to treat patients suffering from cold injury accompanied by symptoms of sweating and thirst with Hoelen Five Combination (Wuling San), and without sweating with Hoelen and Licorice Combination (Fuling Gancao Tang). Or for situations in which the

cold injury is over and palpitations appear, he also recommends Hoelen and Licorice Combination. From these classical examples we can deduct that in situations of palpitations and excessive sweating--which has dried up the internal heart fluids--the kidney water rushes upwards into the void, and when it enters the heart palpitations occur. Since no other herbs can control this particular type of water, hoelen must be used to settle it. The indicator symptom for this condition are palpitations accompanied by insomnia--the insomnia being specifically caused by the palpitations, and the palpitations having been caused by excessive sweating. Also, there was the high fever, the thirst without a strong desire to drink, and the slippery pulse--all of these are signs of water qi. In this case it was lucky that the patient came from a family that planted hoelen [and knows how to use it], otherwise there would have been uncontrollable sweating culminating in yang-collapse, water qi intimidating the heart, and the final extinguishing of the vital flame, and we don't have to conduct complex speculations to figure out who would have been blamed. So, I admitted my mistake and departed."

Looking at this narrative of Dr. Zhu, I find it truly admirable that he exposes his own mistake for the sake of providing reference materials to his fellow physicians. Also, the way in which he expounds the classics and is able to grasp the deep meaning behind Zhang Zhongjing's usage of hoelen and illuminate it for us attests to the goodness of his heart. A selfless person's descendants are bound to flourish, by the way; the good doctor's son is called Yuxiang, an energetic young man who is well on his way to become an eminent physician. On occasion, he and I exchange letters. His upbringing is truly priceless.

One time I received a letter from Cuilanting in Tianmen County in Hubei Province. It reported how in the year 1930 the wife of Mr. Li, the commanding officer of the 48th regiment, had suffered from extreme dizziness,

palpitations, vomiting of sputum, occasional sensations of qi rushing upwards, and loss of consciousness. The military doctor chose to treat her with substances that calm the shen, but to no avail. Then she took the remedies prescribed by altogether more than ten doctors. She failed to respond to any of them, and by now she was in a truly critical state. The writer diagnosed her pulse, finding it floating and forceless, and it looked as if she was not able to take any more medicine. He remembered that in my explanation of hoelen, contained in volume four of my book, I had introduced the heavy use of hoelen, and he thought that this method might be able to cure this problem. So he prescribed one liang (30g) of hoelen, and after only five minutes after drinking the decoction the symptoms began to clear up. He immediately decocted the dregs again and gave the liquid to her, and her shen turned around and she became fully conscious. After taking several doses, the disease was completely cured. So, if you happen to encounter this symptom complex in the future, you can always approach it with this method.



## PINELLIA (BANXIA)

*Pinelliae tuber*

The nutritive essence of pinellia is pungent, its functional nature is warming, and it is toxic. All extremely pungent herbs contain the storing and descending momentum of autumn metal. Therefore, pinellia can pull things down, a function that makes it the prime material to descend stomach qi and calm the penetrating channel. Therefore, it can control vomiting and drain phlegm that is lodged in the lung and stomach downwards, while at the same time enhancing qi absorption and stabilizing dyspnea. For the same reasons, it is a good herb to treat counterflow of stomach qi manifesting in symptoms of blood ejection or nosebleed.

A problem, however, that one usually encounters in the use of pinellia is the fact that most pharmacies decoct the tuber in alum to counteract its toxicity. Because pinellia is usually over-processed, its naturally pungent flavor disappears and even turns into alum flavor, which may induce nausea rather than treating it. Even the so called soaked pinellia (qing baxia) contains alum, which may be used when the disinhibition of damp phlegm is desired. When it comes to controlling vomiting, blood ejection, and nosebleed, however, then the use of pinellia that has been processed in this manner is contraindicated. Whenever I encounter these symptoms, I always make sure that I use the type of pinellia that has only been washed in warm water several times. Since its power decreases during the washing process, I usually use larger amounts.

