

An Investigation of the Pharmacomechanisms of Shang-Han Lun Formulas as Elucidated in the Qing Dynasty Classic 'Ben-Jing Shu-Zheng'

Authors : William Ceurvels, Dong-Di Zhang

Abstract : The true nature of the mechanism by which the pharmaceuticals of the Shang-Han Lun act has been a topic of debate since Wuji Cheng published the first commentary during the Northern Song. Subsequent commentaries employed a number of methodologies in their analysis of pharmaceutical mechanisms, but no commentator was able to garner universal acceptance. During the Qing Dynasty, the proliferation and development of Neo-Confucian scholarship produced a new generation of scholars possessed of rigorous and inventive research methods, one of whom was the famed materia medica scholar, Run-an Zou. Run-an Zou and his successor Zhou Yan advocated analyzing the mechanism of Treatise pharmaceuticals based upon the understanding of those pharmaceuticals during the time period in which the Treatise was written and thereby focused on the Han Dynasty materia medica tract Shen-nong Ben-cao Jing (The Divine Husbandman's Herbal Foundation Canon). Zou Run-an's commentary, Ben-jing Shu-zheng won nearly universal praise among materia medica scholars for its scholastic rigor and innovative research methods. However, because Ben-jing Shu-zheng only focuses on individual herbs, as opposed to formulas, its value in analyzing the Shang-Han Lun has limitations. The purpose of this study is to combine Zou Run-an's single-pharmaceutical commentaries to generate theoretical full formula analyses to gain a fuller picture of Zou's understanding of the healing mechanism of Shang-Han Lun formulas. Commentaries were gathered from Ben-jing Shu-zheng and Zhou Yan's Ben-cao Si-bian Lun and combined to produce theoretical full formula model mechanisms of Treatise formulas. Through this study, a new picture of the mechanistic basis of Shang-han formulas emerges, which is based on qi-xue changes as opposed to organ or meridian theory. The author hopes that this modest research study will be of service to scholars of the Shang-han and clinical doctors alike in their pursuit of the true pharmacomechanisms of this great Han dynasty tome.

Keywords : Materia medica, Shang-han Lun, Shen-nong Ben-cao Jing, neo-Confucian scholarship

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