

원 저

Interpretation of “Tri-jiao” presented in 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』

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There are wide variations in the definition and functions of tri-jiao among investigators in the area of Chinese medicine. Given a wide spectrum of views, it is difficult to identify uniform opinions about the definition and functions of tri-jiao. This paper is intended to clarify the meaning of the tri-jiao, which was presented as “it builds a waterway and serves as the passage for the flow of Shuidao” in 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』, a classic text of traditional Chinese medicine.

Investigators have been divided in their opinions in interpreting this reference; some claim that tri-jiao regulates fluid metabolism in the entire body while others assert that the role of tri-jiao is limited to lower-jiao that controls urination function. However, this does not appear convincing given the description in other texts of 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』, in which functions of 12 organs were explained in a summarized manner. The assumption that the role of tri-jiao is closely linked with lower-jiao seems to have deviated from the meaning of the original texts. Besides, fluid metabolism involves the entire body, and any pathological changes caused by disorders of fluid metabolism can affect any part of the body, not only the lower area of the body cavity. The phrase, “passage for the flow of Shuidao,” expressed in the texts of 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』, is likely to mean that body fluid is also distributed and transported to the whole body along with primordial-Qi via tri-jiao. The phrase, “passage for the flow of Shuidao” means that tri-jiao is involved in regulating body fluid metabolism and that it plays an important role in fluid distribution.

Key Words: tri-jiao, 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』, lower-jiao, primordial-Qi, Shuidao

Introduction

Investigators are divided in their opinions about the definition and function of Tri-jiao. From the discussion in the 『NanJing』, there has been a wide range of discussions as to whether Tri-jiao is an organ, how Tri-

jiao is related to ministerial fire, whether Tri-jiao serves as an ambassador of Primordial-Qi and how Tri-jiao is connected with Xinbao. The debate is stills underway without forming a conclusive opinion on the definition and function of Tri-jiao. This paper, therefore, is intended to provide vital insights into the meaning of the phrase “it builds a waterway and serves as the passage for the flow of Shuidao” presented in the texts of 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』¹⁾. Many investigators have concurred that Tri-jiao has a strong influence on fluid metabolism. But they disagree with each other regarding a specific function of Tri-jiao and the meaning of fluid metabolism. By referring to the

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literature in the same area, this paper aimed to define the function of Tri-jiao in its own way.

Body

1. Opinions published in the literature

First, a majority of investigators concluded that Tri-jiao is like a pathway handling the flow of fluid in the body in interpretation of the phrase “it builds a waterway and serves as the passage for the flow of Shuidao” presented in the texts of 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』. In details, their conclusion is further divided based on individual opinions. Wangbing²⁾, Yaozhian³⁾ and Parkchanguk⁴⁾ asserted that Tri-jiao has a significant impact on body fluid metabolism. Among them, Parkchanguk said Tri-jiao-related fluid metabolism had nothing to do with digestion and absorption of Gu-Qi and excretion. He insisted Tri-jiao be an ambassador of Primordial-Qi by saying fluid controlled by Tri-jiao is closely linked to Primordial-Qi⁵⁾. Meanwhile, Yaozhian stressed that Tri-jiao regulates activities of the body cells. He denied the claim that Tri-jiao is a self-contained organ and cited a critical role of Tri-jiao in regulating Qi flow and activities of other organs as the reason for its inclusion in the twelve regular channels in the classic texts.

Secondly, the other group of investigators, including Mashi⁶⁾, Wukun⁷⁾, Zhangjiebin⁸⁾, Zhangzhizong⁹⁾ and Gaoshizong¹⁰⁾, defined the function of Tri-jiao based on lower jiao. Among them, Wukun stated that Tri-jiao controls water metabolism in the body and that the malfunctioning Tri-jiao would let fluid flow stop around the upper middle and lower part, eventually cause pathological problems. He, particularly, claimed that body fluid that is transferred through Tri-jiao is collected in the bladder and flowed out of the bladder through functional activities of Qi, suggesting a close relationship between Tri-jiao and bladder. Many

investigators such as Zhangjiebi, Zhangzhizong and Gaoshizong shared the same view. Zhangzhizong emphasized that the excess Tri-jiao's fetter in lower jiao results in retention of urine while the scarcity in lower jiao triggers for incontinence.

