

Cinnamon Twig (Guizhi)

Huang Gongxiu

from *Bencao qiuzhen*

(Exploring the True Meaning of the Materia Medica, 1769)

TRANSLATED BY HEINER FRUEHAUF

Cinnamon twig primarily enters the muscle layer at the surface of the body. At the same time, it enters the heart and liver channels. It is the branch of the cassia tree which also yields cinnamon bark. Cinnamon twig is light, its nourishing essence is pungent, and its color is red (therefore its affinity to the heart).

The action of cinnamon twig is rising without descending. Therefore, it can also enter the lung and facilitate uninhibited movement of qi, and enter the bladder channel and stimulate water metabolism. In a horizontal direction, it enters the upper extremities, harmonizes ying (nutritive layer) and wei (defensive layer), and thus treats pain in the arms and sides of the chest.

Cinnamon twig controls restless sweating, dispels wind, and disperses external pathogens. It is the primary herb to relieve the muscles. Therefore, the books all say that cinnamon twig can induce sweat if there is none; and that it can astringe sweat if there is too much of it. Actually, the type of sweat that can be induced or controlled by cinnamon is caused by wei excess and ying deficiency, referring to a situation where

the yin is being advanced upon by yang. Therefore, cinnamon can be used to regulate the ying. If the ying is regulated, then the wei will become harmonious by itself. Since now there will be no place to go to for the wind pathogen, it will be relieved via the sweat. This action is quite different from that of ephedra, which can directly open the pores and thus induce sweat.

The type of sweat that can be astringed by cinnamon is caused by wind injury to the wei layer, which in turn cannot attend to (holding) the ying (in place); the ying qi is weak, and the fluids and humors thus not secured properly; therefore, the patient experiences symptoms of sweating, fever, and aversion to wind. This condition is best treated with Cinnamon Combination (Guizhi Tang), since this remedy contains peony to enter the ying and astringe the yin inside, and cinnamon to enter the wei and eliminate the pathogens outside. In this way, the sweat will stop naturally. This does not mean that cinnamon closes the sweat pores directly. In other words, if you just say that cinnamon induces sweat and controls sweat without understanding why and under what conditions, you will miss the meaning of cinnamon by far.



Images: (1) *Guiye* (cinnamon leaf), *Guizhijian* (tender tip of the cinnamon branch), and *Guiding* (cinnamon leaf stem) are different parts of the cinnamon tree used for medicinal purposes; (2) Cinnamon trees growing in their natural habitat; (3) Large pieces of *Rougui* (cinnamon bark) drying in a courtyard at the Vietnamese border in Yunnan, China.