Since I am quite dissatisfied with the way that pinellia is usually processed by local pharmacies, I have made it a habit to get several pound of the unprocessed herb during spring and autumn time and soak it in hot water. I continuously soak the material for ten days, changing the water every day, then I cut the pinellia tubers in half, and then I place them back into the pot, adding plenty of cold water and bringing it to a boil. Once boiling, I immediately take the herb out of the pot along with the liquid, wait until the water cools off, and then dry it for future use.

Once there was a little boy from the neighboring village; his name was Wang and he was aged about twelve or thirteen. When he woke up one morning he suddenly felt paralyzed on one side. His family members were too poor to buy medicine, so I gave them some of my self-processed pinellia, had them grind it into powder and give the boy 1 ½ qian (4.5g) twice a day along with ginger soup. After about twenty days his problem had disappeared. This affect is due to the fact that the pungent flavor is particularly strong in my self-processed pinellia. So it can not only

disinhibit phlegm, but it also has the affect of relieving paralysis that has been caused by wind cold and damp pathogens.

The Japanese doctor Notsu Takeo relates the following: “The British military health official Mr. Alepp was suffering from a disorder involving chronic vomiting, and had not been able to ingest any food for a long time. His brother was treating him in cooperation with the American Dr. Ningmahr, but the vomiting could not be brought under control. Therefore, they came to me. At the time, they already considered the patient a certain death candidate, and they were only going to give me a single shot at trying to save him. Dr. Ningmahr and the other doctor informed me about the case and their treatment in great detail. After that, I told the two doctors: ‘I have an idea, why don’t we try it?’ I departed and after consulted various Kanpo manuals, I made up Minor Pinellia and Hoelen Combination (Xiao Banxia Jia Fuling Tang), sealed it in a bottle, and had the patient take it. After he had imbibed this decoction several times the miracle occurred, and after several days he had completely recovered. To this date, pinellia infusions are a popular anti-vomiting remedy that are fashionable at our medical schools, as well as at hospitals and clinics.”

Note: For this particular case it would have been good to use Major Pinellia Combination (Da Banxia Tang) plus hematite. Since the patient has vomited for a long time, his fluids and qi have been harmed, and the ginseng in that formula can generate fluids and tonify qi; the hematite is particularly affective in draining pathogens downward. If there is heat, one can add asparagus. If there is no self-processed pinellia available, one can use the steeped type of pinellia (qing banxia), use it heavily to about one liang (30g), and decoct it after washing off the alum.

## TANG-KUEI (DANGGUI)

*Angelicae radix*

The nutritive essence of tang-kuei is sweet and slightly pungent; its qi is fragrant, its sap is rich, and its functional nature is warming. It is the main herb to produce and vitalize blood. It is also known to open up and disinhibit the body's qi layer, enticing both qi and blood to return to where they belong, thus its name "dang gui" (return to where it belongs).

The force of tang-kuei is rising (due to its strong and warming qi), but it can also descend (due to its strong and pungent flavor). Internally, it can moisten the organs and bowels (because its sap is rich and sweet), and externally it can reach the muscle surface (because its flavor is pungent and its function warming). It has the ability to moisten the dryness of lung metal, and it is this action which accounts for the classic statement in Shenong's Herbal that it treats coughing due to qi counterflow. It can smooth aggravation of liver wood, and this is why the formula Tang-kuei and Peony Combination (Danggui Shaoyao San) from the classic compendium Essentials from the Golden Cabinet is indicated for all kinds of female abdominal pain. It can tonify spleen blood, and therefore it has a moistening effect on the tissues and muscles. It can generate the new but it can also transform the stagnating old, and therefore it can treat numbness and pain in the entire body, as well as painful boils and carbuncles. It can move blood yet at the same time control bleeding, and therefore it can be used for the vomiting of blood, nosebleed (best to fry it with vinegar to emphasize its descending affect), or blood in the stool or urine. Also, it moistens the bowels and disinhibits urination. In sum, it can be used in all situations where there is evidence of blood deficiency or blood dryness or depletion of the nutritive ying layer. Only in situations of taxation fatigue accompanied by profuse sweating and diarrhea should the use of tang-kuei be avoided.