Mashi explained that the function of Tri-jiao is closely associated with kidney by saying that Tri-jiao occupies the left part of the kidney while the bladder occupies the right part. He added that the fluid stored in the bladder flow out of the bladder via the waterway (Tri-jiao) by functional activities of Qi. These investigators said that the fluid stored in the bladder indicates urine in which wastes from metabolism are dissolved. On the other hand, Hutianxiong asserted that the fluid presented in the text of 『Linglanbidianlun』 represents urine despite various assumptions by different investigators. Thus many investigators discussed Tri-jiao by focusing on lower jiao and urination function¹¹⁾.

Lastly, some investigators saw Tri-jiao as Zhongdu. For instance, Danboyuanjian interpreted Juedu as Zhongdu, which circulate and distributes qi to organs¹²⁾. This means that body fluid is also distributed to the whole body through functional activities of Qi and that the pathway of fluid flow is Tri-jiao. They, therefore, concluded that Tri-jiao equals Zhongdu.

Among these investigators, the first group and the third one share the same view on the function of Tri-jiao. That's why the interpretation of the function of Tri-jiao presented in the texts of 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』 is divided into the two categories - Tri-jiao regulates water metabolic system in the body and Tri-jiao mostly represents the urination function of the lower jiao.

2. Background for the emphasis on lower jiao

As mentioned in preceding paragraphs, investigators are divided into two groups: one group said that Tri-jiao is responsible for body fluid metabolism and the other

group opined that Tri-jiao largely reflects the urination function of the lower jiao. The latter view appears to have become more common recently¹³⁾. It can be questioned why they try to underline the function of the lower jiao despite the effect of Tri-jiao on water metabolism as a whole. As for reasons for such a view, the phrase "Tri-jiao is Zhongdu's fu-organ, through which Shuidao flows. And it is a solitary hollow organ that belongs to the bladder" in the texts of 『Lingshu · Benshu』 can be cited. This kind of connection between Tri-jiao and bladder is likely to influence investigators when they understand the function of Tri-jiao described in the texts of 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』. It is assumed that they focused on the facts that the classic text 『Linglanbidianlun』 described Tri-jiao and then bladder among the 12 organs and that the bladder function relies on functional activities of Qi¹⁵⁾. Based on the order in which bladder was explained after Tri-jiao, they might have concluded that Tri-jiao is closely related to the bladder. And they also assumed that the phrase "it comes out by functional activity of Qi" means that urine flow out of the bladder through functional activities of Qi. As a result, it is likely that they concluded that the phrase is closely related to urination, the main function of the lower jiao.

Secondly, urination is the most common phenomenon in fluid metabolism. The metabolic disorders will disturb the normal function of bladder, leading to the risk of retention of urine, hydrops and hydroperitoneum. Pathological changes, therefore, become discernable. Given the importance of urine in interpreting body fluid metabolism, investigators might have been inclined to concentrate on bladder function when they explained the meaning of the phrase, "passage for the flow of Shuidao." Many investigators seemed to have shared the same view recently.

3. Opinion of author

The definition and functions of 12 organs are presented in summarized form in the text of 『Linglanbidianlun』, making the description of each organ brief but inclusive. And each description should be understood as aspect of generalized function of organ rather than aspect of specific function of the organ. The description of Tri-jiao in the classic text conveys its critical role in body fluid metabolism. It does not seem proper to limit the function of Tri-jiao to urination function of the lower jiao. Many investigators, however, insisted that Tri-jiao is closely related to the function of the lower jiao. By clarifying reasons for such an assumption, author suggest the meaning of the function of Tri-jiao presented in the classic text.

