

2nd edition

Applications of
**Chinese
Formula
Compatibility**



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人民卫生出版社

PEOPLE'S MEDICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

BEIJING • LONDON • NEW YORK



人民卫生出版社

PMPH PEOPLE'S MEDICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

Website: <http://www.pmph.com>

Book Title: Applications of Chinese Formula Compatibility (2nd edition)
方剂的配伍方法 (第2版)

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First published: 2008

ISBN: 978-7-117-09206-7/R • 9207

Cataloguing in Publication Data:

A catalogue record for this book is available from the
CIP-Database China.

Printed in The People's Republic of China

ISBN 978-7-117-09206-7



9 787117 092067 >

About the Author



Professor Li Fei, born in July 1934, in Haimen City of Jiangsu province, graduated from Nanjing University of CM. He is a consultant for the Formula Branch of the China TCM Academy, as well as a member of the expert advisory committee in Nanjing University of CM.

His main achievements include the long-term teaching, study and clinical work of the texts *Chinese Medicinal Formulas* and *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet*. He holds abundant experience in the treatment of diseases of the heart, spleen and stomach, and kidney. He took part in the compiling and planning work of the nationwide teaching material of the second, fourth, and fifth editions of *Chinese Medicinal Formulas*, organized by the Ministry of Health and National Bureau of Administration of TCM. He compiled the following

teaching materials: *Teaching Material Series of the TCM Basic - Science of Formulae*, *Teaching Materials for the Foreign Students in Advanced TCM Universities - Chinese Medicinal Formula*, *Modern TCM Serial Teaching Material - Chinese Medicinal Formula*. The didactical reference books compiled by Professor Li Fei include: *Translation and Paraphrasing of The Essentials from the Golden Cabinet*, *Didactical Reference Material for The Essentials from the Golden Cabinet*, *Clinical Applications of Chinese Medicinals and Formulas* (English and Portuguese versions), *Basic Prescriptions Handbook for the TCM Clinic*, and *Higher Series of TCM - Chinese Medicinal Formula*, which received a third class award in the eleventh nationwide competition for excellence in science and technology books category. Professor Li collated the ancient text, *Emendation and Paraphrasing of The Discussion on the Origins of the Symptoms of Disease* and obtained a third class award for the advancement of science and technology awarded by the National Bureau of Administration of TCM. He participated in the reading and editing of *Formulae Thesaurus of TCM* (volumes 1~11) which is the topic of the Ministry of Health, he worked as the subeditor and routine member of the editorial board, and obtained the first class award for the advancement of science and technology awarded by the National Bureau of Administration of TCM. Professor Li Fei has also published more than 60 academic theses.

Preface

Formulas are comprised of herbal medicinals, and constitute the clinical development and increasing use of Chinese medicinals. After the appropriate combinations, Chinese medicinals become formulas and can, firstly, bring into play the synergistic reaction between medicinals and increase the curative effects or change the intrinsic function and produce a new effect. Secondly, it can identify patterns and determine treatment, with consideration of all aspects of syndromes to enlarge the therapeutic range, and to meet the needs of relatively complicated syndromes. Thirdly, regarding those Chinese medicinals with drastic properties or pertaining to those that are toxic, medicinal combinations can restrict the secondary properties and reduce toxicity, hence eliminating the ingredients that are harmful to the human body. Therefore, in a formula, medicinals can supplement, oppose, or complement one another, thereby embodying the superiority of Chinese medicinals combinations.

There is a plethora of formulas in TCM, we had recorded 96,592 formulas in the *Formulae Thesaurus of TCM* compiled in the 1990s. From these abundant formulas, there is much to discover and research regarding the compatible rules for mastering the applications of formulas for clinical use. So the study on the compatible theories and methods of formulas is the core issue behind formula research, and is the only way to discover the compatible rules of formulas.

As far as the direction of research is concerned, the difference between the compatible methods of formulas and the treatises on prescriptions is that the latter mainly aims at single

formulas, whereas the former aims at formulas as a whole. Compatible methods of formulas operate under the guidance of the theories of therapeutics, in order to apply inductive methods in scientific research, launching from the study of the systematical analysis of a variety of representative formulas (such as tonic formulas, formulas for relieving exterior syndromes, formulas for invigorating blood and dispelling stasis, etc.) which were in common use in the past. This is done in order to find common ground, particular points and main points of the combination in these kinds of formulas, thereby revealing the compatible essences of the formulas that include the relationships between the Chinese medicinals used in the formulas, their dosage, preparation, and formulation.

