



Application of "Si Ni He Wei Tang" Based on "Internal Regulation of Qi" by Yang Zhen

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Abstract: Si Ni San is a widely known formula created by Zhang Zhongjing in the Eastern Han Dynasty and described in the Treatise on Typhoid Fever, which consists of four herbs: Bupleurum (*Bupleurum chinense*), Bitter Orange (*Aurantii Fructus Immaturus*), Peony Root (*Paeoniae Radix Alba*), and Licorice. Yang emphasizes the changes of qi in the human body and often uses Si Ni San to treat miscellaneous internal diseases. As modern diseases are becoming more and more complicated, the efficacy of Si-Reversing-San alone is weak. Professor Yang Zhen used Si-Reversing-San as the base formula and combined it with He Wei Tang composed of Citron Fruit (*Citri Sarcodactylis Fructus*), Cyperus Rhizome (*Cyperus Rhizoma*), Finger Citron (*Citri Sarcodactylis Fructus*), Forsythia (*Forsythiae Fructus*), Indian Trumpet Flower (*Oroxylum Indicum*), and Bitter Orange Peel (*Aurantii Fructus*), and his own Si Ni He Wei Tang has a remarkable efficacy in the treatment of modern miscellaneous diseases.

Keywords: Sini He wei Tang; same treatment for different diseases; Yang Zhen; experience of renowned physicians; qi movement

1. The Liver as the Governor of Qi Mechanism

In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), the liver is termed the "General of the Organs", governing the ascending and descending dynamics of qi. Physiologically, the liver embodies the properties of wood, aligning with the upward momentum of spring energy, as stated in *Suwen: Five Movements and Six Qi*: "The east generates wind, wind generates wood, wood generates sourness, and sourness generates the liver." This ascending force maintains systemic qi balance, corroborated by Linzheng Zhinan Yi'an: "The liver, a rigid organ, thrives on free flow". Functionally, the liver regulates emotions, water metabolism, blood circulation, spleen-stomach coordination, and reproductive functions through its "sovereign of dispersion and discharge". It also stores and distributes blood and modulates yang hyperactivity via its "yin-substance and yang-function" nature. Classical scholars have extensively explored liver qi dynamics: Zhang Jiebin in *Jingyue Quanshu* emphasized that "failure to comprehend qi renders medical practice baseless," establishing qi regulation as a diagnostic cornerstone. Zhou Xuehai in *Duyi Suibi* highlighted that "the qi transformations of the twelve meridians rely on the impetus of liver-gallbladder qi," underscoring their pivotal role in systemic qi dynamics. Professor Yang Zhen synthesized classical theories with the neuro-endocrine-immune network, proposing the "Liver Governs Qi Mechanism" doctrine, positioning the liver as the central regulator of qi. This multidimensional perspective bridges TCM theory and modern medicine, preserving the liver's "general" status while modernizing its anatomical relevance.

2. The Spleen-Stomach as the Pivot of Qi Movement

The Inner Canon states: "Without exit and entry, vitality perishes; without ascent and descent, qi collapses." Professor Yang advocates Huang Yuanyu's qi theory from *Sisheng Xinyuan*: "The pivot's motion lifts clear qi leftward (transforming into fire) and lowers turbid qi rightward (transforming into water)... The middle qi, the pivot of yin-yang movement, resides in the spleen-stomach." The spleen governs upward movement of clear yang, while the stomach directs downward movement of turbid yin. Their synergy drives the "one-qi circulation" model, where qi flows endlessly in a left-rising, right-descending, middle-pivoting cycle [1]. Disruption of this cycle causes qi stagnation and disease. As Huang Yuanyu noted: "Robust middle qi ensures harmony; deficient middle qi breeds myriad disorders," cementing spleen-stomach regulation as a clinical priority.

3. Sini He Wei Tang: A Bridge for Regulating Liver and Spleen

Sini San, originating from the Shaoyin chapter of *Treatise on Cold Damage Diseases*, addresses yang depression due to qi stagnation rather than yang deficiency. Later generations repurposed it as a universal formula for liver-spleen regulation[2]. Sini He Wei Tang enhances Sini San (*Bupleurum*, *Peony Root*, *Bitter Orange*, *Licorice*) with *Citron Fruit*, *Cyperus Rhizome*,

Finger Citron, Forsythia, Indian Trumpet Flower, and Bitter Orange Peel. This formula establishes a bidirectional "liver-soothing and stomach-harmonizing" system. Its mechanisms include: Liver Qi Regulation: Bupleurum (Bupleurum) as the monarch herb lifts shaoyang qi, paired with Peony Root (Paeoniae) to balance dispersion and astringency. Cyperus (Cyper) disperses stagnation, Finger Citron (Citri) harmonizes liver-stomach, and Citron Fruit (Citri) resolves phlegm-qi stagnation, aligning with Zhu Zhenheng's "liver governs dispersion" principle. Spleen-Stomach Modulation: Bitter Orange (Aurantii) descends stomach turbidity, while Bitter Orange Peel (Aurantii) ascends spleen yang, forming a "mutually reinforcing ascent-descent" mechanism. Peony-Licorice Decoction alleviates spasms, while Forsythia (Forsythiae) and Indian Trumpet Flower (Oroxylum) clear liver heat, preventing qi stagnation from transforming into fire. Liver-Spleen Synergy: Three herb pairs synergize: Bupleurum and Bitter Orange create a "left-right" qi cycle. Cyperus and Peony Root harmonize qi and blood. Finger Citron and Forsythia address damp-heat pathology. By restoring the "turbine effect" of the middle jiao, Sini He Wei Tang achieves systemic regulation, enabling qi to circulate seamlessly.

