

History & Philosophy of Medicine

Discussion on "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao"

Guan-Qun Hou¹, Ming-Yuan Lu^{2*}

¹2017 doctoral candidate of Shandong university of TCM, Jinan 250355, China; ²Shandong University of TCM, Jinan 250355, China.

***Corresponding to:** Ming-Yuan Lu, Nei Jing Department, College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Shandong University of TCM, Jinan, Shandong, China. E-mail: 605432055@qq.com.

Highlights

This paper analyzes the significance of "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao", through confirming the meaning of the word "Chu" from the perspective of literature, and interpreting the connotation of "Wei Qi" with traditional Chinese medicine thinking.

Editor Summary

Based on the analysis of relevant text of *Nei Jing* and the character of Chu with the meaning of leaving, it is concluded that "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao". And it means Wei Qi has left Shang Jiao of Zang Fu system and following in Meridian system, according to Wei Qi's connotation of following and protecting. **Shang Jiao** is the original starting point of Wei Qi in circulation just as it is born. And Shang Jiao is the place where "the slippery and tough Qi of water and grain" has transformed its name into "Wei Qi", which is also the conjunction point that Wei Qi changing from **Ti** (ontology) into **Yong** (methodology).



Abstract

Due to the different versions of *Nei Jing* have been published in the past, variant of records have shown the different explanation of the original source of Wei Qi, thus there are two popular options are still under debate, Shang Jiao and Xia Jiao. Our research has found that the core reason of above dispute is caused by the vague understanding of the meaning of "Chu". Based on the analysis of relevant text of *Nei Jing* and the character of Chu with the meaning of leaving, it is concluded that "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao". And it means Wei Qi has left Shang Jiao of Zang Fu system and following into Meridian system, according to Wei Qi' s connotation of following and protecting. Shang Jiao is the original starting point of Wei Qi in circulation just as it is born. And Shang Jiao is the place where "the slippery and tough Qi of water and grain" has transformed its name into "Wei Qi", which is also the conjunction point that Wei Qi changing from Ti (ontology) into Yong (methodology). And it explains the theory of clinical application based on this view.

Keywords: Wei Qi, Shang Jiao, Ontology, Methodology, Traditional Chinese medicine

Concepts:

Qi: In traditional Chinese medicine, Qi is believed to be the most basic and vital force forming the body and keeping life activities. It is used flexibly in different levels to describe physiological or pathological states, such as Qi and Blood, Zheng Qi and Xie Qi, Yang Qi and Yin Qi etc. **Wei Qi:** Ying Qi and Wei Qi, the two surround body ceaselessly day and night. Their circulating forms are different, Ying Qi follows in Mai (vessels) and Wei Qi out of Mai (vessels). **Shan Jiao:** As one of six Fu, San Jiao consists of three parts, Shang Jiao (the upper one), Zhong Jiao (the middle one), Xia Jiao (the lower one).

Abbreviations:

TCM, Traditional Chinese medicine.

Citation:

Guan-Qun Hou, Ming-Yuan Lu. Discussion on "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao". *History & Philosophy of Medicine*, 2020, 2 (1): 14-20.

Executive Editor: Guan-Qun Hou, Yang-Tao Li.

Submitted: 4 January 2020, **Accepted:** 1 February 2020, **Online:** 2 February 2020.

Background

Wei Qi theory is an important part of the traditional Chinese medicine theories, and it has many controversies. Because of different ancient copies of the article *Ying Wei Sheng Hui* in *Ling Shu*, there are "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao" and "Wei Qi Chu Xia Jiao" two kinds of sayings. Therefore, most of debates are focusing on which 'Jiao' that the Wei Qi comes from.

Debates of the Original Location of Wei Qi

The original location of Wei Qi exists two records: Wei Qi comes from Shang Jiao or Xia Jiao in the passage of *Ying Wei Sheng Hui* in *Ling Shu*, the diverseness of the ancient *Nei Jing* (conclude *Ling Shu*) is unable to be used as a strong evidence to confirm the origin of Wei Qi. Therefore, the origin of Wei Qi has been discussed by later medicals fiercely, and there are three main opinions: "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao", means Wei Qi coming from upper Jiao; "Wei Qi Chu Xia Jiao", refers to Wei Qi going out of Xia Jiao; "Wei Qi Chu San Jiao" implies Wei Qi coming from three Jiao (the upper, middle and lower Jiao).