It should be pointed out here that although the functional nature of tang-kuei is warming, it can also be used in situations of blood deficiency heat. This is because it can produce blood and thus moisten yin, and since it can moisten yin, it can also reduce heat. Its ability to disperse the surface is weak, but it is still an excellent remedy to dispel wind, since wind most often causes blood obstruction after invading the body. So if the blood is set in motion, the obstruction clears and the wind disappears naturally. In particular, tang-kuei is a definite must in post-partum situations accompanied by seizures that have been brought on by an external wind invasion. This is because post-partum seizures are usually caused by a combination of external wind and internal blood deficiency (i.e., deficient blood being unable to nourish the tendons). Since tang-kuei can both vitalize the blood and dispel wind, and produce blood to tonify the underlying deficiency, I always treat problems of this nature by heavily employing tang-kuei (1 liang [30g] or more), and sparingly adding a couple of wind dispersing herbs to assist it. This method usually works instantly.

I remember the case of a young, emaciated woman who came to me because her menstrual flow had decreased over the last couple of months, and now there was merely a little dribbling. Since at the time I was still a newcomer to the field of medicine and did not dare to use complex formulas, I prescribed 8 qian (24g) of the single herb tang-kuei, with the result that her next period arrived in regular fashion. This case clearly demonstrates the blood producing power of tang-kuei.

Another case I remember is a forty-some year old man who suffered from urinary bleeding. At first, he was able to cure himself of the affliction by decocting one liang (30g) of tang-kuei in wine. Only later, when the problem reoccurred and the old method did not work did he come to see me. I prescribed fifty kernels of brucea, to be taken with white rock sugar

dissolved in water, and the problem was soon cured. So, it was the same person with the same problem, yet his case demonstrates that a formula that has helped before may not always work again. In this particular case, the hot/cold ratio was probably different the second time. In any case, this is an example that demonstrates that tang-kuei can also control bleeding.



## PEONY (SHAOYAO)

*Peoniae radix*

The nutritive essence of peony is bitter and slightly sour, and its functional nature is cooling and moist (when boiled by itself, it will produce a very rich decoction). Therefore, it is an excellent herb to moisten the yin and nourish the blood, and to reduce fever and expell restlessness. It can astringe heat that has floated into the upper warmer, entice it downwards, and drain it via the urine. It is, therefore, the main remedy for yin deficiency heat accompanied by disinhibited urination.

Due to its sour essence, it can enter the liver to produce liver blood. Due to its bitter essence, it can enter the gallbladder and boost bile production. Due to its sour and bitter essence as well as its cooling nature, it is an excellent herb to purge heat from the liver/gallbladder, eliminating tenesmus in dysentery patients (tenesmus is always due to downpour of liver/gallbladder heat) or treating eye diseases that involve swelling and pain (the liver has its opening in the eyes).

In combination with tang-kuei and rehmannia, peony can produce new blood. In combination with persica and carthamus, it can dissolve blood stasis. In combination with licorice, it can harmonize qi and blood, and is excellent for pain control. In combination with bamboo skin, it controls the blood ejection. In combination with aconite, it is excellent for astringing

escaping original yang and enticing it back to its lower warmer residence. Its force is moderate, however, and it must be used heavily before it begins to produce results.

There are two kinds of peony: white peony and red peony. The white kind is of superior quality, therefore the prescriptions in most formula books recommend white peony. For the purpose of removing blood stasis, however, the red variety is better. It is often used for boils and furuncles, since it can transform the stagnating blood that is usually produced by a toxic heat process and thus prevent suppuration.

Peony is cultivated in the South, and the best kind is produced in Hangzhou. Its color is white, bearing a trace of red that is particularly obvious on the skin. Because both the white and the red intermingle, the plant's ability to regulate both qi and blood is outstanding. Red peony is produced in the three provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang in the North, where it practically grows on every mountain. Its flesh and skin are both red. It is an extremely coarse plant, with roots like those of a mountain weed, and Zhang Yin'an and Chen Xiuyuan doubted that this could be the root of the delicate peony flower. I myself kept questioning this along with them, until I had the opportunity to see for myself and dispel all doubts. The leaves and flowers of the red peony plant are small, and its blossom formed by only one petal that is either bright red or purple. Yet regardless of the colour of the blossom, the colour of the root is always the same.

