

Shang Han Lun Summer Extravaganza

by Nigel Dawes

August on the East Coast, traditionally associated with uncomfortably hot and sticky weather, this year provided a focus of study for perhaps the mostly unseasonable of Chinese medicine topics – the *Shang Han Lun*¹ (hereafter referred to as SHL). By fortunate coincidence, we have been treated to lectures by SHL scholar-practitioners from both Nanjing and Belgium hosted by individuals in Massachusetts and New York. Here are just a few reflections on my experiences with these inspiring teachers.

In the early part of the month, White Pine Healing Arts Center² in Amherst, MA, under the gifted direction of Sharon Weizenbaum, hosted renowned SHL scholar and teacher Dr. Huang Huang, for an eight-day intensive of lectures and clinic focusing on the herb “families” from the SHL entitled: “Classical Formulas and the Herbs within them.” Widely published in China and Japan, Dr. Huang identifies himself as part of the “School of Formula Classifications”³ having studied under various old-style SHL teachers and only began to appreciate how to apply SHL wisdom in the clinic, on his own admission, sometime after the 10 years of standard TCM education which he claims had not taught him how to use the classical formulas effectively. Sharon had led a very successful study trip to Nanjing in 2007 to visit Dr. Huang’s clinic and this was his first visit to the United States. We were fortunate to enjoy simultaneous translation offered by the truly remarkable Andrea Elliot, whose stamina and clarity was exceptional throughout.

What inspired me most about this extraordinarily gifted clinician and teacher was his passion and intensity. Nowhere was this more evident than during the many patient consultations where his eyes, gestures, and focus transcended the need for words in conveying his clarity and perception. His observational skills in particular I thought were remarkable. From visual analysis of the face, hands, behavior and affect you could literally sense him peering, gently and sometimes not so gently, into the private world of the patient and their suffering, often coming out with seemingly magical interpretations of their personalities, lifestyles, and related medicine. The magic touch was

no coincidence, it was deeply cultivated and supported by rigorous questioning, evaluation, and analysis. You could feel him honing in on a formula as his observation and palpatory findings informed his questioning which was always concise, pragmatic, and precisely relevant to a particular formula conformation as he included or excluded various classical formula possibilities following a kind of invisible mental check list. One of the more significant things he demonstrated was the certainty of being able to arrive at a meaningful clinical decision simply by following a rigorous path of enquiry (based of course on absolute familiarity with the classical formulas and their clinical patterns) and seeing him do this again and again inspired a great deal of confidence and conviction in the process.

The group of more than 30 experienced and committed practitioners from the US and abroad was treated not only to fascinating lecture material (extremely thoroughly documented in advance by Sharon - thank you!) including many fascinating patient stories and case examples, but also to a clear and methodical demonstration of his basic clinical paradigm which he himself refers to as revolving around the triad of Patient (Ren 人), Illness (Bing 病) and Prescription (Fang Ji 方剂⁴). The main features of this approach as far as I could perceive from my short time with Dr. Huang involved a careful analysis of the patient's Constitution (Ti Zhi 體質) as distinct from the pattern of disease itself when considering a particular formula. For example he often identified individuals in terms of being a *Gui Zhi* type or a *Chai Hu* type, and this would influence his clinical judgment as strongly as the presenting signs and symptoms. I am familiar with this style of clinical thinking as it is used a great deal in *Kanpo*⁵, where patients are often identified in terms of being predominantly Qi, Blood, or Fluid types predisposing them to an affinity with certain formula families. Another interesting similarity to *Kanpo* practice was that Dr. Huang also used abdominal diagnosis with every patient and I was fascinated to see him do this with the patient in a seated position (we always do this exam supine in *Kanpo*) and to notice how he integrated his findings with other methods of evaluation.

