

Cixi and the Menghe Medicine of Ma Peizhi

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Cixi and the Menghe Medicine of Ma Peizhi

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本文調研了清代皇族醫療的情況。特別是我們查閱了慈禧太后的病歷，反映出馬培之醫生(1820–1903)獨特的醫療觀念。這一章主要講馬醫生的醫療理論，充滿了陰陽相互作用的概念。用他的二陽病的疾病理論來治療女性病人被看作是陰。在他的治療策略中他認為心臟和脾臟是成功治療的關鍵。這個方發源于他相信身體疾病是因為精神上的不安造成的。這種情況也表明即使看起來一直向前發展的醫學病歷，政治總是以某種形式存在。然而，在編輯那些被後代傳誦或想象的人們的情況是常常受記載方式的影響，怎樣寫他們以及是否記錄在任何時間被篡改。這個問題困擾着歷史學家們。最明顯的例子就是非常複雜的慈禧案歷，證據總是部分的，扭曲的，含糊不清的。這個案歷表明，盡管有這些局限，檔案是歷史學家最重要的來源。

Key words : Dowager Empress Cixi, Double Yang Disease(二陽病), Ma Peizhi, Gui Pi Tang(or Restore the Spleen Decoction, 歸脾湯)

I . Introduction

The records of the Qing Imperial Palace examine medicine at the elite level. Most scholars would agree that the practice of medicine in the Palace involved some of the most capable and therefore the most efficacious physicians in the empire. Examining criteria for efficacious medical practice is of considerable significance. The successors of these court physicians played a significant role in shaping the practice of Chinese medicine well into the twentieth century. The patients in the records are of interest as well, as many of them were significant figures in Chinese history. The emperors examined in the cases, such as Kangxi[康熙] and Qianlong[乾隆]，are still subjects of much analysis

by historians. An examination of their medical records can offer further insights into their lives and into areas of their thinking.

Much recent scholarship aims to show that the Qing remains under-examined despite a growing body of literature. One reason for this is that many of the records were written in Manchu. The study of the area of medicine during the Qing has been particularly neglected not least because historians tend to see medicine as a peripheral area. Official histories mostly concentrate on political and economic matters.

This brief study looks at the late Qing[清] Empress Dowager Cixi[慈禧] and examines her case in conjunction with the unique conception of medicine of the physician, Ma Peizhi[馬培之](1820–1903).¹⁾

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1) The primary source is Chen, 2006, pp. 2297– 2305. The main secondary source is Chang, 1998, pp. 123–159; pp. 205–237.

II. Cixi as Consort

Looking at Cixi's case files, we see that, like her predecessors in the Qing Palace, she did not enjoy good health. I argue that the evidence is conclusive that the Qing emperors and Cixi suffered from poor health.²⁾ Speaking as a physician and after reading the physicians' reports, it is clear that none were robust. The counterargument is that these were medical records and that of course doctors' notes would chronicle sickness and pain. Those who doubt my argument would ask what else would one expect to find in medical records. I contend that medical records need not contain tales of sickness and woe. I also argue that these records were private records not intended for a public audience and were intended for an inner court imperial audience. While accepting that no records are free from bias and that some records may have been skewed, I argue that on balance there was no urgent need to doctor the records so as to grossly misrepresent reality. In the case of the Qing emperors, they were eager to present an image of strength and robustness. Therefore, the evidence of frailty builds a convincing case. Cixi is recorded as being worried and anxious, as were many of the other women in the medical cases of the palace. This pattern is unmistakable. The clear implication of these medical records is that the women were depressed and irritable. This does not necessarily mean clinical depression, as understood in biomedicine. In the records it has the implication of melancholy. Let us look at one of the women, Empress Dowager Cixi.

Cixi was born in 1835. She was never the Empress or the official ruler of the Qing. A Council and the imperial family ruled the Qing Empire in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Cixi was at the centre of power in the Qing court in its dying days. As the consort of the Xianfeng[咸豐] emperor she managed to bear him his only surviving son, the future Tongzhi [同治] Emperor. Of the Yehonala[葉赫那拉] clan, she was a Manchu girl of age sixteen when she entered the court

as a consort. The lot of palace women was one of foreboding, a life of bitterness and tears being the norm.

