

Commentary on Formula Design in the *Fuxing jue* Chapter on Heart Organ Disease Patterns

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[1st] Minor Purge the Heart Decoction Analysis

Longdancao is the emperor herb in this formula, as it is suitable for treating excess in the Fire and Wood organ networks. The *Shennong bencao jing* classifies Longdancao as bitter in flavor and cold in temperature. Following the model for the second Minor Purge the Heart Decoction, one could assume Longdancao is classified in *Tangye jing* theory as the Fire herb of the Water class since it is bitter and we know that as the emperor herb here, it will go directly to the diseased organ network. This disease pattern shows signs of excess in the Liver as well as the Heart, so Longdancao is an excellent herb for clearing heat and toxins in the Liver and Gallbladder networks that have been passed on to the Heart. Modern clinical testing has proven Longdancao to be quite effective at inducing vomiting in large dosages. This formula aims to induce vomiting to rid excess pathogens that have invaded the body.

As it is able to aid Longdancao in draining the heat in the Heart, Liver and Stomach organ networks, Zhizi is the minister herb in this formula. It is classified in the *Shennong bencao jing* as bitter and cold, and thus is an excellent herb for draining Heart heat. It is especially noted for treating counterflow Heart heat pain that occurs in this kind of patient. According to *Tangye jing* theory, Zhizi should be the Wood herb of the Water class. It travels through the Liver organ network and can alleviate the fullness at the rib-sides and counterflow qi attacking the breasts in addition to treating the Heart pain.

The assistant herb, Rongyan, should be classified as the Wood herb of the Fire class, as it is the corollary to Da-huang in the second Minor Purge the Heart Decoction. This means it is salty in flavor and is used to balance out the bitter flavor of the emperor and minister herbs of the formula to prevent excessive draining of the Heart Fire. Rongyan transports its salty flavor to the Liver and the Heart since a large quantity of bitter is delivered to the Liver and Heart through the use of Zhizi and Longdancao in this formula. Rongyan can be used in this formula for inducing vomiting, stopping pain and eliminating *gu* toxins.



[1st] Major Purge the Heart Decoction Analysis

Longdancao, Zhizi and Rongyan are used in this formula the same way they are used in Minor Purge the Heart Decoction, except Rongyan becomes the servant herb rather than the assistant herb since it belongs to the Fire class. This balances the formula architecture by having an assistant herb that tonifies the diseased organ.

Kushen is added into this formula as an assistant. The *Shennong bencao jing* classifies it as bitter in flavor and cold in temperature. It is also mentioned in this classic for treating bound qi in the Heart and abdomen, conglomerations, accumulations and gatherings, disinhibiting the nine orifices, draining fire, and drying dampness. According

to *Tangye jing* theory, its bitter flavor makes this a Water class herb. It could be viewed as an alternate Earth herb of the Water class, and thus a corollary to Baizhu. Since one version of this prescription says to use Tongcao instead of Kushen in this formula, it is worth mentioning that both Tongcao and Kushen can drain heart fire and disinhibit the nine orifices.

Shengma is added as an assistant herb in this formula. It is neutral in taste and sweet in flavor, making it an important herb for the Spleen, according to *Shennong bencao jing*. The herbal classic lists it for aiding other herbs in Spleen tonification, “eliminating *gu* toxins and resolving the one hundred toxins.” According to *Tangye jing* theory, it may be considered a corollary to Renshen as an alternate Earth herb of the Earth class.

Dandouchi is added as a third assistant in this formula to aid zhizi in clearing heat from the chest and to help move stagnation in the middle jiao while tonifying the Spleen. It is the Fire herb of the Metal class in the *Tangye jing*. It transports its sour flavor to the Heart to prevent heat and blood transferring across the *ke* cycle to the Lung from the Heart.