Wei Qi Coming From Shang Jiao

Wei Qi comes from Shang (upper) or Xia (lower) Jiao, which is mainly recorded in the passage of *Ying Wei Sheng Hui* in *Ling Shu*. It records "Shang Jiao comes from the upper mouth of the stomach, and goes along with pharynx above, through the diaphragm and chest, walks through armpit, along with Tai Yin meridian spaces, then comes back to hand Yang Ming meridian, up to the tongue, down to foot Yang Ming meridian. It often circles in Yang 25 degrees and Yin 25 degrees together in a circumference with Ying Qi. Dong-Yi Cao [1] believes "Shang Jiao" is idiomatic of "Wei Qi out from Shang Jiao" in this text, because only Qi can "come", "go", "walk", "follow", "up" and "down". And the Qi who can always walk with Ying Qi in company must be Wei Qi, because only the characteristics of Wei Qi conform to the scriptures. In addition, leakage disease is also the pathological manifestation of Wei Qi disorder. Therefore, according to the meaning in the context, Wei Qi is thought to come from Shang Jiao.

Other researchers explore the origin of Wei Qi by comparing the specific nature and functional characteristics of Qi from Shang Jiao described in other articles in *Nei Jing* with Wei Qi characteristics. Such as the passage of *Ping Ren Jue Gu* in *Ling Shu* contains: "Qi discharged from Shang Jiao is agile and slippery." *Ling Shu · Jue Qi* says: "Shang Jiao opens, dispersing Qi of grain, filling body, nourishing fine hair, like fog irrigation, this is called Qi." *Yong Ju* in *Ling Shu* also records "Qi from Shang Jiao warms muscles, nourishes joints and penetrates through skin." It can be seen that the Qi from Shang Jiao described in

many scriptures, has traits of swift and fierce, filling body spaces, nourishing fine hair, warming muscles, and penetrating skins, which is in line with Wei Qi features. According to this, Hong-Wu Wang holds the view that Qi from Shang Jiao is Wei Qi, that is to say, Wei Qi comes from Shang Jiao [2].

There are also medicals study the relationship between Wei Qi and Shang Jiao from physiological and pathological aspects. Tie-Bing Fan believes that the formation of Wei Qi relies on the function of lungs in Shang Jiao, and the pathological relationship between the two is also closely related, so it is known as "Fei Wei", which is idiomatic of "Wei Qi and lungs", so he believes that "Wei Qi comes from Shang Jiao" [3].

Wei Qi Coming From Xia Jiao

Jie-Bin Zhang (1563 B.C.-1640 B.C.), a famous medical in Ming Dynasty, believes that Wei Qi is from Xia (lower) Jiao, according to the passage *Ying Wei Sheng Hui* in *Ling Shu* [4]. It says "when sun comes out, Wei Qi goes out from eyes, follows the head downward, goes along with the Bladder Meridian of Foot-Taiyang in Yang spaces; when sun goes down, Wei Qi starts from the Kidney Meridian of Foot-Shaoyin in Yin spaces, it goes from the bladder to kidney, from down to up, so Wei Qi comes from Xia Jiao." That is, Wei Qi goes from the Bladder Meridian into Yang spaces in the morning, and at night from the Kidney Meridian into Yin spaces. It shows that the starting point of Wei Qi circulation of day and night is the bladder and kidney in Xia (lower) Jiao. Therefore, he believed that Wei Qi is from Xia (lower) Jiao.

Shi Ma, a famous medical in Ming Dynasty, also believes that Wei Qi comes out of Xia (lower) Jiao [4], "the Qi of Xia Jiao rising through Zhong (middle) Jiao to Shang (upper) Jiao, is called Wei Qi, so Wei Qi comes from Xia Jiao." It compares Xia Jiao with Shang Jiao, then Xia Jiao belongs to Yin, Shang Jiao belongs to Yang. And there is Yang in Yin, so the Qi who can rise from Yin—Xia (lower) Jiao to Yang—Shang (upper) Jiao, is called Wei Qi. This conclusion comes by comparing Wei Qi to Yang Qi.

Zeng-Jia Zhang understand "Chu" as the meaning of "generate", so he thinks "Wei Qi Chu Xia Jiao" prefers "Wei Qi is generated from Xia Jiao." According to the text in *Shang Han Lun Qian Zhu Bu Zheng* "Tai Yang Bladder can generate Qi from water, going upward and outside, which is called Yang of Wei (defending) Wai (outside)" It is believed that Yang Qi of Tai Yang Bladder evaporates its fluid, and the Qi changes in mist state and reaches the body surface along meridians. This is the Qi of Tai Yang, that is, Wei Qi. So he holds the view that Wei Qi originates from the fluid steamed by the bladder [5]. Therefore, it is believed that Wei Qi originates from the bladder in Xia Jiao.