The future Dowager Empress managed to catch the eye of the Xianfeng emperor, a son being a by-product of her relationship with the Son of Heaven. The future Cixi was not Xianfeng's favourite consort. Nevertheless, for bearing the heir to the empire she was promoted to consort of first rank, second only in prestige to the empress. Upon Xianfeng's death, Cixi took measures to ensure her son would not be pushed aside in the vicious political battles in the court. She secured backers at court for her cause and it is from this time onward that stories of her formidable will power began to circulate.

Cixi is a much-maligned figure, attracting much of the blame from historians for China's sorry plight and the collapse of the Qing Empire. She receives sympathetic treatment from very few historians and her image in the public imagination is probably worse. She is usually portrayed as evil, idiotic, xenophobic and sex crazed. It is very clear that many of these stories were sheer fabrications. The Qing was struggling to avoid absolute humiliation at the hands of the imperialist powers. One of the tools of the trade in British Empire building was demonisation of one's adversaries. This was done deliberately and calculatingly in order to portray China as backward and cruel. Geremie Barme is one historian who has attempted to revise the established position of Cixi as a bumbling nymphomaniacal tyrant and has argued that she has been a victim of massive caricature and demonisation.³⁾

This cause to malign Cixi was taken up enthusiastically by the Republican government established in 1911. The Sun Yatsen[孫中山] led Nationalist Party had a direct interest, needing to justify its violent revolution which coincided with vicious pogroms of Manchus that took place all over China. The new Chinese nationalism had an initial enemy—the Manchu.

2) Qianlong[乾隆] was possibly an exception, although he was certainly not robust or physically vigorous. The evidence is that he was weakly but managed to stay reasonably well.

3) Barme, 2008, pp. 91–113.

The truth of Cixi's role is likely to be more complex. Despite the uncertainty, the stories of Cixi's lasciviousness continue to be told in China. She makes an easy target, being a woman in a position of power and at the centre of a crumbling empire. Somebody had to be responsible for the sorry state of China's affairs, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, it is not hard to understand why she would have suffered so much from anxiety. Popular legend depicts her as being indifferent to the fate of the empire, playing with her dogs, while the subjects of the Qing starved. If we think back to Qianlong and his public relations exercise as the all-encompassing king, we can see that it was not considered good politics to have the palace seen in a state of melancholy and despair. Since it would have been unrealistic to resort to hubris, it is not surprising that Cixi was considered by popular legend to be indifferent to the fate of the empire.

III. Cixi as Patient

Cixi became particularly ill in 1875 during the succession crisis involving her son. She remained virtually incapacitated for several years, and was never the same again. In 1903, she suffered from a stroke that affected the musculature of her face. Upon perusing the Chen Keji records, a common pattern emerges. The Empress Dowager suffered from severe chronic stress and anxiety, as it would be described in contemporary parlance. She was in a state of physical and mental collapse for years. The stories and rumours of her sexual appetite look even more likely to be fantasy as it is hard to imagine her being in a fit state to conduct extraneous activities. Sexual promiscuity is well known as a means to denigrate and defame the character of women in power. The rumours of her libidousness served to cripple the image of the Qing court and bring it down to the position of a laughing stock. The reality

of Cixi's life in the privacy of her chambers may be almost impossible to access on this matter.

Cixi's stress caused her to suffer from an array of ailments, not the least a propensity for nervous diarrhea. At this point, the lay reader would be justified in querying the efficacy of Chinese medicine. Cixi was a keen imbiber of Chinese herbs. It is not clear how much she was involved in Manchu shamanism. If physicians of Chinese medicine claim that Chinese medical therapy is efficacious, then how is it that these Manchu monarchical figures were so weak, especially when they had whole teams of the best doctors in the empire waiting on them? To ask this question is reasonable. Since we were not there, we cannot speak with absolute certainty, but I would suggest that the treatments were efficacious. It is likely that the patients discussed in this thesis would have gone to their graves much earlier if not for medical support. At least their care was no worse and probably better than what was available in Europe at the same time.

