



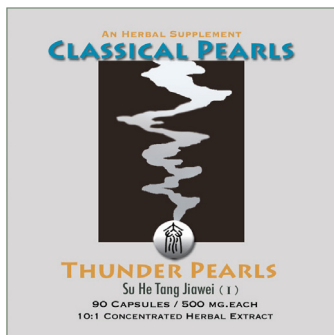
# CLASSICAL PEARLS HERBAL FORMULAS™

## LECTURE SERIES

### ***Thunder Pearls: An Effective Chinese Herbal Treatment for Chronic Parasitism***

*(lecture transcript)*

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In ancient China, thunder and lightning were considered to be the most yang phenomenon in nature. I remember a night in Sichuan province when powerful lightning bolts were dancing around the temple at which we were staying for three hours. I always thought that a lightning strike was as big as my arm, but when you are up close it really appears as big as a room. If you are a hundred feet away from that, you will literally crawl underneath your bed because you're so scared. You feel the earth shake, and you feel the electricity in the air.

Parasites are always at the core of the traditional diagnosis of Gu Syndrome, which literally means “parasite super-infection syndrome” and, in a more extended sense, “possession syndrome”—a situation where multiple parasitic strains have become so entrenched and pervasive in the system that they have taken over your body. More importantly, they most likely have also taken over your mind and your spirit, because many parasites are capable of manipulating your hormonal and endocrine systems. When those systems have been hijacked, and the parasites are now manipulating you to crave certain foods, and even trigger certain emotions so they can feed off the associated endocrine excretions, they own you. All of a sudden your emotions become extremely volatile--you fly off the handle, or become gloomily depressed, as if possessed by an alien spirit. It is a testament to the observational powers of the ancient Chinese that they knew that these kinds of “demons” had a physiological aspect to them. Without microscopes they knew that parasites were involved in the mental state often referred to as “possession,” because the ancient pictogram for *gu* is three worms squirming in

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a vessel. The vessel, in this case, is your body. When your body becomes a vessel for parasites that hollow your body from the inside out while they manage to stay hidden from detection, gradually weakening your body and spirit but keeping them alive enough so they can survive within this vessel, then you have Gu Syndrome.

When I started practicing Chinese medicine more than twenty years ago, chronic candida infections were the big thing in alternative medicine. In my practice, however, I saw a lot of patients who had chronic digestive problems that seemed much more aggressive and tenacious than candida. Those were people coming back from their Peace Corps assignments in Latin America with giardia or entamoeba and a history of repeated Flagyl (metranidazole) treatments. Fifteen years after their initial bouts with dysentery they still suffered from chronic bloating, making them feel weaker and weaker and more miserable as they got older. This type of patient would not respond to the treatment approaches I had learned during my Chinese medicine training. So, I literally took a two-week hiatus from my clinical practice to read about classical treatment approaches to parasites that, in my reckoning, must have played a significant role in the health care of pre-modern China. Why would this person with bloating and the long and wiry pulse on the right hand side not get the usual improvements with *Banxia Xiexin Tang*? Why would the anxiety patient not calm down and sleep better with *Suanzaoren Tang*? It was because all of them suffered from chronic parasitic inflammation of the intestines and/or nervous system that the ancient Chinese called Gu Syndrome—a term that, despite the extremely common occurrence of this disease even, has been stricken from the record of modern TCM, tainted by its association with the “feudalist and superstitious” practices of the past.

So important was the concept of Gu Syndrome in pre-modern China that it became a standard component in the standard life-end book that synthesized a classical scholar-physician’s clinical career. During

the formative years of modern TCM (1956-1988), Communist doctrine expunged any reference to this concept from the historic record because it apparently contradicted core concepts of Marxist materialism. Clearly, the suppression of Gu Syndrome is one of the best examples where in TCM’s modern zeal for standardization and the redrawing of clear ideological edges the baby was discarded along with the bathwater. In addition to “magical methods” of incantations and *fu* talismans drawn or worn on the body, traditional Gu therapy involves a complex set of herbal knowledge that utilizes and combines herbs in a completely different way than laid out in the standard *bagang* type of herbal differentiation.