Once I saw a 15 or 16 year old boy who had come down with a warm disease during spring time. He was treated by a doctor, and the high fever had come down after about 8 or 9 days. But now he still felt a hot sensation in the heart, and suffered from palpitations, inhibited urination, and diarrhea. Since his pulse was deficient and rapid, it seemed that the external pernicious influence had not yet been

completely eliminated. I prescribed 2 liang (60g) of peony and 1 ½ liang (45g) of baked licorice, to be decocted so as to produce a large bowl of medicinal tea from which the patient was advised to drink steadily. Once he had finished the bowl, the problem was cured. In *Shen Nong's Herbal Classic* it is said that peony boosts qi; Zhang Yuansu, moreover, said that peony can control diarrhea. Judging by the results obtained in this case, both statements appear to be true. However, in order to achieve these results with peony, the herb should be assisted by baked licorice, otherwise the results will not be as marked.

Note: It would have actually been best for this problem to use my own formula, Moistening the Yin and Clear Dryness Decoction (Ziyin Qingzao Tang), which also contains 6 qian (18g) of peony, 3 qian (9g) of licorice, plus one liang (30g) each of discoria and talc. But since I had not yet designed this formula at the time, I prescribed only peony and licorice, and luckily it worked quite well.



## REHMANNIA (DIHUANG)

Rehmanniae radix

The functional nature of fresh rehmannia is cold. Its nutritive essence is slightly bitter and slightly sweet. It is an excellent substance to clear heat, cool blood, transform static blood, generate new blood, and treat blood ejection, nosebleed, blood in the stool or urine, or other conditions that are due to blood heat causing rampant blood movement. Rehmannia contains iron, and that is why it turns black as soon as it is dried or steamed. Its iron content is also partly responsible for the effect of generating and cooling blood.

Dry rehmannia (gan dihuang), called raw rehmannia (sheng dihuang) in contemporary herb shops, refers to the fresh herb after it

has been dried under the sun. Its functional nature is cool but not cold. It boosts the vessels, generates jing and marrow, brightens the eyes and clears the ears, and treats bone steaming and other forms of taxation heat, as well as kidney deficiency engendering heat symptoms.

Cooked rehmannia is produced by steaming fresh rehmannia in alcohol, drying it, and then repeating this process several times. Its functional nature is slightly warming, and its nutritive essence is sweet but not bitter. Cooked rehmannia is the major material to tonify the kidneys by enriching yin. It treats heat sensations due to yin deficiency, asthma due to yin deficiency and failure of the kidney to absorb qi, taxation cough, and kidney deficiency leading to an inhibition of the kidneys' filtering process, causing short and decreased urination and eventually edema. It also treats injury to the yin layer of all organ networks. Cooked rehmannia can tonify all of these deficiencies.

The functional nature of rehmannia enters the blood layer and not the qi layer. Feng Chuzhan, on the other hand, once claimed that it can strongly reinforce the source qi of the kidney. Many experts have expressed their dislike of this theory, but have been unable to completely deny this statement.

During the year 1893, I had to attend an examination in the capital, and during my stay there I was drinking wine at a certain gentleman's house. At his home lived a female servant, aged around thirty, who had been suffering from a warm disease for more than ten days. At this point, the situation looked life threatening, and they were about to carry her out on a stretcher. My co-diner Jia Peiqing mentioned that I was a doctor, and so the host asked me to take a look at her. Her symptom profile was the following: diarrhea during day and night, delirium (she did not respond when called by her name), and the pulse was rapid (up to seven beats per breath), but disappeared when pressed down. Consequently, I prescribed

2 liang (60g) of cooked rehmannia, one liang (30g) each of dioscorea and peony, and 3 qian (9g) of licorice. I had the herbs decocted into one large bowl of medicinal liquid and fed to her while it was still warm. By the time she had finished the bowl, the disease was cured.