First, as explained earlier, the texts of 『Lingshu · Benshu』 portrays a close connection between Tri-jiao and bladder. The description might have provided the basis for investigators to understand Tri-jiao presented in the text of 『Linglanbidianlun』 as urination function of the lower jiao. The connection between Tri-jiao and bladder that is suggested in the 『Benshu』 is nothing more than their relationship in terms of channels and collaterals. The classical text also explains the impact of Tri-jiao on fluid metabolism in the body, not a specific function involved urination¹⁶⁾. On the other hand, a majority of investigators do not think that the phrase "it comes out by functional activity of Qi" in the text of 『Linglanbidianlun』 says about bladder function. They believe that the "functional activity of Qi" take place on entire body and that 12 organs function through functional activity of Qi given the meaning of the phrase "comes out." The view that focused the function of Tri-jiao on the lower jiao, therefore, can be a narrow interpretation of the original text.

Secondly, urination is considered the most common phenomenon in fluid metabolism. Such a general perception might have helped some investigators limit

the function of Tri-jiao to that of the lower jiao when they understand 「LinglanbidianIn」. But Tri-jiao is described as an ambassador of Primordial-Qi and as ministerial-fire. This means that the human body needs momentum to circulate and distribute qi to the entire body, and Tri-jiao functions to provide that momentum. While Tri-jiao circulate and distribute Qi to the entire body, body fluid is also transferred along with Qi. All of this process is summarized in the phrase “it builds a waterway and serves as the passage for the flow of Shuidao” in the texts of 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』. The view that focused the function of Tri-jiao on the lower jiao, therefore, can be a narrow interpretation of the part “passage for the flow of Shuidao”. Besides, urination does not reflect every thing related to fluid metabolism. Body fluid circulates throughout the entire body in normal metabolism, and any pathological changes caused by metabolic disorders do not occur in lower jiao only. For instance, the damp-warm disease can occur in upper jiao (weifen), middle jiao or lower jiao as oliguria symptom of damp-heat. Thus the area that is affected by damp evil vary with symptoms and consequently different treatments are required. The damp evil in upper jiao can be treated with herbal medicine that is chilly-hot, warm and fragrant. Any pathological problem in middle jiao should be treated by controlling the fuction that moves up and down of spleen and stomach. The damp evil centered in lower jiao can be treated with diuretic medicines¹⁷⁾. Thus fluid metabolism occur throughout the entire body, and pathological changes caused by metabolic disorders affect any part of the body. It is therefore likely that Tri-jiao presented in the classic texts involves in regulating body fluid metabolism.

Conclusion

The results of the study are presented as follows:

1. Investigators' interpretation of the function of Tri-jiao presented in the texts of 『SuWen · Linglanbidianlun』 is divided into the two categories - Tri-jiao regulates water metabolic system in the body and Tri-jiao mostly represents the urination function of the lower jiao
2. As for reasons for the view focusing on lower jiao for the function of Tri-jiao, a close connection between Tri-jiao and bladder presented in the texts of 『Lingshu · Benshu』 is primarily cited. In addition, how investigators understood the texts is also mattered along with the general perception that urination is the most common phenomenon in normal fluid metabolism.
3. But it doesn't seem proper to limit the function of Tri-jiao to urination function of the lower jiao. The definition and functions of 12 organs are presented in summarized form in the text of 「LinglanbidianIn」, making the description of each organ brief but inclusive. The emphasis of lower jiao among functions of Tri-jiao seems to indicate a departure from the original structure. Besides, body fluid circulates throughout the entire body in normal metabolism, and any pathological changes caused by metabolic disorders do not occur in lower jiao only. The phrase “passage for the flow of Shuidao” means that while Tri-jiao circulate and distribute Qi to the entire body, body fluid is also transferred along with Qi. It is therefore likely that Tri-jiao presented in the classic texts involves in regulating body fluid metabolism.

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