For instance, a Daoist physician of the Qing dynasty who wrote an entire book about Gu Syndrome once said: “If you have diarrhea that doesn’t respond to *Liujunzi Tang*, it is Gu; if you suffer from fatigue and low blood pressure that doesn’t respond to *Buzhong Yiqi Tang*, it is Gu; if you feel malaise, like you’re trapped in a chronic state of the flu that doesn’t respond to the regular approach of driving out the wind, then you have Gu.” I have found that for most modern patients this dose of pertinent clinical advice applies more often than not, especially when mental and emotional faculties are declining in worrisome fashion. When modern herbalists look at a traditional “Gu Formula,” therefore, they generally don’t see much that can be categorized and filed away by their internal pattern recognition system. None of the regular herbal building blocks seem to be reflected here—a testament not to the absurdity of a dead-end branch of Chinese herbalism, but to the extremely broad spectrum of effective clinical approaches that lie preserved, albeit temporarily forgotten, within the classical record.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> century formula primer *Shanghan zabing lun* is generally recognized as the classic foundation for the tens of thousands of herbal formulas created during the following 1800 years. While only few in number, most of the *Shanghan lun* formulas are forgotten today. 350 years later, the Daoist practitioner

Sun Simiao synthesized the clinical herbal knowledge of his time in a voluminous encyclopedia of treatment methods, now known as the *Thousand Ducat Formulas*. Sun Simiao was a humble collector. His book includes so many formulas that he could not have possibly prescribed them all himself. Most of these formulas are not included in modern textbooks of Chinese herbal science, not even in the form of the therapeutic principles contained in them. Therefore, they remain completely unknown, and Sun's *Thousand Ducat Formulas* remains one of the biggest treasure troves of ancient clinical knowledge. The Song dynasty formula textbook *Taiping huimin heji ju fang* is an even better example of this trend. This 11<sup>th</sup> century work sprang from the government impulse to regulate the explosion of patent remedies that a rapidly growing merchant class was bringing to market at the time. The scholars of the Imperial Academy finally included about 720 remedies deemed effective by most contemporary physicians. Famous formulas like Pingwei San and Xiaoyao San were first published in this book, but most of the other 700 formulas no herbal scholar today would recognize or understand at all. Most modern practitioners would be scared to use them, even if they were understood better. Many contain materials like Xionghuang (realgar), a chemical precursor of arsenic, or other kinds of mineral ingredients that contain mercury. When we look closely, most of these formulas were designed for people infected by malaria or some other type of serious ailment. Schistosomiasis, for instance: a parasitic disease that causes one's belly to swell up grotesquely, and requiring immediate emergency-room style intervention to survive.

It is one of the main purposes of the Classical Pearls endeavor to rediscover and make available clinical treasures that lay buried in the past. Both Thunder and Lightning Pearls, the first two products of the Classical Pearls series, are based on a formula from a Qing dynasty book that focuses exclusively on Gu syndrome--that formula is called *Jiajian Su He Tang* (Modified Perilla and Mint Decoction). When I locked myself away in my study 15 years ago, it was

my intention to identify something from this trove of bizarre formulas that was outside the limited categories of TCM herbalism; a formula that had something radically new to offer for the type of chronically inflamed patient I was seeing more and more of, but that at the same time was absolutely safe to use--no mercury or arsenic. After reading hundreds of pages, Jiajian Su He Tang rose to the top. Jiajian Su He Tang and its mother formula, Su He Tang, contain the following herb groups:

- 1) "Shashe Fabiao" (killing the snake with diaphoretic materials), featuring Jinyinhua, Lianqiao, Bohe, Zisu, Baizhi, Chaihu, and Gaoben. In a typical Gu formula, you usually use three herbs from this category, not more, not less. Thunder Pearls contains 30 grams of fried Jinyinhua as the lead herb, next to the fragrant Baizhi and Zisuye. I chose Jinyinhua (rather than Bohe), because it is a powerful single herb remedy for not only acute amoebic dysentery, but also chronic diarrhea disorders such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease (which, according to my clinical experience, are often triggered by parasites in the gut). Baizhi and Zisuye feature prominently in the original Jiajian Su He Tang, and have the alchemical stability that makes them suitable for long-term treatment. Both of these materials exhibit a broad anti-parasitic effect, including conditions that involve fungus/yeast.