Since the end of the 1970s, I have engaged in this direction with research, publishing the first article, *Discussions on the Compatible Methods of Formulae for Relieving Exterior Syndromes*, in the first issue of Nanjing University of CM Transaction in 1982. Thereafter, I was engaged in the studies of formula compatibility in tonic formulas, purgative formulas, and formulas for treating wind syndromes, among others, which were published in succession in the Journal of TCM and other magazines of TCM in many provinces throughout the country. These studies played an important role in the teaching of undergraduate students and majors of TCM, in advancing the study of teachers and training of postgraduate students, to enhance the teaching quality and provide guidance for formulating prescriptions in the clinic. Due to the heavy demands of teaching, research and clinical work, it took over 20 years for me to amend, supplement and collect all the research theories on the compatible methods of formulas which were finally published in 1999.

Formulas for treating dryness syndromes are divided into formulas that can slightly disperse outer dryness and formulas that can nourish yin to moisturize dryness. As dryness and heat injure fluids in the body, the *Basic Questions - Great Treatise on the Correspondences and Manifestations of Yin and Yang* said: "If dryness prevails, the body becomes dry." So the compatible characteristic of formulas for treating dryness syndromes is that both dispersing outer dryness and nourishing yin to moisturize dryness and nourishing fluids should all be considered, at all times. It may be embodied in the representative formulas for treating dryness syndromes recorded in the past version of the teaching material in *Chinese Medicinal Formulas*. Regarding the aspect of combination, formulas for slightly dispersing outer dryness are similar to formulas for relieving exterior syndromes, and formulas for nourishing yin to moisturize dryness are

similar to formulas for nourishing yin, so these kinds of formulas are simply just mentioned in this book.

According to file No. 39 (1993) issued by the State Council and No. 59 (1993) issued by the Ministry of Health, *xī jiǎo* (Cornu Rhinocerotis) belongs to the category of banned herbal medicinals, so when applying ancient formulas with this ingredient for current clinical use, it is substituted with *shuǐ niú jiǎo* (Cornu Bubali).

Since the first publication of this book in 2001, it has received wide acclaim and recognition by the clinical, research and academic professionals of the TCM community. With the development of traditional Chinese medicine, there is constant change and progress in research. It is my sincere wish that those readers of this book who have an interest and background in TCM will provide their valued suggestions for further amendments of this work.

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August 2007

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Introduction

The Principle of Formulating Prescriptions

A prescription is composed of selected medicinals and suitable doses according to the principles of formulating a prescription, based on syndrome differentiation for the etiology and determining the therapy method. The *Basic Questions - Great Treatise on the Essentials of Supreme Truth* (Sù Wèn - Zhì Zhēn Yào Dà Lùn, 素问·至真要大论) indicated that: "The medicinal aiming at the main syndrome is called the chief, the medicinal helping the chief medicinal is called the deputy, the medicinal responding to the deputy medicinal is called the envoy." (主病之谓君, 佐君之谓臣, 应臣之谓使) This is the principle of formulating a prescription. About two thirds of the 314 prescriptions recorded in the *Discussion on Cold Damage* (Shāng Hán Lùn, 伤寒论) and in the *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* (Jīn Guì Yào Lùè, 金匱要略) compiled by Zhang Zhong-jing in the Han Dynasty embodied the above principle. The formulation of many effective prescriptions in the *Important Formulas Worth a Thousand Gold Pieces [for Any Emergency]* (Bèi Jí Qiān Jīn Yào Fāng, 备

急千金要方) compiled by Sun Si-miao and the *Arcane Essentials from the Imperial Library* (Wài Tái Mì Yào, 外台秘要) by Wang Tao in the Tang Dynasty, show a rigorous compatibility and a clear primary and secondary syndrome. It illustrates that the "chief, deputy, assistant and envoy" (君臣佐使) theory of formulating a prescription had been applied widely by many clinical doctors in the Han and Tang Dynasties. During the period of the Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties, Cheng Wu-ji compiled the *Clarification of the Theory of Cold Damage - Treatise on Prescriptions* (Shāng Hán Míng Lǐ Lùn - Yào Fāng Lùn, 伤寒明理论·药方论) to discuss the principle of syndrome differentiation and prescription establishment in the *Discussion on Cold Damage*, and launched into the research on the theory of prescription formulation, and popularized the theory of prescriptions from the *Inner Classic* (Nèi Jīng, 内经) for successive doctors in creating new prescriptions. Thereafter, many doctors, such as Zhang Yuan-su, Li Gao, Wang Hao-gu, He Bo-zhai, Xu Hong,