[1st] Minor Tonify the Heart Decoction Analysis

It is unclear why the Heart has two sets of formulas in this section of the *Fuxingjue* while the other zang organs only have one set of formulas. One theory is that it is because in Chinese medicine the Fire organ networks have two zang (Pericardium and Heart). If this is the case, one set would be attributed to the Pericardium organ network and another to the Heart organ network. The Pericardium would be representative of physical disease patterns, while the Heart would be associated with diseases of the shen. Another theory on this is that this first set of Heart formulas was added later by Tao Hongjing's disciples who compiled the *Fuxingjue*, and that this first set of Heart formulas is not from the original *Fuxingjue*. Based on the fact that it does not appear to follow the same architecture and rules as the other Five Phase formulas for tonifying and reducing, this is a very good possibility. None of the herbs in this particular formula are listed in the twenty-five archetypal herbs of the *Tangye jing*, so it is hard to accurately analyze these formulas from this unique perspective. However, it is clear that this particular formula did exist before Tao Hongjing's time, as clearly the same formula exists in Zhang Zhongjing's *Jingui yaolue*.

While this is a formula to “tonify” the Heart, it is important to note that it is actually a case of excess in the Heart organ network. The *Tangye jing* states, “The virtue of the Heart is to be soft.” To be soft is to flow freely, smoothly and openly. The disease picture of these symptoms is one of congestion of fluids and qi stagnation which create blockages leading to accumulations and pain. Only by moving the stuck qi and breaking up the accumulations can the symptoms dissipate and the Heart become soft again. Typically, in Chinese medicine this would be thought of as an excess condition with a diagnosis and treatment strategy to treat it accordingly. However, this unique way of thinking according to *Tangye jing* theory shows that this kind of thinking does not apply to the terminology used in this herbal classic. In modern clinical practice, these three herbs are often used in combination to treat *xiongbi* due to stagnation, due to cold accumulation and/or yang deficiency.

In the *Shennong bencao jing*, Gualou is classified as bitter in flavor and cold in temperature. The bitter flavor suggests it is of the Water class, and because it is the emperor of this formula, it transports its bitter flavor to the Heart, making it the Fire herb. This tells us it is a corollary to Huanglian from the twenty-five archetypal herbs listed in the *Tangye jing*. The *Shennong bencao jing* mentions it for treating heat, vexation fullness and quieting the center. It clears upper burner fire, expels phlegm and removes toxins. Particularly important for this case, it helps to relieve chest oppression and pain caused by accumulation of heat and phlegm.

The minister herb, Xiebai, is classified in the *Shennong bencao jing* as pungent in flavor and warm in nature. It is used to treat *xiongbi* due to cold phlegm stagnation and is applicable here for the symptoms of chest oppression and Heart pain. Since it has a pungent flavor, it is safe to say it belongs in the Wood class. Possibly, it is the herb of Metal, but it could also be a Fire herb.

The assistant herb, Banxia, is classified in the *Shennong bencao jing* as pungent in flavor and neutral in nature. It is mentioned for treating cold and heat, hardness below the Heart, down bearing the qi, phlegm and chest distension. Since Banxia is pungent, it must belong to the Wood class unless the author of the *Tangye jing* classified it as a different flavor. It can perhaps be thought of as the Earth herb of the Wood class. This makes sense if Xiebai is the Metal herb of the Wood class, as these herbs would be transporting the pungent flavor of Wood to the Spleen and Lung to resolve phlegm since the Earth produces phlegm while the Lung stores phlegm produced by the Spleen.



[1st] Major Tonify the Heart Decoction Analysis

The addition of Zhishi, Houpo and Guizhi to Minor Tonify the Heart Decoction makes Major Tonify Heart Decoction. Gualou, Xiebai and Banxia all have the same roles as in Minor Tonify the Heart Decoction. Zhishi is added as an assistant to this formula as the Wood herb of the Metal class. Despite being classified as a sour herb in *Tangye jing* theory, the *Shennong bencao jing* says it is bitter in flavor and cold in nature. “It eliminates cold and heat, circulates the qi and breaks up phlegm and accumulations and is used to treat chest impediment, phlegm accumulation, glomus and distension.”

Houpo is added as an assistant and is classified as the Metal herb of the Fire class in the *Tangye Jing*, meaning it is used here as a salty herb. The *Shennong bencao jing* classifies it as having a bitter flavor and a warm nature. The herbal classic indicates it for “treating heat and cold, blood impediment, relieving chest fullness and abdominal fullness, dispersing phlegm and moving bound water.”