- 2) Fragrant, anti-parasitic ingredients that tonify the blood: notably Danggui and Chuanxiong, possibly also Shaoyao and Danshen. Since most Gu patients appear hollowed out and deficient on some level, you should never just employ excess removing--"kill, kill, kill"--methods, such as hammering the patient with clove and black walnut. These methods, inspired by the anti-biotic approach of Western medicine, may bring about an initial improvement, but eventually cause stomach discomfort and eventually make the patient feel worse. A Gu diagnosis automatically means that the patient needs to be treated for a minimum of six months, often 1.5-3 years, so it is pertinent that you use an herbal approach that is suitable for long-term use: anti-parasitic (bad for the pathogen) and tonic

(good for your body) at the same time. Thunder Pearls contains Danggui and Chuanxiong.

3) Anti-parasitic herbs that tonify *qi*: unprocessed Gancao, Huangqi, and Wujiapi all belong to this category. Thunder Pearls contain (sheng) Gancao and Huangqi. Note that the main *qi* tonic, ginseng, should never be used for a parasitic patient, since it will tonify the pathogen even more than the patient. It is actually a diagnostic indicator for Gu syndrome if the patient responds poorly to ginseng.

4) Anti-parasitic herbs that tonify yin: Many Gu patients are yin deficient, manifesting in a brittle nervous system. Patients with “Digestive Gu” (chronic parasitic inflammation of the gut, leading to IBS, diverticulitis, or other diseases involving bloating, constipation and/or diarrhea). If a patient tends toward diarrhea, one must be careful not to inundate them with herbs that are sticky and hard to digest. Baihe and Huangjing are prime herbs in this category, also Beishashen. For constipation, unprocessed Heshouwu is suitable. Huangjing, especially, is an underused Daoist folk herb that my teacher’s teacher, a Daoist Abbott, would eat for breakfast, by digging up some Huangjing in the vicinity of the monastery and eating it fresh. Directly out of the ground it is crunchy like a pear, but looks more like rehmannia (*Dihuang*) once steamed and dried. According to several classical texts, the ancient shaman physician Hua Tuo favored this root as a fasting remedy, stabilizing the adept’s blood sugar and increasing mental clarity, while clearing parasites at the same time. Externally, it works well as a remedy for fungi such as athlete’s foot.

5) Modern parasitology has recently come up with the concept of “biofilm.” It is most interesting to see that the ancient designers of parasite remedies did account for this phenomenon way back in the past. Traditional treatments for “Digestive Gu” often feature a category of aromatic herbs that are not only anti-parasitic, but also move *qi* and blood. From a modern perspective, these materials have the capacity of breaking through the camouflage mechanisms and protective biofilm

layers that many parasites have around them, so that the anti-parasitic substances can be effective. *Sanleng*, *Ezhu* and *Yujin*, all relatives of turmeric, are primary herbs in this category. You don’t need to use much of these ingredients, just 3-6 g of each within a traditional remedy (while many of the others are used in amounts of 9-15g). Thunder Pearls contains all three of them.

6) The final category is directly anti-parasitic. *Dingxiang*, *Kushen* and *Shechuangzi*, for instance are particularly suitable for parasites in the digestive tract, and the herbs *Baitouweng* and *Baibiandou* are very specific for diarrhea symptoms. If you have constipation, you can still use these last two herbs, they will not make you constipated. However, I have recently replaced the *Baitouweng* in the original Thunder Pearls recipe with *Guanzhong*, which is also a good herb for anti-protozoan treatment like giardia, entamoeba, or blastocystis hominis (especially prevalent in travelers to India, Nepal, and South America), and worms, but also has a broader anti-pathogenic effect on chronic viruses (such as herpes) and spirochetes (such as borelia/Lyme), and tends to be more suitable for long-term use. Other herbs in this category are *Qinghao* and the forgotten *Guizhenyu*—*Euonymus alatus*, literally the “Arrow that Kills All Demons” (recently imported in granular extract form by Classical Pearls). *Binglang*, *Feishi*, and *Shijunzi* are anthelmintics that could be included in this category, specific for Gu syndrome involving worms.