We take up the story when she was forty-five years old. In 1880, Cixi was particularly ill, causing her to be bedridden. Chang Che-Chia also discusses this period in some detail.⁴⁾ Before relating the accounts in the records edited by Chen, it should be noted that Chang's account differs substantially. Both Chang's and Chen's accounts concur that Cixi was ill, although the dates slightly differ. The physicians involved are the same, Ma Peizhi, Xue Fuchen[薛福辰], Wang Shouzheng[汪守正] and Li Deli[李的立]. Both agree that the principal credit for Cixi's recovery at this stage should go to Ma Peizhi. That is where the accounts part ways. Chang relates the details of a labyrinthine and acute struggle among the physicians to receive the accolades deserving of a successful diagnosis and healing strategy. Any discussion of medicine in Chang's writing is merely superficial, his focus being on the complex political manoeuvrings among the physicians. Chen's records, rather, concentrate on the medical strategies of Ma

4) Chang, 1998, pp. 123-159.

Peizhi in this episode, leaving out the political struggle.

Ma Peizhi was a Menghe[孟河] physician.⁵⁾ His family were specialists in external medicine *waike*[外科], an aspect of medicine encompassing externally visible problems and associated with petty surgery. Inheriting the lineage of the Ma clan he received further training from the illustrious Fei Boxiong[費伯雄], thus equipping him with skills in internal medicine *neike*[内科]. Ma Peizhi became one of the most well educated physicians in Menghe. His surgery became so busy that he became a household name throughout Jiangnan[江南] in modern day Jiangsu[江蘇] province.

After nine months spent in the palace from 1880–1881, his fame spread from Beijing[北京] and throughout the empire. In 1883, Ma Peizhi moved his practice to Suzhou[蘇州]. From there he moved to Wuxi[無錫] and then to Shanghai[上海].

His leap to empire-wide prominence took place after Ma Peizhi was summoned to the imperial palace in 1880 to be part of the team to treat the Empress Dowager Cixi. The Palace records stress Ma Peizhi's prominent role in successfully treating Cixi.

Ma Peizhi's diagnosis of Cixi was that she had er *yang* bing[二陽病], meaning 'double yang disease'. Ma Peizhi cited the *Su Wen* [素問] from the *Inner Canon*[內經] as his inspiration for this conceptualisation. For Ma, double yang disease was one involving the heart and spleen. It meant deficiency of heart blood and spleen *qi*[氣]. It sneaks upon the unsuspecting patient surreptitiously. The symptoms include sudden amenorrhea or absence of menstruation. This is accompanied by difficulty in breathing. This condition is very difficult to treat successfully. According to the Palace records, before Ma Peizhi, there was no discussion of double yang disease. Another characteristic of this condition is that the patient suffers muscle wasting or loss of weight. As a general rule, the difficulty in breathing is accompanied by wheezing and cough. Ma interpreted the two *yang* in double *yang* as involving the heart and spleen. Physical motion is controlled by the spleen and internal motion, manifested in the vessels. His more detailed explanation

follows in further passages.

Following are the case notes

26 July

Cixi's pulses: Both *cun*[寸] vacuous and fine. Left *guan*[關], deep, minute and stringlike. Right *guan* – deep, slightly stagnant, slippery. Both *chi*[尺] – deep and soggy. The pulse beat was irregular.

Ma noted that there was accumulation and depression. Cixi's heart and spleen were deplete.

The case notes continue.

The heart governs vessels. Spleen governs post-conception *qi*. The organs have come to a halt. The kidneys are not able to generate the wood. The spleen's function of transforming and transporting is not working. The blood is deplete. Cixi also had a sore lower back. Her limbs were sluggish. She had heat vacuity. She had a poor appetite. In order to cure the patient, the aim is to benefit the heart and spleen, and to nourish the blood and liver.

In this case we also notice that Ma Peizhi's interpretation of Cixi's pulse is that as well as being deficient overall she had, within this overall pattern, a particular problem of heat vacuity. Ma does not specify why he came to this conclusion. This point is crucial as this was the major disagreement with the other doctors on the team. They did not agree that Cixi had any heat. I do not detail these arguments here. Chang shows that Xue and Wang believed that Cixi needed only warming herbs. I suggest that Ma reached his conclusion from the pulse. The reasoning would have been that Cixi's pulses were so deficient that she must have had deficiency of *yin*[陰] as well as *yang*. This would mean that she would have simultaneous heat vacuity as well as cold. The interdependence of *yin* and *yang* means that the one must affect the other. This complexity

5) Scheid, 2007, pp. 94–99. Menghe was a region in modern day Jiangsu province.

renders treatment difficult.