Wei Qi Coming From San Jiao

Some researchers also believe that "Wei Qi Chu San

Jiao". For example, Li Qin, et al. believes that Wei Qi is distributed throughout the body, depending on the function of lungs in Shang (upper) Jiao, so Wei Qi Chu Shang (upper) Jiao. According to *Du Yi Sui Bi*, it contains: "Wei Qi originates from the door of life, reaches San Jiao to warm muscles, bones, skin." Since Wei Qi originates from the door of life, and the door of life lives in Xia (lower) Jiao, and the function of kidney which lives in Xia (lower) Jiao is the root of the formation of Wei Qi. Therefore, it is thought that Wei Qi is from Xia (lower) Jiao. And the spleen and stomach in Zhong (middle) Jiao is the hub of human body Qi lifting and discharging, they are the important foundations of Wei Qi generation and dispersion, so it is believed "Wei Qi Chu Zhong (middle) Jiao". Accordingly, they think "Wei Qi Chu San Jiao" [6]. Here researchers take "Chu" as the meaning of "related", and all viscera related to the formation and movement of Wei Qi are attributed to the meaning of "Chu".

It can be seen from the above that researchers study the issue by exploring context of the same text in *Nei Jing*, or carries out comparative analysis from the relevant content of different texts, or understands the origin of Wei Qi by personal understanding of physiology and pathology in traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). But they do not reach an agreement and disagree with each other. The reason lies in the lack of a deep understanding of the meaning of the word "Chu" and the connotation of the sentence "Wei Qi Chu One's Jiao".

Discussion of "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao" according to the Meaning of Chu

From the above discussion, it can be seen that the reason why researchers can't reach a consensus is that they have different understandings of the meaning of "Chu" in the sentence "Wei Chu Shang or Xia Jiao". Some think it means "be generated from", others think it means "related to". Therefore, to make clear "Wei

Chu Shang or Xia Jiao", the key point is to confirm the connotation of "Chu".

From the perspective of philology, "Chu" is a character in associative compound in Chinese, it is written as 出 in Shang Dynasty, which shows leaving the cave. *Ji Yun* records: "Chu means from inside to outside." Chu is a kind of action process, going from the inside to outside. "Wei Chu Shang or Xia Jiao", that is, Wei Qi goes from one Jiao inside to its outside. So we should not mistake "Chu" as the meaning of "be generated from" or "related to". Therefore, the point of "Wei Qi Chu Xia Jiao"—Wei Qi generated from lower Jiao or "Wei Qi Chu Shan Jiao"—Wei Qi transformation related with three Jiao is not correct. Combined with the other medical evidence above, it all proves that "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao", Wei Qi is out of Shang Jiao.

Then why use "Chu" to describe Wei Qi? This is basically determined by the connotation of Wei Qi.

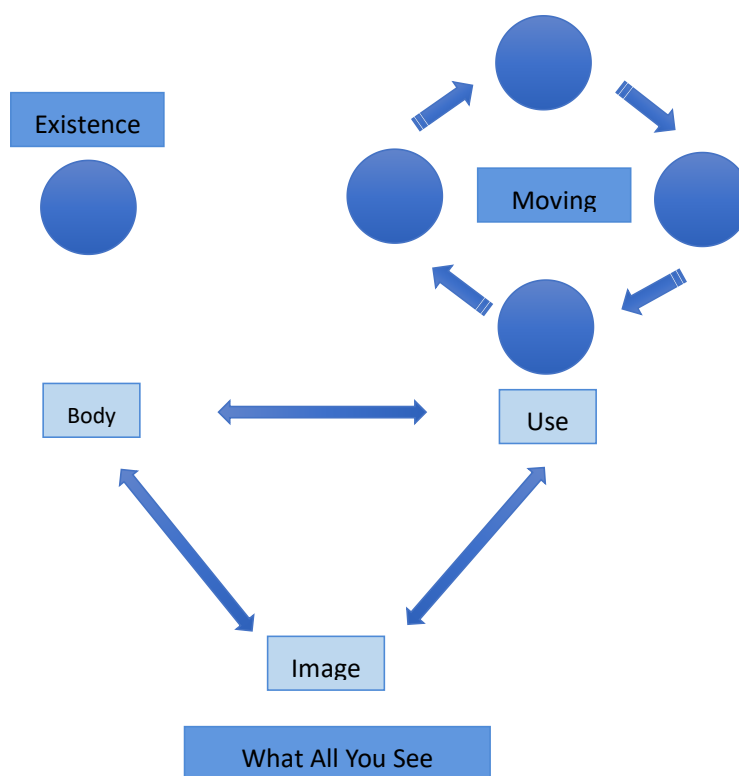
Analyzing the Significance of "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao" From the Perspective of the Connotation of Wei Qi