What stayed with me from this brief encounter was the impression of someone who, in a very uncomplicated, genuine, and direct manner was able to clearly share his process with us, making eminent sense of a text that can sometimes seem obscure and inspiring confidence

I particularly related to his suggestion that to treat illness means to remove obstructions, with the implication that “strong medicine,” SHL-style, is often necessary, with the only caveat that we should always be careful not to harm the *Yuan Qi* 元氣. As such, his love for the classical formulas revealed a belief that their proper use evokes immediate and effective results that must be monitored closely for side-effects, misdiagnosis, dosage and formula modification, while removing blocks to the person's natural healing ability. In one of his more philosophical moments he remarked that Classical School⁶ thinking ultimately requires the practitioner to try to maximize the full potential of the patient's *Yuan Qi* in life, this must be the aim of all treatment!

Towards the end of the same month, Frank Butler and Tom Bisio's NY-based *Zheng Gu Tui Na*⁷ hosted the first of a three-weekend lecture series entitled “Core Patterns of the SHL.” The following two seminars, in September and November, will be taught by Dan Bensky and Craig Mitchell respectively. This first one was offered by Arnaud Versluys, PhD, a native of Belgium who pursued his entire training in China from Bachelors (Hubei TCM College) to Masters and Doctorate (Chengdu TCM University). It was there that he met and studied with his main SHL master, *Zeng Rongxiu* 曾荣修 whose own (renowned) teacher was also from Chengdu, Tian Heming 田鹤鸣.

From the first moments with Arnaud I was impressed with his vital and irrepressible spirit so obviously fired by a deep love of Chinese medicine and in particular the SHL. For me, this degree of enthusiasm and passion is an essential ingredient that distinguishes a great teacher, and Arnaud has plenty of both to spare. More importantly, the affect is matched by his profound and detailed knowledge of the subject, something quite rare in our field these days, and rarer still amongst non-Asian teachers and practitioners. After 10 long years in China his mastery of the language and in particular the classical texts allows him to move with ease between developing ideas and associations while fully supporting them with textual references, something he does effortlessly and with great educational effect.

Whether getting to grips with the meat of the lecture, exploring the twin principal SHL theoretical paradigms of Manifestation, Root, Middle and Opening, Closing, Pivoting, or introducing the particular

pretations of SHL pulses (a clinical specialty all his own), Arnaud never failed to impress. His singular ability to deconstruct complex ideas and render them accessible to an audience of quite varied educational and clinical levels was exceptional. Those with limited experience of SHL medicine I am sure will have walked away with an infinitely clearer understanding of how to recognize the clinical manifestations of each stage (including pulse qualities) as well as the kinds of herbs and formulas typically associated with them, thus bringing the SHL alive as the eminently clinically relevant text it most certainly is. For those of us who dare to claim a measure of experience with classical formula prescribing and SHL approaches to treatment, I for one repeatedly found myself being blown away with Arnaud's ability to articulate clearly and without hesitation convincing interpretations of a whole range of SHL references. He is seemingly at home in discussions ranging from the metaphysics of the Heaven, Earth, Yin, Yang origins of the Six Conformations to the eminently practical details of everyday clinical experience such as a left Cun position Floating, Soft pulse indicating Windstrike and the need for a *Gui Zhi* based formula.

Yet what I appreciated most were some of the more general comments made at the outset of the weekend where Arnaud was discussing the broader issues of the title, scope, and aim of the text. Here I felt he really touched the heart of why the SHL remains so clinically relevant and why it still forms the core of all herbal practice. He reminded us for example of the full title of the text: *Shang Han Lun Za Bing* (see note 1 above) reflecting the treatment of externally and internally contracted (i.e. all) illness; he recalled for us the *Nan Jing 58th Difficulty* which identifies five types of cold damage reinforcing the idea of the Shang Han as a category of illness as opposed to a single etiology and perhaps most significantly, he outlined what he termed the "Yang Engendering Doctrine," born of sun worship, manifest in the "heart as Emperor" relationship and dictating a purely functional approach to medicine. If *Zhang Zhong Jing* had had a war cry in his battle against cold damage, contagion, and epidemics it would have been, suggests Arnaud, "Revive the Yang!" How refreshing to hear a SHL teacher speak, not of cold as an entity to be expunged, but rather of the functional need to clean up the mess of its damaging after-effects. Bravo Arnaud! What an inspiring summer this has been!