Wu Kun, Wang Ang, Ke Qin, etc, individually developed and contributed to the principles of formulating prescriptions from the academic and practical points of view, and enriched the theories of composing prescriptions, thereby the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” theory became enhanced further in the formulation and application of prescriptions. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, with the establishment of *Chinese Medicinal Formulas* as a subject, the compatible theory of methods of prescriptions were summarized and studied systematically. Especially important is that with the development of experimental research on prescriptions, many scientific connotations on the principle of using “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” in formulating prescriptions were expounded. Both in the academic texts for the *Chinese Medicinal Formulas* versions 1~5, in colleges of Chinese medicine, and in the teaching material of the general higher education on *Chinese Medicinal Formulas*, the theory of “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” as the principle of formulating prescriptions is held to be the guide for the research on compatibility theory and method of prescription, and has become an important topic in modern research on formula prescriptions.

There were difficulties in systematizing and modernizing the research of prescriptions because it took a long period of realization and practice to put forward the principle of “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” in formulating prescriptions, and the views of many doctors regarding this principle have been varied, plus the fact that many prescriptions couldn’t be explained with this

principle. In this chapter, we will discuss this principle from the perspective of the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” theory, the different beliefs of many doctors and the development of this study and its research.

■ THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE “CHIEF, DEPUTY, ASSISTANT AND ENVOY” PRINCIPLE

As a professional phrase, “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” was also found in the *Divine Husbandman’s Classic of the Materia Medica* (*Shén Nóng Běn Cǎo Jīng*, 神农本草经). In this book, according to their different properties and applications, Chinese medicinals were differentiated into three categories of the best, the middle and the low grades based on the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy”; implying, the best grade was the chief medicinal, the middle grade was the deputy medicinal, and the low-grade were the assistant and envoy medicinals. The meaning of the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” was completely different to that applied in the principle of formulating a prescription. So the *Basic Questions - Great Treatise on the Essentials of Supreme Truth* indicated that: “The meaning of chief and deputy in the formulation of prescriptions, is not the meaning of best, middle and low grades.” (方制君臣, 非上中下三品之谓也。) It told us that the original meaning of “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” included two aspects, pertaining to the classification of medicinal properties and the theory of the

formulation of prescriptions. The origin of the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” theory in prescriptions can be found in the book, the *Inner Classic*. It should be strictly differentiated. The theory of formulating a prescription during the period of the *Inner Classic* applied the different military statuses of the chief, deputy, assistant and envoy of that time to the concept of different primary and secondary relations of herbal medicinals in formula prescriptions. That is: “A medicinal aiming at the main syndrome is called the chief; a medicinal helping the chief medicinal is called the deputy; a medicinal responding to the deputy medicinal is called the envoy.” It indicated that in a prescription the mainly effective medicinal for therapy was the chief medicinal, the helpful medicinal to the chief was the deputy medicinal, and the medicinal catering to the deputy was the envoy medicinal. Due to the differences in the primary and secondary effects of medicinals in a prescription, and the compatibility of medicinals in the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” theory requiring different amounts of medicinals, according to the different sizes of prescriptions in the clinic, the *Inner Classic* has further formally stipulated the composition of prescriptions, such as “one chief and two deputies,” (君一臣二) “one chief with three deputies and five assistants,” (君一臣三佐五) and “one chief with three deputies and nine assistants,” (君一臣三佐九) etc. Thereby the principle of selecting medicinals and formulating prescriptions was established. Shen Kuo, in the *Song Dynasty*, indicated that when analyzing the principle of formulating prescriptions,