Another time I treated the daughter of a Mr. Gao from Lin Village. The patient appeared constitutionally weak and emaciated. She had suffered from a warm disease for 5-6 days and now was afflicted by severe phlegm asthma. I used Minor Blue Dragon plus Gypsum Combination (Xiao Qinglong Jia Shigao Tang) and the asthma was immediately under control. This was around 8 o'clock in the evening, and during most of the night her situation remained stable. Between 3-5 o'clock in the morning, however, the asthma attacks reoccurred, and she felt overcome by panic and palpitations. When I examined her pulse again, I found it to be like hemp floating upon water: it disappeared when pressed down, and the rate was so fast that it was impossible to count. This was surely a sign of imminent exitus. I immediately wrote out a prescription containing 4 liang (120g) of cooked rehmannia, one liang (30g) of dioscorea, and 5 qian (15g) of wild codonopsis. However, since the closest pharmacy was out of wild codonopsis, and since there were no other types of ginseng that could have been used to replace it, I used the cooked rehmannia and the dioscorea by themselves. I had the patient take three doses in a single day, and after altogether 12 liang (360g) of rehmannia the disease was cured.

Ideally, for this particular symptom complex one should use Revival Decoction (Laifu Tang) which is recorded in vol.3/1 of my book, a formula that heavily uses 2 liang (60g) of cornus; when I was treating this patient, however, I had not yet created this formula. If I would have been able to use the wild codonopsis, by the way, the formula would not necessarily have worked better. In that case, however, the life-saving affect of the

formula would have been attributed to the wild codonopsis.

Another case was a relative of frontier-sergeant Li from Lin Village, an old woman of 70 years of age. She suffered from severe taxation asthma, and had not slept in a horizontal position for ten years. Every day, I had her decoct some cooked rehmannia and drink it frequently like a tea, and after several days she was able to lay down. Her relatives were perturbed by this turn of events, however, and thought that such a drastic change must be a bad omen. They did not realize that she had been cured.

Another patient was old woman Zhang who lived in near-by Longtan Village. She was 70 years old and had contracted a warm disease at the height of summer. After four or five days, her body was feverish, she felt dry and thirsty, and her spirit was dim and confused. There seemed to be no coating on her tongue, but in several places the skin of her tongue was black, dry, and shrunken. Her pulse was fine, rapid, and without force. Considering her high age and the symptom complex involved, it seemed like a situation where a doctor should decline treatment. Not knowing quite what to do, I pondered her case for a while and finally wrote out two formulas, one being Ginseng and Gypsum Combination With Dioscorea Replacing Oryza (Baihu Jia Renshen Yi Shanyao Dai Gengmi Tang), the other one consisting of 2 liang (60g) of cooked rehmannia, 1 liang (30g) of each of dioscorea and lycium fruit, 5 qian (15g) of gelatin, and 4 egg yolks that were to be added after the decoction process. The formulas were to be decocted into two large bowls, from which the patient had to take alternating sips while the liquid was still warm. By the time she had finished both bowls the disease was cured.

Another case I remember is the five year old son of Hou Shouping, the secretary to the provincial governor in Mukden (Shenyang).

He had been given too much cooling and draining herbs, and was now suffering from slow onset infantile convulsion, that is a cold stomach manifesting in vomiting and diarrhea, frequent convulsions, a dim and confused spirit, and upwardly turned eyeballs--truly signs of imminent crisis. I prescribed 2 liang (60g) of cooked rehmannia, 1 liang (30g) of dioscorea, 2 qian (6g) each of dry ginger, aconite, and cinnamon bark, and 3 qian (9g) each of cornus and wild codonopsis. I had the herbs decocted into 1 ½ cups of medicinal liquid and given to the patient while still warm. Consequently, the vomiting, the diarrhea, and the convulsions stopped, and he regained consciousness. Since he seemed restless, I removed the dry ginger and added 4 qian (12g) of peony, and after one more dose the problem was cured.

If we summarize the experience gained from all of these cases, we must conclude that Mr. Feng's theory concerning the tonic affect of rehmannia on the kidney source qi is not completely unreasonable. The yin, after all, is the keeper of yang, and blood is the mate of qi. Since rehmannia can strongly enrich yin and nourish the blood, if taken in large doses it can tonify the body's yin and blood, and the body's original yang qi then naturally will not escape upwards or collapse downward.