

## Double vision

# Treating the brain qi

by **Qian Song**, Qing dynasty<sup>1</sup>  
translated by Nicholas Dent

**WHEN A PERSON** suddenly begins to see things as double, without any obvious reason, it is often diagnosed as a surplus of Liver qi — who would guess that it is actually due to an insufficiency of brain qi!

It is true that eyes are linked below to the Liver, but they are also linked above to the brain. When the qi of the brain is insufficient, Liver qi responds, but if Liver qi is [also] excessively deficient, it cannot respond to the [needs of] the brain. What follows from this is a separation of the qi of each organ, resulting in a split image: one thing is seen as two. Early on, Sun the Perfected Man<sup>2</sup> said:

*If pathogenic [wind] strikes the eyes directly, the strike is not equivalent in both eyes, and the divergence in the amount of dispersing caused by the pathogen leads to double vision.*

Yet [as I have demonstrated above] this is not the only mechanism of etiology.

The treatment should be to strongly tonify Liver qi, making Liver sufficient to respond to the brain, because when Liver qi is sufficient the brain will become sufficient. The formula to use is Help Liver to Benefit the Brain Decoction.

Some may object that this formula is made up completely of herbs to benefit Liver, with nothing to directly benefit the brain. But in order to tonify the brain one must first supplement the marrow, and to supplement the marrow requires first nourishing the Kidneys. Yet nourishing the Kidneys is slow, while tonifying Liver is much more direct; coupled with pathogen-expelling

### Zhu Gan Yi Nao Tang (Help Liver to Benefit the Brain Decoction)

<i>Bai Shao</i>	(Paeoniae Radix alba)
<i>Dang Gui</i>	(Angelicae sinensis Radix)
<i>Ren Shen</i>	(Ginseng, Radix)
<i>Yu Li Ren</i>	(Pruni Semen)
<i>Chai Hu</i>	(Bupleuri, Radix)
<i>Tian Hua Fen</i>	(Trichosanthis, Radix)
<i>Xi Xin</i>	(Asari cum Radice, Herba)
<i>Chuan Xiong</i>	(Chuanxiong Rhizoma)
<i>Ju Hua</i>	(Chrysanthemi, Flos)
<i>Sheng Di</i>	(Rehmannia glutinosae Radix)
<i>Tian Men Dong</i>	(Asparagi cochinchinensis, Tuber)
<i>Gan Cao</i>	(Glycyrrhizae Radix)
<i>Bai Zhi</i>	(Angelicae dahuricae, Radix)

herbs, this is actually superior. For if the brain is deficient, a pathogen can take up occupancy, and without herbs to expel it, all your tonification will be no benefit.

The method described here — tonifying Liver to benefit the brain [and thereby treat double vision] — is really a remarkable treatment method!

### Translator's note

Qian Song's book *Bian Zheng Qi Wen* (Extraordinary Observations in Diagnosis, published c. 1829) is notable for its rather unusual take on the commonly accepted methods of diagnosis and treatment, which is sometimes most welcome when the usual methods have not been successful. In this article, for example, the brain and its relationship with the Liver and Kidneys is brought into a discussion of the treatment of double vision. The translation is offered as a matter of interest.

### Endnotes

1. Qian Song, (zi-name Jing-Hu) was a Qing-dynasty physician of the early 19th century who lived in Shao Xing city, in Jiangsu province, and at one point held a high post in the Imperial Medical college. This short article is from *Extraordinary Observations in Diagnosis* (*Bian Zheng Qi Wen*) which he edited; which was included in the modern text *Zhongyi Lidai Yi Lun Xuan*, p. 32.

2. Sun Si-Miao. The term “perfected man” indicates that Sun Si-Miao had undergone a long period of Daoist training and come to an embodied realisation of the Dao.

■ Nicholas Dent is a US practitioner of Oriental Medicine, currently overseas, with a particular interest in eye problems.