Ma had fierce disagreements with Xue and Wang on the issue of whether Cixi had vacuity heat or not, Ma insisting that she did. We see that he won the arguments. He included one or two cooling herbs, most notably *Sheng Di*[生地黃], to address the vacuity heat among the array of moderately warming herbs. He prescribed the following herbs:

Dang Shen[黨參] Codonopsis 1.5

Bai Zhu[白朮] Atractylodes 1

Ou Zhi[藕汁] Lotus juice

Dang Gui[當歸] Angelica 2

Shan Yao[山藥] Yam 2

Bai Shao[白芍] White peony 1.5

Fu Shen[茯神] Poria 2

Sheng Di[生地黃] Rehmannia 3

Mu Li[牡蠣] Oyster shell 3

Xu Duan[續斷] Dipsaci 1.5

Hong Zao[紅棗] Red dates 3 pieces

Measurements are in *qian* 錢.

This is a very elegant prescription illustrative of the Menghe style described by Volker Scheid in *Currents of Tradition*. The herbs are generally moderate and delicate. The dosage is light. There is no sense of direct attack on the problem. We see, rather, the subtle hand of a physician who is intent on activating the *qi*[氣] mechanism of the patient, with the touch as light as a feather. This is simplicity encapsulated and artistry personified, if one accepts that the style of prescribing herbs reveals much about the physician. Evident in this prescription is the acknowledgement of the patient being a female, therefore paying attention to the idea of Blood as the leader.

I will not go into the individual herbs in much detail, but to summarise, Ma has prescribed herbs such as *Dang Shen*, *Bai Zhu*, *Fu Shen*, *Hong Zao* and *Shan Yao* to strengthen *qi*. This is in line with the strategy of building *qi* to strengthen the blood.

Each of these herbs addresses different aspects of

the *qi* in subtle ways. *Fu Shen*, for example, directly addresses Cixi's anxiety problem.

To address the problem of vacuity heat, each in their own different way, Ma Peizhi included, *Sheng Di*, *Bai Shao* and *Mu Li*. *Sheng Di* and *Bai Shao* also tonify blood, as does *Dang Gui*. Moreover, *Mu Li* can also assist in calming Cixi's frayed nerves. Xu Duan was included to strengthen Cixi's kidney *qi*.

The notes of Cixi's consultation the next day are as follows.

27 July

The records state that Ma Peizhi saw Cixi together with Xue Fuchen, Wang Shouzheng and Li Deli.

Both *cun* pulses had improved. The *guan* pulses were more stringlike. Both *chi* pulses were fine and weak. Liver *qi* was still rising. Cixi's menstrual period was still absent. Her sleep was poor. The middle *jiao* mechanism of fluid transportation was not working. Her stools were red with blood. (In other words, she had blood in her stools). Blood was spilling out from the stomach— this being connected to the spleen. The liver is supposed to store the blood. Since this was not working, then the lungs, kidneys and heart were all affected. *Zong qi*[宗氣]was not assisting. Cixi's *Shen*[神] (spirit) mechanism was exhausted and injured. Too much thinking had hurt Cixi's liver. This in turn had hurt the kidneys. Therefore, the heart and kidneys were not communicating. Wood *qi* was depressed. Therefore the liver was not supporting the spleen. The spleen channel runs along the chest, liver channel along both flanks. These areas were subsequently blocked. Wood is like a thief taking from the earth. Liver takes from the spleen. Therefore the *qi* could not flow smoothly. If *qi* is not flowing smoothly then blood flow stops. If the flow of blood stops then it stops communicating with the *Chong*[沖]and *Ren*[任]channels and the Sea of Blood becomes empty. The channels become chaotic. The strategy should be to smooth the

wood depression.