Guizhi is the servant herb. As the Wood herb of the Wood class, it is used here as the principal herb to tonify Wood. Unlike the other zang formulas which tonify the diseased organ network directly, this is an indirect method for tonifying the heart. This reflects the ancient view that it was inappropriate to approach the emperor directly. The *Shennong bencao jing* says it is pungent in flavor and warm in nature. This aids the movement of qi and blood that is stuck in the Heart by first tonifying the Liver to move energy along the *sheng* cycle so that Wood can nourish its child, Fire. Circulating the Liver and Heart qi and blood alleviates the severe pain caused by stagnation of qi and blood in the Liver and Heart.



[2nd] Minor Purge the Heart Decoction Analysis

Huanglian is the principal herb to purge the Heart since it transports the bitter flavor of Water to the Heart. As the Fire herb of the Water class according to the *Tangye jing*, Huanglian controls the excess Heart Fire in this disease pattern. The *Tangye jing* states, “Use the salty flavor to tonify [the Heart] and bitter flavor to purge [the Heart].” Huanglian is used in modern clinical practice to drain Heart Fire, eliminate glomus and fullness in the chest and treat heart vexation due to excessive Heart Fire.

Huangqin is listed in the *Shennong bencao jing* as bitter and neutral. In the *Tangye jing*, it is classified as the Wood herb of the Water class. This means it can be used to transport the bitter flavor of Water to the Liver. Since the

child (Heart) is taking excess qi from its mother (Liver), the mother of the Liver (Kidney Water) is being used to supplement the Liver. Additionally, Huangqin is considered to be one of the most important herbs for clearing heat from the upper jiao, and so it is appropriate for clearing the Heart heat and glomus under that Heart that is seen in this particular disease pattern.

Dahuang is used as assistant herb to help remove the heat and blockage caused by this symptom pattern. Dahuang is classified as bitter and cold in the *Shennong bencao jing*, but perhaps it should be thought of as salty in this formula since the *Tangye jing* classifies it as the Wood herb of the Fire class. In this way, it could be argued that Dahuang is also being used to tonify the Fire in the body by transporting the salty flavor to the Liver and Heart to tonify these organs and prevent excessive draining by the emperor and minister herbs.



[2nd] Major Purge the Heart Decoction Analysis

The *Tangye jing* states, “The virtue of the Heart is to be soft.” This is a pattern of excess qi and blood in the Heart causing congestion and stagnation of qi in the Heart, which then leads to the symptom picture in this disease pattern. Like Minor Purge the Heart Decoction, this formula contains Huanglian, Huangqin and Dahuang, while Shaoyao, Paojiang and Zhi Gancao are added to create this formula.

Shaoyao is the Earth herb of the Metal class, and it is used as an assistant herb in this formula to treat the heart glomus, bleeding, to tonify the blood and also to quell any Liver Fire that could be stoking the Heart Fire. The *Shennong bencao jing* lists Shaoyao as bitter, but being of the Metal class means it is used as a sour herb in this formula. Shaoyao transports the sour flavor of Metal to the Spleen in order to astringe the blood vessels to prevent the loss of blood.

Paojiang is the Earth herb of the Wood class, and is used as an assistant herb in this formula to aid in treating the Heart glomus, chest fullness, bleeding and to cease the vomiting. According to the *Shennong bencao jing*, Paojiang has a pungent flavor and a warm nature. In this case, it is dry roasted for extra emphasis on astringing the blood. Paojiang delivers its pungent, moving quality, which mirrors springtime, to the realm of Earth to aid in moving the stagnant qi and blood that is stuck in the Spleen.

Zhi Gancao is the Wood herb of the Earth class according to the *Tangye jing*, so it transports its sweet, Earth flavor to the Liver to help relieve anxiety stemming from Wood. The *Shennong bencao jing* lists Zhi Gancao as being neutral in nature and sweet in flavor. As the servant herb, it also serves to harmonize the formula so that balance is achieved in the architectural design of this carefully constructed herbal remedy.