4. Case Examples

4.1 Case of Epigastric Pain

Female Patient, 45 years old from Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. Initial consultation (January 22, 2018): The patient Epigastric pain for over one month after emotional stress, worsened postprandially with burning sensation. Symptoms persisted despite omeprazole treatment. poor sleep, morning edema, constipation (bowel movement every 3-4 days). Pale-red tongue with thin white coating and sublingual ecchymosis; string-like and tympanic pulse with large right guan pulse. Diagnosis: Pattern of liver-stomach disharmony. Treatment Principle: Soothe the liver, harmonize the stomach, regulate qi, and relieve pain.

Formula: Sini He Wei Tang modified:

- Radix Glycyrrhizae Praeparata 6g
- Fructus Aurantii Immaturus 10g
- Radix Paeoniae Alba 20g
- Radix Bupleuri 12g
- Fructus Citri 15g
- Rhizoma Cyperi 10g
- Fructus Citri Sarcodactylis 10g
- Fructus Forsythiae 15g
- Rhizoma Corydalis 15g
- Semen Oroxyli 10g
- Fructus Cannabis 12g
- Caulis Polygoni Multiflori 15g
- Os Sepiae 15g
- Semen Pruni 15g
- Bulbus Lilii 20g

7 doses, decocted in water.

Second Visit (February 1, 2018):

Epigastric pain and burning sensation significantly improved. Residual distension persisted. Sleep quality enhanced. Bowel movements occurred every 2-3 days. Tongue and pulse unchanged. Formula Modification: Removed Caulis Polygoni Multiflori and Os Sepiae. Increased Fructus Cannabis to 20g. Added Fructus Trichosanthis 15g and Semen Raphani 15g to descend qi and relieve constipation. 7 doses, decocted in water. Full recovery achieved.

Commentary:

In spleen-stomach disorders, the regulation of ascending and descending qi mechanisms is pivotal[3]. This patient's emotional stress led to liver qi stagnation, which invaded the stomach, causing epigastric pain and burning (due to stagnant heat)[4]. Constipation resulted from fluid depletion by heat. Professor Yang Zhen combined Sini San with He Wei Tang to harmonize liver-stomach dynamics. The addition of bowel-regulating herbs enhanced efficacy by addressing both qi regulation and intestinal stagnation.

4.2 Case of Constipation

Female patient, 28 years old, from Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. First consultation (June 9, 2023): The patient developed constipation symptoms six months ago due to excessive dryness from home heating (2-3 bowel movements per week), with formed stools. She self-administered "Maziren Wan" (Cannabis Semen Pills), "Aloe Capsules," and "Lactulose,"

which provided slight relief but frequent recurrence. She sought treatment at our hospital. Her medical history includes frequent postprandial epigastric pain (no distension, acid reflux, or heartburn), normal appetite, urination, and formed stools, accompanied by cold intolerance in the extremities. Tongue: pale with thin yellow coating and ecchymosis; pulse: deep, wiry, and choppy (slightly rapid) with stagnation at both guan positions. Diagnosis: Constipation (Qi Stagnation Syndrome). Treatment: Modified Sini Hewei Tang to regulate qi and relieve stagnation. Prescription:

- Bupleurum chinense 12g
- Aurantii Fructus Immaturus (stir-baked with bran,) 10g
- Paeoniae Radix Alba 12g
- Glycyrrhiza uralensis 6g
- Citri Sarcodactylis Fructus 15g
- Citri Fructus 15g
- Cyperi Rhizoma (processed with vinegar,) 12g
- Forsythiae Fructus 15g
- Oroxylum indicum 10g
- Trichosanthis Semen 20g
- Cannabis Semen (stir-baked,) 10g
- Aquilariae Lignum Resinatum 6g

Preparation: Decocted in water, 14 doses.

Second consultation (July 14, 2023):

The patient reported daily bowel movements, improved mood, reduced epigastric pain, normal appetite, sleep, and urination. Tongue: pale-red with thin yellow coating; pulse: deep and slightly rapid. Modified prescription: Added Arecae Semen 12g to enhance diuresis and laxative effects. Preparation: Decocted in water, 21 doses. Complete resolution achieved.

Commentary:

The pathogenesis of constipation lies in dysregulated intestinal conduction due to systemic qi stagnation[5]. Prolonged emotional stress leads to liver qi stagnation, which generates heat and blood stasis, disrupts gastric function, and impairs the pivot mechanism, manifesting as insomnia, irritability, and constipation. The treatment combined Sini Hewei Tang and Jieyu Tang (Depression-Resolving Decoction): Sini San regulates liver qi and restores pivot harmony. Citri Sarcodactylis Fructus and Cyperi Rhizoma promote qi circulation. Cannabis Semen and Trichosanthis Semen moisten the intestines. The addition of Arecae Semen in the second consultation enhanced laxative efficacy. This case exemplifies the principle: "Resolving depression begins with harmonizing the liver; calming the spirit requires regulating the pivot".