A reference to blood spilling out from her stomach should not be taken too seriously. This was a poetic way to say that there was bleeding. The reference to liver *qi* rising is the situation describing anxiety or perhaps anger. We notice that the heart/mind is still a central consideration. The *shen* mechanism referred to is Cixi's spirit or state of mind. Persisting with the same strategy, the resulting formula was not very different from the first; Ma Peizhi was still able to guide the strategy of treatment in the same direction. The strategy was still aimed at relieving Cixi's depression. The difference was in the slight shift to also targeting Cixi's liver rather than vacuity heat. As usual, one day is too short a time to have expected any recovery in Cixi's condition. She still had all kinds of problems. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that her pulses had improved. This was a very good sign that Cixi had responded well to treatment.

The records state that the formula used was *Yang Xin Gui Pi Tang*[養心歸脾湯] or Nourish the Heart and Restore the Spleen Decoction. The individual herbs were recorded as follows.

Dang Shen[黨參] Codonopsis 3 qian
Bai Zhu[白朮] Atractylodes 1.5
Ou Zhi[藕汁] Lotus juice
Fu Ling[茯苓] Poria 3
Dang Gui[當歸] Angelica 2
Bai Shao[白芍] Peony 1.5
Xiang Fu[香附] Cyperus 1
Di Yu Tan[地榆炭] Charred sanguisorbae 2
Cu Chai[醋柴] Vinegar prepared bupleurum 1
Dan Pi[丹皮] Moutan 2
Zhi Cao[炙草] Honey prepared licorice 0.8
Then add Zao Xin Tu[灶心土] Earth from a cooking fireplace 3.

In this prescription, *Xiang Fu* had been added. This herb's traditional use was to relieve depression, especially

when related to liver depression. *Di Yu Tan* and *Zao Xin Tu* were added to stop bleeding. Earth from a cooking fireplace was a substance commonly used to stop bleeding due to its warming property.

Again, the overall strategy was to nourish the blood by strengthening the spleen. This strategy was supplemented by the judicious balancing of cooling and warming herbs. It is noted that *Dan Pi* and *Chai Hu* were added to clear heat and to balance the warming earth from the fireplace.

IV. The Style of Ma Peizhi

At this point, Chen's records move away from Ma Peizhi as part of a team to discuss his personal style. The records refer to Ma Peizhi's own notes that he later published as *A Record of Being Marked By Grace or Ji En Lu*[紀恩祿]. The following account is a discussion of Ma Peizhi's own notes as chronicled in the Chen records.

The first comment is a reference to Ma staking a claim for the Wu style medicine of Jiangsu.⁶⁾ The editor's comments say that *A Record of Being Marked by Grace* contained many cases of all kinds, including difficult cases. Ma was an expert in treating depression and fatigue. The reader here may start to suspect that this is some type of hagiography. Indeed, this is what both Chang and Scheid hint at.⁷⁾ I believe it still useful to get a deeper sense of Ma Peizhi's thinking. Ma's writings are not merely of academic interest, but still hold practical relevance to modern day clinical practice.

Ma Peizhi, in his own notes, advocates the use of double *yang* disease theory, a term which the majority of modern day physicians do not use as their main style of practice. He is advocating that the chief strategy is to nourish the heart and to focus on the *shen* or the spirit as the main priority. To translate this into modern

6) Wu is the old name for an area incorporating parts of modern day Jiangsu and Zhejiang[浙江] provinces.

7) Chang, 1998, p. 245. Scheid, 2007, p.98.

day parlance he is saying that physical disease has its root in psychological worries and unease(dis-ease).

In a case like that of Cixi, many physicians who have received modern day training may think of the liver and kidneys as being primary. From examination of the Chang accounts it is seen that this was the argument that Ma was having with his counterparts. The other doctors in his team, Wang and Xue were arguing strongly for tonifying her kidneys. Ma was also arguing that women are different to men and needed to be prescribed herbs accordingly— concentrating on tonifying the blood.