[2nd] Minor Tonify the Heart Decoction Analysis

The second Minor Tonify the Heart formula contains four herbs— one emperor, one minister, one assistant and one servant. The emperor, Daizheshi, is not listed as one of the twenty-five archetypal herbs of the *Tangye jing* and one can only speculate how the author would have classified it according to this method. The *Shennong bencao jing* lists Daizheshi as bitter in flavor and cold in temperature, so the nature and qi suggest it is of the Water class. Given the fact we are tonifying the Heart, it is doubtful the author would use two herbs from the Water class, as the *Tangye jing* clearly states that bitter purges the Heart. Alternatively, the author might have classified this herb as salty,

which would put it in the Fire class. Salty tonifies the Heart, and so this would follow the pattern of twice as many herbs of the flavor that tonifies the zang organ in comparison to herbs that purge it. Daizheshi is able to subdue deficiency counterflow, relieve irritability and to prevent belching.

The minister herb, Xuanfuhua, is the Fire herb of the Fire class and is the chief herb to tonify the Heart Fire with its salty flavor. The *Shennong bencao jing* says it is warm in nature and salty in flavor, and also mentions it to treat belching. Xuanfuhua is listed second (meaning it is the minister herb) because in ancient China it was considered inappropriate to try to approach the emperor directly. Since the Heart shen is the emperor of the body, the Heart must first be tonified indirectly through Wood. Therefore, the Heart is tonified directly only secondarily to its tonification through its mother, the Liver. Thus, it is probable that Daizheshi is most likely the Wood herb of the Fire class. That means that salty flavor of Fire is brought to the Wood phase to tonify it so that the Liver can have sufficient qi and blood available to generate more qi and blood for the Heart.

Zhuye is the assistant herb in this formula. It is classified in the *Tangye jing* as the Metal herb of the Water class and is bitter in flavor according to this classic. The *Shennong bencao jing* classifies it as having a neutral nature and a bitter flavor. Zhuye is able to tonify qi, relieve irritability, restlessness and crying. Zhuye is used to control excess tonification of the Heart to prevent scorching of the Lung through the *ke* cycle. The bitter flavor of Water enters the Lung to control the Fire that naturally comes across the *ke* cycle once the Fire energy starts flowing too strongly.

The servant herb, Dandouchi, is the Fire herb of the Metal class, is sour in flavor and belongs to the Lung. As the Fire herb, Dandouchi transports its sour flavor to astringe the Heart, helping with both the physical loss of fluids as well as the mental/emotional instability shown in the patient. Mental/emotional instability may manifest in the patient as irritability, sadness, crying and restlessness. Dandouchi is also known for its ability to stimulate appetite, the loss of which results from Spleen qi deficiency. If the mother (Heart) is deficient, so too will be the child (Earth). For this reason, the patient will have no desire to eat.



[2nd] Major Tonify the Heart Decoction Analysis

This formula consists of all four herbs from the second Minor Tonify the Heart Decoction, plus one liang each of Renshen, Zhi Gancao and Ganjiang. The amount of Daizheshi, Xuanfuhua and Zhuye all increase by one liang from the second Minor Tonify the Heart formula since this formula is for more serious disease.

Renshen is added as an assistant herb to this formula to strengthen the Spleen, which has become deficient due to malnourishment from its mother, the Heart. Renshen is the Earth herb of the Earth class, so it is the main herb for bringing the sweet flavor of Earth to the Spleen to nourish it so that the desire to eat and drink returns to the patient. Renshen is classified in the *Shennong bencao jing* as sweet in flavor and cool in temperature. It is also said to supplement the five zang, open the Heart, relieve and prevent fright and palpitations and settle the shen.

Zhi Gancao is the Wood herb of the Earth class and transports its sweet flavor to the Liver to help relax the Liver and ease the symptoms of displeasure, restlessness, terror and anxiousness. It serves to harmonize the formula and nourishes the Heart qi as well.

Ganjiang is added as a servant herb in this formula. As the Earth herb of the Wood class, it helps treat the imbalance in the relationship of the Spleen and Liver. Since Zhi Gancao and Ganjiang represent Earth and Wood, they are a complementary pair for resolving any problems related to the Earth-Wood *ke* cycle relationship. Ganjiang

transports its pungent flavor to the Spleen in order to exert the moving power of Wood on the Stomach to help move any stagnant yin substances (i.e. stagnant food) and stagnant qi that might be preventing the Spleen from extracting the *guqi* from the food processed in the Stomach. This contributes to the problems of no desire for food and drink, dry retching and excess saliva production. Additionally, its warm nature helps to tonify the Spleen qi.