Notes

1. Shang Han Lun Za Bing 傷寒論雜病, by Zhang Zhong Jing, 219AD, translated as: "On Cold Damage and Miscellaneous Disease" (which includes the Jing Gui Yao Lue or "Prescriptions from the Golden Chamber").
2. For information on the Center and its activities contact Sharon (whitepinehealingarts.com).
3. Lei Fang Pai 類方派 Their main clinical inspiration is the SHL and the clinical style is one characterized by a focus on objective manifestations and linking them directly to appropriate classical formulas, rather than using any form of abstract ideas or analysis to reach a clinical decision (as in modern TCM for example).
4. For an in-depth explanation of what he means by a Person, Prescription, Illness approach to treatment, please refer to the transcript of an interview conducted with Dr. Huang in Nanjing by Michael Max, L.Ac., a Seattle-based practitioner, published in Volume 4-2 of the Australian journal, *The Lantern*.
5. Sino-Japanese herbal medicine, 漢方.
6. Jing Fang, 經方, referring to herbalists primarily prescribing SHL formulas.
7. For further information (zhenggutuin.com).
8. Biao Ben Zhong Qi 標本中氣.
9. Kai He Shu 開闢枢.
10. Cold Damage 傷寒.

Nigel Dawes, M.A., L.Ac., has been practicing acupuncture, Kanpo and shiatsu since 1985. He graduated from schools in Japan, China, and the UK, and has taught Oriental medicine in Europe, Israel, and the US. He founded and directed the London College of Shiatsu (1987-1993), was Dean of the Graduate School for Oriental medicine at the NY College (1993-2001) and currently has a private practice in New York City where he is also on the faculty of the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine and Tristate College of Acupuncture. Nigel also runs a one-year post-graduate Kanpo internship in New York City. He is currently finishing a translation of a modern Kanpo text by Ostuka Keisetsu.

Tokyo seminar 2008: A Journey Into The Heart Of Japanese Acupuncture

by John Thompson

August 2008 saw staff from AIMC and Goto College organize another study trip to Japan with Stephen Brown and Jeffrey Dann to experience many aspects of Japanese acupuncture and culture. The trip was a huge undertaking and a rare opportunity to journey into what can only be described as the heart of Japanese acupuncture. It presented many different aspects of Japanese acupuncture and was filled with many practical insights. One is always humbled by the generosity and warmth of Japanese sensei towards visiting acupuncturists. It was truly a banquet of sensei, techniques, and ideas. Speaking of banquets, Goto College again provided a wonderful banquet at the end of the first day and the Meridian Therapy Association made us especially welcome at the banquet to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their Summer College. And yes, sake from the barrel does taste very different from that out of a bottle.

Once again the group that met in Omori was international with participants from France, Brazil, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, and the US. There were two days of study at Goto College, one day was for visiting Kamakura, three days were with the Meridian Therapy Association at Nishogakusha University and a further day at the Omori Tokyu Inn. The group was to study with a diverse group of sensei but the wonderful thing was that no matter what your own style was, there were valuable insights to be gained from each sensei. The insights from this encounter would be profound.

Goto College is an easy walk from the hotel in Omori. After a warm welcome from Professor Goto and staff, the busy week began. In hindsight, the first lecture by Katai Sensei was a well-chosen introduction to those that followed. Palpation is a common thread that drives the art of Japanese acupuncture, even though the term 'Japanese acupuncture' is difficult to define. The use of palpation in Japan is certainly highly developed and valued.

Each day revealed another aspect of palpation