In the records, Ma Peizhi gives an explanation for the term double *yang* disease. The heart governs the vessels – so controlling internal movement. The spleen controls post- conception *qi*, therefore external physical movement. The heart and the spleen in coordination are therefore crucial for the working of all the organs. He adds that the heart controls the *shen* or spirit, while the spleen controls the physical body and movement. These two then cover both the physical and mental aspects, being tightly connected and interdependent. The two *yang*, therefore, are motion and the vessels. By this, he means physical motion(controlled by the spleen) and internal motion(manifested in the vessels).

In his notes, Ma Peizhi also discusses his favourite herbs. It is common knowledge that the Chinese medical repertoire contains hundreds, if not thousands of medicinal substances. In the spirit of simplicity, Ma most commonly used *Dang Shen*, *Bai Zhu*, *Shan Yao* and *Fu Shen* to benefit *qi*, nourish the heart and strengthen the spleen; *Dang Gui* and *Bai Shao* to nourish the blood and harmonise the Liver; *Sheng Di*, *Xu Duan* to benefit the water to restrain wood. This can ensure that the *qi* circulation is working. Another herb that Ma Peizhi liked to use was *Ou Pian*[藕片]to moisten the lungs and tonify the spleen. These are all common herbs, with the exception of lotus *Ou Pian*, which is used occasionally by modern day physicians. Ma's point is his belief that simplicity is best, even in complex cases. This is in line with the Menghe style of the Wu[吳] area as it is

remembered.

Ma argued that diseases may have a myriad of causes and even more manifestations but they can all be handled by using the method of working on the heart and spleen channels. Here is the central nub of Ma Peizhi's clinical ideas. He insists that most conditions can be treated using the double *yang* disease method. When he says all, it probably does not literally mean all, but a majority of conditions, as the writing style is descriptive, tending towards artistic exaggeration rather than being pared down to facts.

Modern day teaching of Chinese medicine takes the approach of matching formulas to patterns. Conversely, physicians such as Ma were able to use one or two formulas to deal with most diseases. This was possible by the skilful and delicate art of fine tuning or adjusting the original herbal formula to suit the condition.

In this passage from Ma Peizhi's notes, we see that, in line with the Chinese scholarly tradition, he was always careful to claim inspiration from classic texts of China's ancient past. Ma claimed his inspiration from the *Inner Canon*.

Moving on to further illustrate Ma Peizhi's approach, we briefly look at just two more of Cixi's cases, which are not dated. Cixi in this case is recorded to have had blood in her stools and irregular menstrual periods. Her upper flanks were sore. Ma saw this as a problem of the blood. The notes record that his strategy was to nourish the heart and spleen and relax the liver depression.

To nourish the heart he advocated Restore the Spleen Decoction or *Gui Pi Tang*[歸脾湯].⁸⁾ Any practitioner of Chinese medicine will not fail to notice that this is a very well known formula to benefit the spleen *qi* and thereby restore its control over the blood. Ma Peizhi is affirming his preference for this strategy, in line with this formula's functions of tonifying blood and nourishing the heart. Perhaps more surprisingly, Ma Peizhi wrote

8) For a detailed discussion of this formula see Scheid, Bensky, Ellis and Barolet, 2009, *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Formulas and Strategies*. (I referred to an unpublished version).

that he also liked to use the earth from a cooking fireplace *Zao Xin Tu*. He explained that this warms the middle, strengthens the spleen, binds the intestines,⁹⁾ and stops bleeding.

In this case Cixi, in addition to the aforementioned symptoms, had bad sleep. Ma Peizhi prescribed *Gui Pi Tang*. He also asked her to take ginseng in the mornings on an empty stomach. This was to strengthen the effect of the treatment. After twenty nine days she felt a lot better. Her water had been nourished, her liver subdued. She had vitality or spirit *jingshen*[精神]. The heat in her spine had gone. Her throat, which had blocked *qi*, felt much relief. Her symptoms were all reduced. She was very happy. Her pulses were all good. She had been transformed, according to the final medical report. The rationale for the use of ginseng was to nourish the heart, to benefit *qi* and strengthen the spleen. This is Ma Peizhi's chosen example for using the double *yang* disease method.