The basic concept of TCM theory is under the guidance of the traditional thinking method and the ontological understanding of Qi monism, generated by the result of three factors: Ti (ontology), Yong (methodology), Xiang (imagery) [7]. The same as the concept of Wei Qi, *Su Wen · Bi Lun* says: "Wei is the brave one of water and grain Qi. It is slippery and can not get into Mai." *Ling Shu · Xie Ke* says: "Wei Qi is swift and fierce, going into spaces of limbs first." According to the nature of the characteristics of Qi, who is slippery, following spaces among muscles and skins, it is named Wei Qi. Another example as the passage of *Ben Zang* in *Ling Shu* puts forward the definition of Wei Qi, that is, "Wei Qi can warm muscles, fill skins, padding interstitial space and govern the on-off of pores." They are all called Wei Qi according to different aspects.



and defend". Qi is its Ti (body, ontology), and the function of following and guarding to warm separations of muscles, skin as its Yong (use, methodology), and use the Chinese character "Wei" to express the characteristics of its Xiang (imagery), so it is called Wei Qi in Chinese. Therefore, Wei Qi is named for its use of "follow and defend".

If emphasizing the source of Wei Qi originating from refined essence of water and grain, then Wei Qi is called refined Qi or grain Qi; if valuating the function of Qi that follows and defends, then the Qi is named Wei Qi. The word "Wei Qi" itself is a description of the cycle state of Qi. So for the following Qi, it is necessary to discuss the beginning of its cycle, that is, the problem of "He Dao Cong Lai", how to start, rather than the place of its "source". Therefore, it is appropriate to use "Chu" to describe the cyclic Wei Qi. Wei Qi comes from one's Jiao, that is to answer the problem of the starting point of Wei Qi circulation.



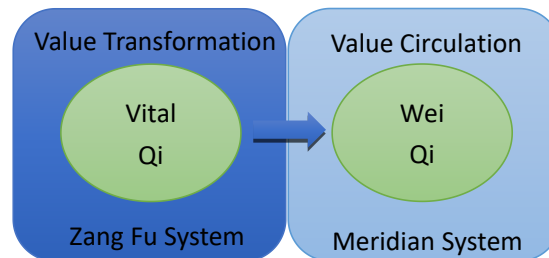
Qi starts from the upper mouth of the stomach, leaving the viscera and entering the meridians as the core part to start the cycle, that is, from the internal viscera system valued metagenesis into the meridians system valued cycle. This is also the subtle difference between "Qi" and "Wei", body (ontology) and use (methodology). As Yuan-Yu Huang, a famous medical in Ming Dynasty (1705 A.D.-1758 A.D.), says, "It is called Qi in Zang Fu (viscera) , and it is named Wei in meridians" [8]. It implies that Zang-Fu system tends to value the body, so it is called "Qi", as vital Qi of water and grain; while the meridians system tends to

emphasize the use, so it is called "Wei", as defending evil and circulating in body. Of course, Zang Fu and meridians are one originally, but they are different for their functions. Studying the source of conversion more root in Zang Fu system and discussing running route based on meridian system. So Wei Qi goes out of Shang Jiao where it leaves Zang Fu system and into the meridian system.

The reason for "Wei Qi Chu Xia Jiao" demonstrated by Jie-Bin Zhang, is that in the circadian rhythm of Wei Qi goes outside and inside from the kidney and bladder meridians, and the kidney and bladder belongs

to Xia Jiao, so it is believed that "Wei Qi Chu Xia Jiao". But there is unreasonable logic. First of all, kidney and bladder can not represent their meridians, kidney and bladder belonging to Xia Jiao do not represent their meridians are also classified as Xia Jiao. Furthermore, the kidney and bladder meridians are the

junction where Wei Qi goes outward and inward in day and night. It is not the starting point where Wei Qi goes out of Zang Fu system when Wei Qi is just transformed by grain essence. They both talk about the intersection point, but they emphasize different meanings of the intersection.