By definition, Gu patients are long-term patients and have to be on this type of herb combination for at least six months. Since you need to change some of the herbs along the way in order to stay ahead of the parasites’ vigorous attempts to adapt, I developed two versions of the same formula, called Thunder and Lightning Pearls. For “Digestive Gu” inflammation, I recommend to use three weeks of Thunder Pearls and one week of Lightning Pearls to keep the parasites on the run. For the more neurologically inflamed type that I call “Brain Gu” (Lyme Disease, or chronic versions of rabies or scarlet fever or Dengue fever or malaria or chronic encephalitis—conditions we don’t hear much about in regular medical training), it would be

the opposite: 3 weeks of Lightning Pearls and 1 week of Thunder Pearls. According to my personal clinical experience, a lot of patients who seek help for chronic body pain, mental fogginess, anxiety and insomnia actually suffer from “Brain Gu” syndrome.

In ancient times, Gu remedies were typically used in large amounts, up to 300g of crude herbs in decoction form per day. This type of dosage is necessary for aggressive types of parasites that kill you in a short amount of time, such as schistosomiasis. For your average Gu patient with *blastocystis hominis* or IBS or chronic bloating or the Peace corps returnee, or to prevent parasitic infection while traveling in Nepal, lower doses will suffice. One capsule of the Pearls is always equivalent to 1 gram of granulated extract or 5g of crude herb material. I rarely prescribe more than 12g per day of anti-Gu herbs in granular form, or 4 capsules of Thunder Pearls 2-3x/day.

If you use more than that, the person will tire earlier of the remedy. It all depends what else you prescribe. If the person already ingests three garlic cloves a day, you could consider that to be the afternoon dose, and you can then just take six Thunder Pearls in the morning. For some Gu patients who manifest with extreme intestinal inflammation and are thus very sensitive, reactions to food and herbs are to be expected, and you will have to start dosing very gradually: 1 capsule 2x/day for three days. If that is okay, you go up to 2 capsules 3x/day. If that still works after 3-7 days, then you increase to 3x3 for a week, eventually ending up with a standard dose of 5 capsules 2x/day. For cases of acute amoebic dysentery, I would recommend 6 capsules 2x/day. If that’s not strong enough, some of the strongly anti-pathogenic Dragon Pearls should be taken alongside. In my opinion, acute parasitic infections can be resolved with Chinese herbs without having to resort to strong antibiotics. Dragon Pearls essentially represents an herbal antibiotic without the “anti-life” effect. We sometimes forget that herbs can heal serious infections--you just have to take the right ones, and enough of them.

Recent studies have shown that antibiotics have the potential to force parasites to escape the gut and hide out in tissues that they normally don’t go to. In contrast, you can look at the Gu approach as a kind of fumigation of the body’s tissues, while building up the body’s immune system at the same time—like smudging, causing the parasites to say: “This place is not for us anymore, let’s get out of here.”

Note that Gu syndrome has traditionally been described to be “like oil seeping into flour.” To separate oil from flour takes a long time. Most people thus need to be treated for 6 months to 3 years. In my experience, even a young person saying “six months ago I caught a bug in El Salvador; I took Flagyl and felt better for a while, but now I am bloated again and suffer from alternating diarrhea and constipation” still needs to be on an anti-Gu treatment protocol for at least 6 months. If someone has had this type of condition for twenty years, then you need to stay on it for 3 years. With the more chronic cases, where treatment exceeds the 6 month mark, it is important to simultaneously address the body’s immune deficiencies and auto-immune tendencies. This situation requires aconite—a vital ingredient contained in many of the other Pearl formulas. We will talk about them later--especially the Vitality Pearls are important to accompany Gu treatment past the 6 months mark. For particularly cold and deficient patients, Vitality Pearls may need to be prescribed along Thunder/Lightning Pearls right from the get-go.

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