Finally, to show that Ma Peizhi did use other methods in diagnosis and treatment, I discuss one more of Cixi's cases. In this case, Ma Peizhi discusses Withered Blood. No date is recorded. Before going into the notes, we note once again that Ma Peizhi was careful to cite the *Inner Canon* as his inspiration for this case. Here the notes become gushing with all kinds of praise for Ma Peizhi. It is said that Cixi bestowed on him gifts and paeons of praise. He was supposedly described as a sage. Chang Che— Chia does corroborate this, while showing that he was not the only one to be a recipient of praise.

The notes say that Cixi's chest and flanks were full. She had a poor appetite. She had foul smelling leukorrhea. The reference to feeling full means some kind of distension. She also had blood in her saliva. Her limbs were weak and almost immobile. She had dizziness. Again this was a blood problem. The name of the disease was withered blood. It is associated with exhaustion of the *qi*. This leads to damage of the liver function and then the decline of the menses.

In a change of style we see here that Ma Peizhi was

keen on not only prescribing herbs, but also on using food as medicine. This was a common method among Chinese physicians. Ma Peizhi prescribed Cixi to eat cuttlefish bone *Wu Zei Gu*[烏賊骨], sparrow eggs and to drink abalone juice. He said these would benefit the intestines and prevent damage to the liver function.

Following this short précis, the records include an appendix or an analysis of this case:

The lungs govern the *qi*. The liver governs the blood. Why the smell? The *qi* cannot keep the liver calm. The liver and lungs have gone out of control. This has caused the *qi* to become turbid and muddy. The (lung) *qi* is not descending. The clear *qi* is not rising. Therefore, Cixi was vomiting clear fluid with blood mixed in her saliva. The blood was not staying in the channels. Her four limbs were weak and cold. Her *qi* could not circulate. She had dizziness. Her *qi* and blood were vacuous as well as being chaotic.

Her *yin*, *yang* and blood were in a bad way. Her *qi* exhaustion and liver damage caused impairment of her period.

Ma asked her to take aloe vera *Lu Hui*[蘆薈], and madder *Qian Cao*[茜草]. Madder can unblock the channels and invigorate the circulation of blood. Sparrow eggs can tonify kidney *yang* and benefit *jing*¹⁰⁾ and blood. The *Ben Cao Gang Mu*[本草綱目]¹¹⁾ spoke about this. Drinking abalone juice can help the blood and *jing* and can transform the source.

Finally, Ma Peizhi places himself in the lineage of those seminal classical texts *Cold Damage*(*Shang Han Lun*)[傷寒論] and the Warm Diseases(*Wen Bing*)[溫病] while leaving the last citation to the *Inner Canon*. Ma's citation of the *Wen Bing* is significant for his acceptance of this relatively new current of medical theory. To this

9) This means to stop bleeding from the intestines or to stop diarrhea.

10) Essence related to the kidneys. [精]

11) *Compendium of Materia Medica* compiled by Li Shizhen[李時珍] in the Ming[明] period.

day, there are some physicians who negate the *Wen Bing* while positioning themselves as adherents of the *Shang Han Lun*.¹²⁾

The notes imply that this was a successful treatment. The analysis will again appear vague to the lay reader. Nevertheless, the practitioner may find this passage of interest. It is notable that Ma Peizhi liked to explain every symptom and was quite clear that the continuous dynamic movement of *qi* and blood were the most important aspects to consider with their complex inter-relationships being considered as a totality. Of interest is the simplicity of the treatment. Again, this is an example of using simplicity to deal with complexity.

As throughout this thesis, the preceding cases of Cixi's were charged with significance beyond the bounds of the palace. On one level, this was high power politics at play, with the western powers eager to know how Cixi would fare. On another level, a battle was being waged to see which style of medicine would win out. The fate of the empire was enmeshed with struggles to protect and enhance careers and reputations.

As seen in the record, Ma Peizhi's diagnosis was double *yang* disease. This indicated that Cixi was suffering from exhaustion. Ma pinpointed the cause as worry and over-thinking. For Ma, it was not a simple case but a complex one for which he adopted a simple strategy. The strategy he adopted of building *qi* and blood by gently targeting the heart and spleen was not adopted by the other doctors in the team. The other doctors insisted on warming as the principle strategy. Apart from exhaustion, a prominent symptom was amenorrhea. For Ma, this was one symptom of many rather than the disease itself.