4.3 Depression Syndrome, Insomnia Case

Patient: Male, 31 years old, from Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. First Visit (February 28, 2023): Eleven years ago, due to dissatisfaction with university major selection, the patient developed intermittent insomnia, emotional stagnation, depression with irritability. Nine years ago, diagnosed with "mild depression" at Anhui Provincial Hospital and intermittently took antidepressants for 7 years. Three years ago, developed dizziness and tinnitus aggravated by fatigue. Current symptoms: irritability, poor sleep (taking up to 3 hours to fall asleep in severe cases), fatigue, cold intolerance, sweating, scattered pustules on neck/back, foul flatus, occasional acid reflux. Turbid urine with excessive foam; daily bowel movements with sticky stool, difficult defecation, and strong odor. Tongue: purplish-dark with white coating, stasis spots, tooth marks, and prominent sublingual varicosities; pulse: deep, wiry, sluggish and choppy. Diagnosis: Depression Syndrome (Liver Qi Stagnation Pattern). Prescription: Sini He Wei Tang combined with Jieyu Tang modified to soothe liver and resolve stagnation. Formula:

- Bupleuri Radix (Bupleurum chinense DC.) 10g
- Aurantii Fructus Immaturus (Immature Orange Fruit stir-fried with bran) 10g
- Polygoni Multiflori Caulis (Tuber Fleecflower Stem) 15g
- Glycyrrhizae Radix et Rhizoma (Licorice) 6g
- Paeoniae Radix Alba (White Peony Root) 12g
- Oroxili Semen (Indian Trumpetflower Seed) 15g
- Albiziae Cortex (Silktree Albizia Bark) 15g
- Rubiae Radix et Rhizoma (Indian Madder Root) 15g
- Ophiopogonis Radix (Dwarf Lilyturf Tuber) 15g
- Curcumae Radix (Vinegar-processed Turmeric) 12g
- Nardostachyos Radix et Rhizoma (Spikenard) 10g

- Citri Sarcodactylis Fructus (Finger Citron) 15g
- Citri Fructus (Medicinal Citron) 15g
- Cyperi Rhizoma (Vinegar-processed Nutgrass Galingale Rhizome) 12g
- Forsythiae Fructus (Weeping Forsythia Capsule) 15g
- Santali Albi Lignum (Sandalwood) 6g
- Lysimachiae Herba (Christina Loosestrife) 15g
- Solani Lyrati Herba (Bittersweet Herb) 12g
- Cannabis Semen (Hemp Seed stir-fried) 8g
- Jujubae Fructus (Chinese Date) 18g

7 doses decocted in water for oral administration.

Second Visit (March 1, 2023)

Dizziness and tinnitus reduced; acid reflux significantly improved (no recurrence for 20+ days). Mood and sleep quality enhanced. Recent job change improved emotional state, though occasional poor sleep remains. Bowel movements: once daily with improved stool consistency; reduced flatus; occasional red papules on shoulders/back. Tongue: red tip/edges, thin greasy coating, stasis spots, tooth marks, sublingual varicosities; pulse: deep, wiry, thin and choppy. Modified prescription: Added Bombyx Batryticatus (Silkworm with Batryticated) 12g and Cicadae Periostracum (Cicada Molting) 6g. 14 doses achieved full recovery.

Comment:

Depression Syndrome typically arises from emotional stagnation causing liver qi constraint and disrupted qi dynamics. Prolonged liver stagnation generates fire, manifesting as irritability and insomnia. In this case, chronic liver constraint impaired spleen-stomach harmony, leading to acid reflux and digestive disturbances. Sini He Wei Tang was used to regulate liver-spleen interaction, while Jieyu Tang with Albiziae Cortex and Oroxili Semen resolved stagnation and calmed spirit. The addition of insect drugs (Bombyx Batryticatus and Cicadae Periostracum) in the second visit enhanced wind-dispelling and collateral-unblocking effects, achieving complete qi regulation and symptom resolution.

5. Conclusion

Qi movement is a critical link in traditional Chinese medicine treatment, with the liver and spleen-stomach system serving as the core zang-fu organs for internal regulation of qi dynamics [6]. Professor Yang Zhen's combined application of Sini San and He Wei Tang establishes a bidirectional regulatory system termed "soothing the liver to regulate the pivot (shu gan tiao shu) – harmonizing the stomach to downbear counterflow (he wei jiang ni)". Clinically, the use of Sini He Wei Tang must strictly adhere to the core pathogenesis of liver-spleen disharmony and qi movement disharmony in patients. This formula is predominantly indicated for digestive system disorders (e.g., abdominal distension, acid reflux) and emotional disorders (e.g., stress-induced gastrointestinal dysfunction), provided that pattern differentiation confirms liver-spleen dysfunction and qi stagnation.

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