Therefore, "Chu" means leaving one place for another from the inside out. Because Wei Qi itself has characteristics of following and defending, it is also the root reason of getting its name. Therefore, to explore where Wei Qi follows should be described by "Chu". "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao" means it goes out of Shang Jiao in Zang Fu system to the meridian system. Wei Qi goes out of Shang Jiao, leaving its birthplace - Zang Fu system, and beginning to enter the circulation in meridian system.

Examples of the Application of "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao"

Shang Jiao is the starting point of releasing Wei Qi into the human body, so that the relevant scriptures can be understood and the pathological phenomena described in the scriptures can be deeply understood. For example, *Su Wen · Tiao Jing Lun* discusses the three pathological states related to "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao", such as "Yang deficiency leads to cold outside", "Yin deficiency causes internal fever", "Yang excess shows heat outside".

The inner mechanism of "Yang deficiency leads to cold outside" recorded in the passage is "Yang receives Qi from Shang Jiao to warm skins between muscles, expelling cold outside. When Shang Jiao is blocked, then the cold stay outside, so body feel cold. " It means cold evil outside assaults skins, leading pores occluded, then the internal lung Qi can not disperse Wei Qi to body surface to warm it, then cold evil itself stay in the skin surface. The body surface is cold because Yang deficiency. Then medicals should use Xin Wei (pungent flavor) prescriptions, such as Ma Huang soup, to expel cold evil, open pores, leading Wei Qi reaching surface to warm muscles and skins.

The inner mechanism of "Yin deficiency causes internal fever" recorded in the passage is "due to

fatigue, Qi is weak. The grain Qi is not full, Shang Jiao is blocked, then lower part of stomach is in congestion, too. So the stomach Qi gets hot, the hot Qi fumigates chest, then it causes internal heat." Body Qi decline is called Yin deficiency, Grain Qi is not prosperous to reach Shang Jiao, then both Shang Jiao and Xia Jiao are blocked. Qi staying in the stomach for a long time, it gets hot, fumigating the chest. Then it leads to internal heat. Medicals can use formulas of invigorating Qi, such as Bu Zhong Yi Qi soup to fill Qi in Zhong Jiao. When Qi is sufficient enough to go out of Shang Jiao, then Shang Jiao is unobstructed, and Xia Jiao is also free. Qi stagnation disappears, so internal heat vanishes.

The inner mechanism of "Yang excess shows heat outside" recorded in the passage is "Shang Jiao is blocked, the skin is dense and pores are blocked. Wei Qi can not goes out of surface, so it causes external heat." Because impassability of Shang Jiao, Wei Qi can not disperse outside, staying at the surface of skin, so Yang excess on the surface causes hot. In order to disperse Wei Qi out and open pores, medicals should use Xin Wei (pungent flavor) prescriptions, too.

Conclusion

To sum up, "Chu" means to go from the inside to the outside, and Wei Qi comes from Shang Jiao, which is the beginning of Wei Qi leaving Zang Fu system and entering the meridian system to circulate body, and the beginning of playing its surrounding and guarding function. "Wei Qi Chu Shang Jiao" conforms to the common meaning of many literature in *Nei Jing*, and medical theories of clinical applications. The theory of Wei Qi needs to be further studied to better explain the theory of clinical application and to guide clinical practice.

References

1. Cao DY. Wei Qi Chu and Xing Xi Yi. Chin J Tradit Chin Med, February 18, 2011 (004).
2. Wang HW. Wei Chu Xia Jiao. Nei Mongol J Tradit Chin Med 2014, 28:113.
3. Fan TB. Wei Dang Chu Shang Jiao. Chin J Tradit Chin Med, June 15, 2011 (004).
4. Wang YX. Three medical's annotation on *Huang Di Nei Jing Ling Shu*. Beijing: China Press of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2013.
5. Zhang ZJ. Discussion on clinical significance of Wei Qi originating from bladder. Tradit Chin Med J, 2012, 01: 23-25.
6. Qin L, Su WD, Zhao P, et al. Discussion on "Wei Chu San Jiao" and its clinical experience by Bo-Lin Zhang. Jiangxi J Tradit Chin Med, 2015, 46:23-24.
7. Sun ZQ. based on Qi monism the Six Evils of the essence. Jinan: Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2016:11.
8. Sun QX. Huang Yuan Yu medical book. Beijing: China Press of Traditional Chinese Medicine, 2013:790.