Ma's approach was a whole of body and mind approach. He identified the need to focus on benefiting *qi* and blood. In this whole body and mind approach, it is analogous to finding the key to a problem that is the root cause of all other problems in the body and mind. For Ma the central issue was simply to stimulate the spleen to produce blood. Because of the integral relationship between the *qi* and blood, tonifying one will

have a direct effect on the other. The adage '*Qi* is the commander of blood, and blood is the mother of *qi*' suggests that *qi* moves the blood and that blood nourishes the *qi*.¹³⁾ Ma calleds this the Restore the Spleen or *Gui Pi Tang*[歸脾湯] strategy.

It is likely that Ma Peizhi first learned this strategy from his Menghe networks. Related to this, Fei Lanquan[費蘭泉] another Menghe physician related to Fei Boxiong, a teacher of Ma Peizhi, was known to use *Gui Pi Tang* to treat cases of female genital itching. He said that this method was transmitted in his family but that they had originally learned it from another family, the Jia.¹⁴⁾ This is significant because this method was not widely used. It is likely that Ma Peizhi was a beneficiary of learning this method through the Menghe network.

The Menghe method was simple but difficult to practise. It required a deep sophistication and grasp of the ever subtle nature of the flows of *qi* and other intangible qualities such as the heart/mind or *shen* or spirit. To use light dosages required a touch and a precise knowledge of the relationship of herbs in combination whose synergy enhanced the production and the flow of *qi* and blood as required. In his formula he also included other herbs to support the central thrust of the strategy. Regulating disease depends most of all on the capacity of a patient's system for maintaining the *yin/yang* balance of the body. Using drugs in this way is what is referred to as a few ounces being able to shift a thousand pounds.¹⁵⁾ The physicians of Menghe, Ma Peizhi being an integral figure, regarded the medicine of harmonisation and gentleness as a distinctive tradition of medical practice. Complex issues were consciously tackled with very simple strategies, characterised as gentle, mild and slow acting that had as their aim returning the body to a normal state of harmony and

12) Hanson, 1998, *Robust Northerners and Delicate Southerners: The Nineteenth Century Invention of a Southern Medical Tradition*.

13) Scheid, Bensky, Ellis and Barolet, 2009. P. 353.

14) Scheid, 2007, p. 156.

15) Scheid, 2007, p. 169.

balance.

This approach was inspired by Laozi's notion of non-interference *wu wei* [無為],

Sunzi's strategies of warfare emphasising the use of minimal force, Buddhist notions of mindfulness, and Confucian concerns for harmony and balance. To the outside observer this may seem like an unwieldy melange, but the writings of the Menghe physicians themselves show that these cultural roots, bedrocks of Chinese thought, provided succour and guidance in the very act of prescribing medicine and in healing.¹⁶⁾ This was a style that would later spread beyond Jiangnan but would soon encounter a clash of cultures with the advent of western medicine.

VI. Conclusion

Significance lies in the unique conceptualisation in which Chinese medicine regards the nature of women's *qi* to be different from men. While men and women share the obvious qualities such as *qi*, blood and so on, women were conceptualised as requiring unique treatment approaches. This could be characterised by the concept of recognising blood as the leader in treating women.

The physician featured in this article, Ma Peizhi, in a paradox infused with the concept of the interdependence of *yin* and *yang* used his double *yang* disease theory to treat a female patient, regarded to be *yin*. In his treatment strategy he identified the heart and the spleen as the key to successful treatment. This approach had its roots in his belief that physical disease stemmed from mental unease.

The paradox in the palace was that in the popular imagination, Cixi was seen to be wielding political power, placing her in a position traditionally occupied by males. Cixi, as the Dowager Empress, symbolising qualities of *yin* was placed in a position charged with *yang* displays of naked power.

The records show conclusively that Cixi was not the figure as portrayed to the world at large. Finding herself at or near the centre of power when the Qing was weak and vulnerable, the image she would have liked to portray to the world was out of her hands. The image making had spun out of control. Her enemies would distort her image. The once radiant image of the Qing court had turned into a nightmare. The once mighty power of the Qing had spun out of control. It is not surprising that Cixi spent many of her final years on her sickbed.

감사의 글

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