“the theory of one chief, two deputies, three assistants, and five envoys, means that although there are many medicinals in a prescription, just one of them mainly aims at the syndrome, while the others will help to carry out its effect. This is appropriate.” (用药有一君、二臣、三佐、五使之说,其意以谓药虽众,主病者在一物,其他则节节相为用,大略相统制,如此为宜) *Dream Creek Essays* (Mèng Xī Bǐ Tán, 梦溪笔谈) illuminated that the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” were determined according to their respective importance in a prescription. During the *Ming Dynasty*, He Bo-zhai further explained that “the medicinals in therapy play their effects in different ways. The main effective ingredient is called the chief medicinal; the helpful ingredient to the chief is called the deputy; the helpful ingredient but incompatible with the chief is called the assistant; and the ingredient leading the other medicinals in the prescription to the affected part or some correlative channels and collaterals is called the envoy.” (大抵药之治病,各有所主。主治者,君也;辅治者,臣也;与君相反而相助者,佐也;引经及引治病之药至于病所者,使也。) (*The Inside of Chinese Medicine - Yī Xué Guān Jiàn*, 医学管见) The text, *The Inside of Chinese Medicine*, further expounded the meaning of “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy.”

THE REALIZATIONS OF DOCTORS IN PAST DYNASTIES

Since the theory of the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” in the formulation of prescriptions was put forth in the *Inner Classic*, many doctors try to discuss and

differentiate the objective proofs of the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” from their own views. In general, the following three aspects should be mentioned.

1. Differentiating “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” according to the dosages of the Chinese medicinals

The chief medicinal is the main ingredient in the composition of a prescription and its dosage is relatively large, but the dosage of the deputy, assistant and envoy medicinal is reduced in turn. So, many doctors choose the dosage of a medicinal in prescriptions based on the standard for differentiating the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy.” Li Gao said: “The dosage of the chief medicinal is the maximum, then the deputy’s dosage is secondary and its dosage cannot exceed the dosage of the chief” (君药分量最多, 臣药次之, 不可令臣过于君). In the *Discussion on the Spleen and Stomach* (Pí Wèi Lùn, 脾胃论), Wang Hao-gu also said: “The dosage of the chief medicinal is the most, the deputy medicinal is next, and the assistant medicinal is third. If the effects of all the ingredients in the prescription are uniform, then their respective dosages are uniform” (为君者最多, 为臣者次之, 佐者又次之, 药之为证所主同者, 则等分). In the *Materia Medica for Decoctions* (Tāng Yè Běn Cǎo, 汤液本草), Wu Qiu further indicated: “The dosage of a medicinal is according to the following standard: The main effect on a syndrome is from the chief medicinal, and its dosage is one hundred percent, then the deputy medicinal’s dosage is seventy to eighty percent, and the assistant medicinal is fifty to sixty percent, while the

envoy medicinal is thirty to forty percent” (凡用药铢分, 主病为君, 以十分为率, 臣用七八分, 辅佐五六分, 使以三四分) (*Thoughts on Curing - Huó Rén Xīn Tǒng*, 活人心统). All of the above discusses that it is somewhat reasonable to differentiate the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” according to the dosage of medicinals, but because of the variance in characteristics of the effects of the medicinals, the strength of the effects and the weight of medicinals’ textures, in addition to the different needs for individual therapies, it is insufficient to determine the dosage solely based on the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” standard. For example, Ke Qin discussed the dosage of ingredients in the formula, *Dà Chéng Qì Tāng* (Major Qi-Coordinating Decoction, 大承气汤) from the *Discussion on Cold Damage*: “The dosage of hòu pò (厚朴, *Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis*) is twice that of dà huáng (大黄, *Radix et Rhizoma Rhei*), so the medicinal with the effect of promoting qi is the chief medicinal” (厚朴倍大黄, 是气药为君) (*Collected Writings on Renewal of the Discussion on Cold Damage - Further Appendices to the Discussion on Cold Damage - Shāng Hán Lái Sū Jí - Shāng Hán Fù Yì*, 伤寒来苏集·伤寒附翼). This subject necessitates further discussion. First, in terms of the property of dà huáng (*Radix et Rhizoma Rhei*) and hòu pò (*Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis*), the former is bitter and cold, with the effect of purging away heat and relieving constipation, cleaning the small intestine and the stomach, invigorating blood and transforming stasis. The latter is bitter and warm, with the effect of promoting the flow of qi and guiding

away stagnation, and relieving fullness, and is indicated for cases of excess syndrome of the *yangming fu*-organs. Therefore, in this prescription, *dà huáng* (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei) should be considered to serve as a chief medicinal. Secondly, analyzing from the selection of medicinals in the *Sān Chéng Qì Tāng* (Three Qi-Coordinating Decoction, 三承气汤), some practitioners use *hòu pò* (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis) while some practitioners don't, but *hòu pò* (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis) is a prerequisite medicinal. It illustrates that all three prescriptions named "*Chéng Qì*" use *dà huáng* (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei) as the chief medicinal. Thirdly, compared with the *Hòu Pò Sān Wù Tāng* (Officinal Magnolia Bark Three Agents Decoction, 厚朴三物汤) in the *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet*, the composition of this prescription is uniform, but the dosage of every medicinal is the same as that in *Dà Chéng Qì Tāng* (Major Qi-Coordinating Decoction). Although the medicinal of promoting the circulation of qi is emphasized as a chief medicinal, the prescription is indicated for abdominal pain, both the full and closed types, and the prescription is not named *Chéng Qì Tāng* (Qi-Coordinating Decoction), but rather, *Hòu Pò Sān Wù Tāng* (Officinal Magnolia Bark Three Agents Decoction). It is obvious that if the main effect of a prescription is purging, then *dà huáng* (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei) is used as the chief medicinal, but if its effect is promoting the circulation of qi, then *hòu pò* (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis) is used as the chief medicinal. Therefore, it is not comprehensive to differentiate the "chief, deputy, assistant and envoy" just according

to the dosage of medicinals in a prescription.

2. Differentiating "chief, deputy, assistant and envoy" according to the strength of the Chinese medicinals.

In accordance with the needs of the clinic, the composition of prescriptions may need a medicinal with strong effects to serve as the chief medicinal and the effect of deputy, assistant, envoy medicinal to be relatively weak, so some doctors differentiate "chief, deputy, assistant and envoy" according to the strength of the medicinal. For example, Zhang Yuan-su, indicated: "*The medicinal with strongest effect serves as the chief medicinal*" (力大者为君) (recorded in *Grand Materia Medica - Běn Cǎo Gāng Mù*, 本草纲目). However, the strength of a medicinal in a prescription is also correlated to its dosage and preparation, so it is not sufficient to simply emphasize the strength of the medicinal. For instance, *Zhǐ Zhú Tāng* (Immature Bitter Orange and Atractylodes Macrocephala Decoction, 枳实汤), as recorded in the *Essentials from the Golden Cabinet* and *Zhǐ Zhú Wán* (Immature Bitter Orange and Atractylodes Macrocephala Pill, 枳实丸), as recorded in the *Discussion on the Spleen and Stomach*, are both composed of two herbal medicinals: *zhǐ shí* (枳实, Fructus Aurantii Immaturus) and *bái zhú* (白术, Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), which are indicated for stuffiness due to weakness of the spleen. The former mainly targets stuffiness, using the strong effects of *zhǐ shí* (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus) as the chief medicinal; the latter mainly

treats the weakness of the spleen, so *bái zhú* (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), with its weak effect, serves as the chief medicinal. So the correct conclusion cannot be reached solely considering the strength of the two medicinals while ignoring the differences between the two prescriptions in terms of dosage and preparation. The other example is *Má Zǐ Rén Wán* (Cannabis Fruit Pill, 麻子仁丸), recorded in the *Discussion on Cold Damage*. It is the representative laxative prescription and *má zǐ rén* (麻子仁, Fructus Cannabis) serves here as the chief medicinal. In terms of the strength of the effects of the ingredients, *dà huáng* (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei) shows the strongest effect of purging, and should be differentiated as the chief medicinal, but this contradicts the principles behind the formulation of this particular prescription and makes it difficult to distinguish it in terms of the principle behind *Sān Chéng Qì Tāng* (Three Qi-Coordinating Decoction), so it is also not comprehensive to simply differentiate the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” based on the strength of the medicinals.

3. Differentiating the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” according to the medicinal used for naming the prescription.

Throughout history, prescriptions named after a single medicinal generally indicate the chief medicinal which was used, such as *Má Huáng Tāng* (Ephedra Decoction, 麻黄汤) and *Guì Zhī Tāng* (Cinnamon Twig Decoction, 桂枝汤). Otherwise, the prescription names reflected medicinals arranged in the respective

orders of “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy,” such as *Má Huáng Fù Zǐ Xì Xīn Tāng* (Ephedra, Aconite, and Asarum Decoction, 麻黄附子细辛汤), *Líng Guì Zhú Gān Tāng* (Poria, Cinnamon Twig, Atractylodes Macrocephala, and Licorice Decoction, 苓桂术甘汤), etc. Many doctors analyzed the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” according to the medicinals used in the name of a prescription, which is quite reasonable. However, the meanings of prescriptions named with medicinals are varied, and not limited in scope to the chief medicinal, such as *Shí Zǎo Tāng* (Ten Jujubes Decoction, 十枣汤), recorded in the *Discussion on Cold Damage*. This is a representative prescription for eliminating fluid retention, which uses *dà jǐ* (大戟, Radix Euphorbiae Pekinensis), *yuán huā* (芫花, Flos Genkwa), *gān suì* (甘遂, Radix Kansui), three medicinals with the effects of drastically purging and eliminating fluid as the chief and deputy medicinals, yet it is named with the medicinal *dà zǎo* (大枣, Fructus Jujubae), with the function of reinforcing the spleen and the stomach. The meaning of this prescription deserves close examination, because all of the medicinals in this prescription show the effects of drastically purging and eliminating fluid. It is easy to injure the spleen and the stomach, and in turn the resistant qi in the body, so ten pieces of *dà zǎo* (Fructus Jujubae) are used in this prescription to reinforce the spleen and the stomach, as well as to reduce the drastic properties of the other medicinals and their toxic reactions, and to protect the resistant qi while purging. At the same time, it is a reminder of the incompatibility between *gān*

cǎo (甘草, Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae) and the three medicinals in this prescription: Dà jǐ (Radix Euphorbiae Pekinensis), yuán huā (Flos Genkwa), gān suì (Radix Kansui). So the name of “Shí Zǎo” is very profound. The other example is Shén Qū Wán (Medicated Leaven Pill, 神曲丸), from the *Important Formulas Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold for Any Emergency*, used for the optical disorders caused by incoordination between the heart and the kidney due to the disharmony of water and fire. The medicinal, cí shí (磁石, Magnetitum), in this prescription enters the kidney channel and shows the effects of benefitting yin and suppressing yang, and is used as the chief medicinal. Zhū shā (朱砂, Cinnabaris) enters the heart channel, is capable of purging away fire from the heart and tranquilizing the mind, and is used as a deputy medicinal. The combination of the two medicinals can nourish the kidney and suppress yang, fill up the kidney with essence, enable the patient to hear and see well, as well as restore coordination between the heart and the kidney so that a normal physiological state is recovered and the mind is tranquilized. In relation to why the prescription was called shén qū (神曲, Massa Medicata Fermentata), is firstly because the disharmony between the heart and kidney, and between water and fire; it is caused by the dysfunction of the middle *jiao*; and since shén qū (Massa Medicata Fermentata) is used for digesting grains and strengthening the spleen, it can regulate the middle *jiao*, and also is helpful in restoring the coordination between the heart and the kidney, as well as the controlling of fire with water. Secondly,

both cí shí (Magnetitum) and zhū shā (Cinnabaris) are both mineral medicinals, which can easily disturb the normal function of the stomach. Shén qū (Massa Medicata Fermentata) can strengthen the stomach and help to transport foods and mineral medicinals, and the combination of these medicinals may prevent the dysfunction of the stomach caused by mineral medicinals, as well as help the transformation of foods and its upward flow to benefit the eyes. Therefore, it is insufficient to solely differentiate “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” based on the medicinals used in the name of a prescription.

The above discussion demonstrates that the confirmation of a medicinal as the “chief, deputy, assistant and envoy” is made according to the primary or secondary effects of the medicinal, the needs of the formula combination, as well as the dosage and strength of the medicinal. A comprehensive and integrated analysis is greatly beneficial to the understanding of the principles of formulating a prescription, and to the application of formulating and establishing new prescriptions.

MODERN INTERPRETATION OF THE “CHIEF, DEPUTY, ASSISTANT AND ENVOY”

1. Chief medicinal

This is the ingredient with the primary therapeutic effect aiming at the main disease or main syndrome and exhibits the following three characteristics: