Functions and applications of Gui Pi Tang

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1. Summary

In this paper the functions and uses of Gui Pi Tang are investigated via literature research, mainly using the works of Bensky, Maciocia and Yifan Yang.

Gui Pi Tang is an excellent formula for chronic Qi and Blood deficiency and bleeding problems related to these, caused by overwork and worrying. The formula addresses Spleen and Heart Blood mostly, but also Liver Blood deficiency. Its use is also specifically indicated for menstrual bleeding: excessive bleeding, prolonged bleeding, painful-, irregular- or absent menstruation can be treated with it.

Secondary complications from Qi and Blood deficiency like Dampness, Phlegm, Blood stagnation and a disturbed Mind (amongst other forgetfulness) are well suited for treatment with Gui Pi Tang. Though to more these manifestations are on the forefront, the more modifications or other formulas should be considered. Since the formula is warm and tonifying in nature cold and excess patterns also require careful consideration.

Because in practice there are multiple manifestations, with varying intensity, it is important to identify the right pattern(s). Deficiency of Qi and Blood, menstrual and/or mental problems are the most important background for Gui Pi Tang. These manifestations are broad and by definition many formulas would apply, or could be considered. This paper provides an aid and a sound basis for making these choices by providing a table that compares the most important relevant formulas. In this table a suggestion for key distinguishing parameters is also given, which is aimed to help in the complex discussion making process.
2. Introduction
The choice for investigating this herb formula is because of my interest in the mind or Shen. Also with acupuncture I see a lot of people who have mental problems on a background of deficiency of Qi and Blood. Since this formula is relevant to the mind, Qi and Blood tonification I want to further explore to see in which clinical settings it is specifically relevant.

2.1. The goal of this paper – problem statement
The main goal is to obtain more knowledge about this herbal formula, to learn the details of the composition and to learn key discriminators for application of this versus another (related) formulas.

This thesis attempts to answer this research question: What are the functions and clinical applications of Gui Pi Tang

To answer this question the following sub-questions are used:

- What is the detailed formula composition?
- For which patterns and indications can it be used?
- What are key discriminators for use of this formula versus related ones?

To relate these questions to a problem statement would be that the actions and indications of Gui Pi Tang are broad. The risk of this is that there are multiple formulas applicable in a situation, leading to ineffective treatments.

An example where this could apply would be bleeding due to deficiency. Many formulas would apply to this general criterion.

It is specific knowledge of the formula (and pattern identification), combined with a broad knowledge of comparable formulas that will lead to the best clinical application.

This paper is a humble attempt to provide a scope to this end.

2.2. Methods
The method for this paper is literature research. By looking at the details of the formula compositions and its traditional use the patterns and indications will become apparent.

The second part is to get an overview of the most relevant formulas and to see how they differentiate clinically. This should generate a table as comprehensive tool to aid in clinical practice.

Theory

2.3. Name and relationship to bleeding
The name Gui Pi Tang is translated as “return the Spleen decoction”. The formula benefits the Qi of the Spleen, thereby restoring its function, regaining its control over Blood. The latter is following the principle that:

*The Spleen is in charge of holding the Blood together*¹

All the Qi of the body supports this, but it is the raising function of Spleen Qi that is the major contributor to this. When Spleen Qi is deficient, the Blood is not held in the vessels and bleedings can occur. Due to the failure of the raising function can occur in downward i.e. bladder or uterus. This could be regarded as an important feat on why the formula is used for menstrual bleeding (due to deficiency).

¹ Maciocia, foundations of Chinese Medicine, p. 146.
The Spleen is important in preventing bleeding but also in making blood. This paper will fall back on this 2 sided feat. With the production of Blood it is the Spleen and the Heart which make Blood with the help (foundation) of Kidney essence.

In the following chapters the formula will be discussed in great detail.
2.4. Description of formula

In the table below the general properties of the formula are described (Bensky, p. 353):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall action</td>
<td>Benefit the Spleen and gain control over the Blood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Tonify Qi and Blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbs</td>
<td>Ren Shen, Chao Huang Qi, Bai Zhu, Fu Ling, Chao Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou, Mu Xiang, Zhi Gan Cao, Dang Gui, Zhi Yuan Zhi (Sheng Jian, Da Zao)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Augments Qi, tonifies Blood, strengthens the Spleen, nourishes the Heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indications</td>
<td>Forgetfulness, palpitations (with or without anxiety), insomnia, dream disturbed sleep, anxiety and phobia, feverishness, withdrawal, reduced appetite, pallid and wan complexion, pale tongue with a thin white coating and a thin and frail pulse. Possible chronic bleeding. Women can experience early periods with copious pale blood, or prolonged / continues periods with little flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio-medical</td>
<td>Neurological: post-concussion syndrome, myasthenia gravis, nervous exhaustion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indications</td>
<td>Hematological: (chronic) anemia, thrombocytopenic or allergic purpura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cardiovascular: congestive heart disease, supraventricular tachycardia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gynecological: cervicitis, dysfunctional uterine bleeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Digestive: peptic ulcers, nonspecific colitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psycho-emotional: depression, anxiety, neurasthenia, mood changes, PMS,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>insomnia, addiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraindications</td>
<td>None found</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1, overview of the properties of Gui Pi Tang

In Table 1 it can be seen that the herbs, actions and indications align very nicely towards treating deficiency conditions, specifically deficiency of Qi and Blood. When these are lacking problems can manifest themselves quite broadly in impaired digestion, impaired menstruation, bleeding and mental emotional problems. This is similarly reflected in the bio-medical indications.

The formula is based on Si Jun Zi Tang (Ren Shen, Bai Zhu, Fu Ling, Gan Cao) which tonifies Qi. It has modifications to address the problems that can arise from Qi deficiency namely: Damp (Huang Qi, Zhi Yuan Zhi) and Blood tonification (Chao Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou, Dang Gui). The addition of Huang Qi also helps with raising the Qi which can be hampered with deficiency. Mu Xiang helps prevent cloying from all the tonifying herbs. Also the presence of Dang Gui helps with moving Qi. Furthermore Gui Pi Tang also

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2 Yifan Yang has Fu Shen in stead of Fu Ling, combined with Huang Qi. Also in this composition Da Zao is present. Fu Shen has less Qi tonifying properties and more mind calming effects. This lack of Qi tonification is arguably compensated by the addition of Da Zao

3 This formula is also used for Ménieres disease, hypertension and diabetes
contains the two ingredients from Dang Gui Bu Xue Tang (Dang Gui and Huang Qi), though the amount of Huang Qi in Gui Pi Tang is considerably lower.

No contraindications were found, however since this is a tonifying formula it is less suitable for excess conditions. For these another choice should be made, or the formula should be modified. Also the formula is warm in nature (see Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.), unmodified it could worsen heat conditions. There are relatively much tonifying herbs, these could hinder the Middle Warmer (MW). To circumvent this Sheng Jiang and Da Zao are there to tonify the MW.

To understand the formula in more detail, to properties of the individual herbs are given in the table below.

![Table 1, detailed description of the herbs in Gui Pi Tang.](image)

*Min. = minister, Ass. = assistant, Env. = envoy, Temperature: orange = warm, white = neutral, Sw = sweet, Bi = bitter, So = sour, Bl = Bland, TQ = tonify Qi, DD = Damp Draining, CS = Calm Spirit, TB = tonify Blood, RQ = Regulate Qi, WA = Warm Acrid herbs that release the exterior.*

The above table shows the overall warm nature of the formula and that its principle properties are Sweet, Bland and Acrid, channels mostly entered: Spleen, Lung, Heart and Stomach.
Several herbs have a specific preparation. Dry frying has the effect of increased Spleen awakening- and stomach strengthening function. Other herbs are marked “prepared”, the reference source (Bensky, Formulas) doesn’t specify what is done with these herbs. In p. 26 of the Materia Medica it denotes that prepared herbs have an increased shelf life and/or functioning. It could be that the prepared form aids to the function these herbs have in the formulae, however this cannot be verified with the selected references.

Concluding
all the key elements of the formula come back in the different herbs present: tonifying Qi, tonifying and warming the MW, drying/leaching out damp, move Qi, nourishing Blood and calming the Mind. It this sense it is a complete formula for Qi deficiency and its related consequences: blood deficiency, damp, Qi stagnation and mental problems.

Because the consequences appear at a more long term the formula is best suited for chronic conditions relating to Qi and Blood deficiency; mostly related to Spleen Liver and Heart.

There are no contraindications but the formula is warm and tonifying generally. Therefore for excess and warm/heat conditions adaptations should be made. Extra alertness is advisable for Blood stagnation, this formula “requires” a background of deficiency and also modifications should be make. This could be the addition of blood moving herbs like Tao Ren and Hong Hua for example.

2.5. Hierarchical structure of the formula
The hierarchical structure of the formula is indicative of its effects and proper areas of application. Below are given the various groups of herbs and their role in the formula.

Chief
The four herbs together making Si Jun Zi Tang (Ren Shen, Bai Zhu, Fu Ling Gan Cao) + Huang Qi
→ These herbs tonify the Spleen Qi and accelerate the production of Qi and Blood

Deputy
Fu Li, Long Yan Rou and Suan Zao Ren
→ Tonify Heart Qi, calm the Mind and improve sleep

Deputy
Dang Gui, Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou and Da Zao
→ Tonify Heart Qi and Blood and calm the Mind
→ Fu Shen also belongs to this group
→ Dang Gui together with Huang Qi generates Blood effectively

Assistant
Mu Xiang and Yuan Zhi
→ Mu Xiang regulates the Qi, preventing the obstruction in the MW by the tonifying herbs.
→ Bai Zhu enhances this effect
→ Yuan Zhi removes Phlegm that might be available. It also connects the Heart and Kidney
together, calming the mind.

4 From both Bensky Formulas and Yifan Yang Formulas
5 Yifan Yang has this composition for Si Jun Zi Tang: Ren Shen, Bai Zhu, Huang Qi and Gan Cao i.e. Fu Ling is substituted with Huang Qi
Suan Zao Ren’s astringency balances and enhances the role Yuan Zhi has in this formula.

**Assistant**

Sheng Jiang and Da Zao

These herbs harmonize the MW and promote digestive functioning, helping the tonifying herbs.

**Concluding**

The chief herbs are all directed towards tonifying the Spleen and generating blood. They are a large part of the formula, thus mainly Qi- but also Blood deficiency is an important background for the use of Gui Pi Tang. The deputy and assistant herbs obviously emphasize this and also address secondary consequences of Qi and Blood deficiency; mental distress and a weakened MW.

### 2.6. Observed (Dui Yao) Combinations

This section is meant as an extra overview, so significant conclusions will be taken into consideration from this short section.

- Long Yan Rou & Suan Zao Ren → Tonify/augment Ht, Liv, Sp, Blood, calm Mind
- Dang Gui & Huang Qi → Generate Blood
- Yuan Zhi & Suan Zao Ren → Calm the Mind
- Mu Xiang & Bai Zhu → Strengthen MW
- Bai Zhu & Fu Ling → Eliminate Dampness
- Ren Shen, Bai Zhu, Fu Ling, Gan Cao → Tonify Qi
- Sheng Jiang, Da Zao, Gan Cao → Strengthen MW, harmonize formula

**Concluding**

It is interesting to note that all the major functions of the formula are represented in Dui Yao combinations. This emphasizes the logical and synergistic composition of the formula.

### 2.7. Important modifications

When the key indications from Table 1 are present and also one of the indications below, the addition of herbs can broaden the range of use of Gui Pi Tang:

1. Numbness upper extremities: +Qiang Huo, Chuan Xiong
2. Numbness lower extremities / lower limbs: +Wei Ling San, Du Huo, Niu Xi
3. Painful menstruation with clots: +Yu Jin, Xiang Fu
4. Dark menstrual blood: +Hong Hua, Mu Dan Pi, Zhi Zi
5. Menstrual blood volume change suddenly and constant flow: +Shan Zhu Yu, Wu Wei Zi

With the addition of two unique herbs it is possible to specify the formula to match specific indications and to broaden its use. As can be seen this comprises numbness and menstrual problems.

**Concluding**

Based on the chosen additional herbs it appears that the numbness is related to Damp and Qi/Blood stagnation (1) and (2). The menstrual problems appear related to Blood stasis (3) and Blood/Qi stasis with heat from deficiency (4). The menstrual blood volume change (5) is an interesting one astringent herbs are used to normalize the flow. It is interesting because it so closely related to the indication of Gui Pi Tang to stop bleeding. Arguably when the volume is high this is seemingly recommended.
2.8. Comparisons and associated formulas\textsuperscript{6,7}

Since Gui Pi Tang has multiple actions, and because it contains twelve herbs in its unmodified composition, there are multiple scenarios for its use. To understand this formula, where it stands in relations to others, should be helpful when making clinical decisions.

Herbs from Gui Pi Tang are printed in bold. To understand the difference with Gui Pi Tang a column is added with changed herbs. Actions and indications are summarized with a key discriminator that signifies the most noticeable/important/probable feature in practice for use of one formula over another, see below.

\textsuperscript{6} Bensky formulas p. 354-355
\textsuperscript{7} Dharmananda
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formula</th>
<th>Herbs</th>
<th>Changed herbs</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Indication</th>
<th>Key discriminators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gui Pi Tang, 353</td>
<td>Ren Shen, Huang Qi, Bai Zhu, Fu Ling, Xiao Li, Shu Di Huang, Bai Shao</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Augments Qi, ton Blood, str. Sp, nourish Ht</td>
<td>palpitations, anxiety, forgetfulness, insomnia, feverishness and night sweats, prolonged menstruation with pale blood, poor appetite, tiredness, a pale complexion/tongue with a thin white coating, weak pulse</td>
<td>Forgetfulness Night sweating Anxiety, insomnia M: prolonged menstruation with pale blood Bleeding from def</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang, 317</td>
<td>Huang Qi, Ren Shen, Bai Zhu, Zhi Gan Cao, Ju Xi Ding Gui, Chen Pi, Sheng Ma, Chi Hu</td>
<td>Fu Ling, Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou, Yuan Zhi, Mu Xiang, Sheng Jiang, Da Zao + Shu Di Huang, Bai Shao, Chun Xiong, Rou Gui</td>
<td>Ton MW, augments Qi, raises Yang, lifts sunken</td>
<td>Shortness of breath, worse on exertion, a low spirit, Qi sinking Depression Spontaneous sweating</td>
<td>Shortness of breath Breath of Yang Qi sinking Depression Spontaneous sweating Bleeding from def</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiquan, 353</td>
<td>Ren Ren, Bai Zhu, Fu Ling, Gan Cao, Shu Di Huang, Wu Wei Zi, Fu Ling, Yuan Zhi</td>
<td>- Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou, Yuan Zhi, Mu Xiang + Shu Di Huang, Bai Shao, Chun Xiong, Rou Gui</td>
<td>Warms and ton Qi and Blood</td>
<td>Gu Pi Tang, 333</td>
<td>- Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou, Yuan Zhi, Mu Xiang + Shu Di Huang, Bai Shao, Chun Xiong, Rou Gui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gu Chong Tang, 443</td>
<td>Bai Zhu, Huang Qi, Shan Zhu Fu, Bai Shao, Long Gu, Mu Li, Hai Piao Xiao, Lu Tan, Wu Bei Zi, Qian Cao Ben</td>
<td>Ren Shen, Fu Ling, Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou, Yuan Zhi, Mu Xiang, Gan Cao, Sheng Jiang, Da Zao + Shan Zhu Yu, Bai Shao, Long Gu, Mu Li, Hai Piao Xiao, Lu Tan, Wu Bei Zi, Qian Cao Ben</td>
<td>Augments Qi, str. Sp, stabilizes Penetrating vessel, stops bleeding</td>
<td>Patients suffer from heavy Menstrual bleeding, the blood is thin and the color is light, Shortness of breath, a pale tongue, and a thready/wake pulse.</td>
<td>Postpartum abd. pain (better with pressure). Loss of blood leading to qi and blood deficiency Postpartum pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Wu Tang, 333</td>
<td>Shu Di Huang, Bai Shao, Fu Ling, Sheng Ma</td>
<td>- Ren Shen, Huang Qi, Bai Zhu, Fu Ling, Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou, Yuan Zhi, Mu Xiang, Gan Cao, Sheng Jiang, Da Zao + Shu Di Huang, Bai Shao, Chun Xiong</td>
<td>Tonifies the Blood, regulates Liv</td>
<td>Dizziness, blurred vision, lusterless complexion/nails, muscle tension, insomnia, palpitations, thin body w.o. strength, ir.</td>
<td>Abdominal pain Blurred vision / dizziness Insomnia Muscle tension Retention of lochia Night sweat Spider/night sweat M: ir. menstruation (little flow/amenorrhea) but also for menorrhagia (heavy flow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suan Zao Ren, 462</td>
<td>Suan Zao Ren, Chuang Yang, Fu Ling, Zhi Mu, Gan Cao</td>
<td>- Ren Shen, Huang Qi, Bai Zhu, Long Yan Rou, Dang Gui, Yuan Zhi, Mu Xiang, Sheng Jiang, Da Zao + Chun Xiong, Zhi Mu</td>
<td>Nourish Blood, calms the Spirit, clears heat, eliminate irritability</td>
<td>Chronic condition of palpitations. Irritability, restlessness, insomnia, night sweats, dizziness, and dry mouth and throat. The tongue coating is dry and the pulse is thready and wiry</td>
<td>No pale tongue. Pale tongue Irritability/ Insomnia Night sweat Palpitations Wiry pulse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang Tu Tang, 608</td>
<td>Zao Xin Tu, Shu Di Huang, E Jiao, Bai Zhu, Zhi Fu Zi, Gan Cao, Bao Fu Zi, Huang Qin</td>
<td>- Ren Shen, Fu Ling, Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou, Dang Gui, Yuan Zhi, Mu Xiang, Sheng Jiang, Da Zao + Zao Xin Tu, Shu Di Huang, E Jiao, Zhi Fu Zi, Bao Fu Zi, Huang Qin</td>
<td>Warms the Yang, str. Sp., nourish Blood, stops bleeding</td>
<td>Blood in the stools, uterine bleeding, vomiting of blood, or purpura, cold limbs and a wan (pale and weak) complexion, a pale tongue with a white coating and a deep, thready and slow pulse.</td>
<td>Multiple bleeding problems: Blood in stools, vomiting blood, purpura Cold limbs Sp Yang/Qi Def M: uterine bleeding Bleeding due to def of Sp Yang/Qi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gu Ben Zhi Bao Tang, 355</td>
<td>Shu Di Huang, Bai Zhu, Huang Qi, Dang Gui, Pao Jiang</td>
<td>Fu Ling, Suan Zao Ren, Long Yan Rou, Yuan Zhi, Mu Xiang, Gan Cao, Sheng Jiang, Da Zao + Shu Di Huang, Pao Jiang</td>
<td>Ton Blood, augments Qi, stops bleeding</td>
<td>Spleen cannot control the Blood: sudden/severe uterine bleeding or persistent uterine bleeding with continuous spotting. Blood is pale and watery. Shiny pale complexion / slight facial edema, lightheadedness, fatigue, cold extremities, shortness of breath, stifling sensation in the chest, loose stools, pale and swollen tongue with teeth marks, thin frail or hollow pulse</td>
<td>Facial edema Lightheadedness Fatigue/shortness of breath Stifling sensation in the chest Loose stools / cold extremities Cold pulse M: Persistent uterine bleeding with continuous spotting (blood is pale and watery) Bleeding from def</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 comparison of different related formulas. The numbers in the left column are the page reference from Bensky's formula book. In the second column all the herbs present in Gui Pi Tang are printed bold. For basic structural reference herbs from Ba Zhen Tang (Si Jun Zi Tang + Si Wu Tang) are printed with underscore.
Concluding

When analyzing the table, the context of all patterns and or indications is on a background of deficiency, possibly with bleeding.

All the formulas in Table 2 refer to a pale tongue, with the exception of Suan Zao Ren Tang, where no reference of color of the tongue body is made. Also paleness of the face and lightness of the color of blood is noteworthy.

When considering Gui Pi Tang, based on the patterns and indications the formulas in the above table can be considered. Based on distinguishing features a selection can be made for the most appropriate formula. By looking at the herbs that are added or removed compared to Gui Pi Tang information is obtained about the functional blocks that would be used for certain indications specifically, thus further solidifying the choice for a formula.

3. Pathologies, patterns
In this chapter the most relevant patterns are discussed.

3.9. Relation to organs, blood and Shen
In TCM the Shen is related to the Heart, which is said to govern our emotions and to blood, which is said to anchor the Shen. It is very likely that when the Shen is disturbed and needs calming, that blood, or blood related organs, are affected. Below is depicted the relationship between Liver, Spleen and Heart and blood (Maciocia, foundations of Chinese medicine, p. 62).

![Figure 1, the relationship between the Spleen, Liver, Heart and blood](image)

In Gui Pi Tang there is much resemblance to this overview in the above figure. Suan Zao Ren nourishes Liver Blood and Heart Yin. Additionally it also has herbs like Yuan Zhi to calm the mind specifically. The spleen is also strengthened by the herbs that together make Si Jun Zi Tang. The addition of Huang Qi and Dang Gui is there to enhance blood production, all and all a perfect fit to this picture.

In the same paragraph Maciocia provides this quote from the Su Wen8,9:

"Blood is the mind of a person”

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8 Later it is also described that the Heart and Heart blood house the Shen and that Liver blood houses the Hun specifically (p. 335).

9 The reference to the Su Wen is: Chapter 26, p. 443, of Unschuld’s translation of the Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen, see the literature.
This emphasizes the relation between Blood and the Mind and thus also the herbs related to Blood in Gui Pi Tang and its indications for calming the mind and bleeding.

3.10. Blood patterns

As described in the previous paragraph (3.9), the formula discussed in this paper has a strong relationship with blood. For that reason it is useful knowing which blood patterns are described in the literature. These are the ones given by Maciocia (Foundations of CM, p. 447):

- Deficiency of blood
- Stasis of blood
- Heat in the blood
- Loss of blood

Loss of blood, has some overlapping causes to what is described earlier it can be caused by (Maciocia, foundations of CM, p. 446):

- Heat in the blood
- Stasis of blood
- Qi deficiency
- Yin deficiency

Of these patterns Blood, Qi and Yin deficiency are the most relevant ones to Gui Pi Tang, others are more of an excess nature and would require a different approach.

3.11. Heart patterns

Because of the mental indications in the formula, the Heart is discussed in this section as well.

All emotions eventually injure the Heart Qi, so deficient Heart Qi and Heart blood are recurrent patterns overall. Yifan Yang (Chinese herbal medicine p. 192) denotes anxiety, difficulty falling asleep, and palpitation symptoms to be related to the Heart.

Bensky (p.1075) lists these different patterns related to the Heart:

- Heart Qi deficiency, yang deficiency
- Heart blood deficiency, yin deficiency
- Phlegm veiling the Heart
- Heart fire flaring
- Heart spirit disturbance

Of the above list Gui Pi Tang is not relevant Heart fire flaring. To Phlegm veiling the Heart it is relevant but with true excess patterns modifications are to be recommended.

Heart Qi deficiency is a pattern where both Suān zǎo rén and Lóng yăn ròu play their part (Yifan Yang, Formulas p. 144). Heart Qi- is often accompanied by Spleen Qi- and/or blood-deficiency. For these reasons Gui Pi Tang is again well suited to these indications. Heart Yang deficiency seems also less relevant.¹⁰

3.12. Liver Patterns

The Liver is important in blood patterns. For Gui Pi Tang this is mostly a deficiency pattern, and not stagnation patterns. Other herbs/formulas are better suited to that end.

¹⁰ Assuming this is a more systematic i.e. Spleen and/or Kidney related Yang deficiency with in this case having effect on Heart functioning. Giu Pi Tang doesn’t contain any herbs of the Yang tonification category.
Gui Pi Tang does have some moving herbs in it that can address stagnation (Dang Gui, Mu Xian, Sheng Jiang), but they are not primarily in the formula to address a stagnation pattern as such. More to help with moving qi, prevent cloying and generate blood.

For that reason and the fact that deficiency patterns have been discussed already, they won’t be further discussed here.

3.13. 5 element pattern
The five element pattern found named in Bensky Formulas and strategies is one of Child (Spleen) draining the Mother (Heart). Because the child is deficient, it requires extra resources from the mother. Ironically worrying and pensiveness (related to Spleen), create mental more mental problems like anxiety (related to the Heart).

3.14. Patterns of a disturbed Shen
According to Maciocia (Practice of Chinese Medicine, p. 301) these are the patterns related to a disturbed Shen:

- Qi Stagnation (Heart, Liver)
- Blood Stasis (Heart, Liver)
- Heat or Fire (possible due to long term Qi stagnation)
- Damp or Phlegm (associated with Spleen function) → clouded mind
- Heat toxicity (from long term EPF, traumatic experience, bad life style: diet and time)
- Kidney deficiency (yin vacuity fire)
- Spleen deficiency (yin vacuity fire)

Each of these factors can contribute to the formation of the next: Qi stagnation can lead to Blood stasis, both of them can cause Heat or Fire, and the combination of stagnation and Heat can lead to Dampness of Phlegm. All of them hinder the function of the Qi mechanism, which can cause emotional imbalances or vice versa. Written like this these patterns are not appropriate for Gui Pi Yang. It cannot by itself treat these patterns, nor does it seem likely that it should be the first choice for these with modifications.

The five Shen
In the introduction it was established that Gui Pi Tang has indications for mental problems. Therefore the five aspects of the mind are further delved into.

11Hun is the entering and exiting of the Shen, and is said to be a container of ideas, plans, projects, ideals (Foundations of CM, p. 84). The description entering and exiting is abstract and large. It requires more study to describe it more thoroughly. I summarize the Hun as the source of ideas and movement of the Shen itself. In the same work Maciocia (Foundations of CM, p. 84) describes a balance between the Shen and Hun where the Shen controls the input from the Hun. There can be either to restrict control (depression) or to little control (mania), also called a floating of the Hun12. Assuming that restriction is more of an excess pattern, and the floating can be caused more of a deficiency pattern. It could be argued that the formula in this paper better suited for an excess of ideas scenario (Liver blood deficiency). This also fits the Yi (thinking and overthinking) patterns where the herbs are useful for.

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11 Maciocia describes the Shen or spirit is the total complex of the Hun, Po, Yi, Zhi and the Shen itself (Foundations of CM, p. 83).

12 An important symptom is excessive dreaming
Yi is responsible for thinking and memory. The pathology herein is overthinking. Over taxation by thinking injures the Spleen, which needs Qi and blood for its proper functioning (Foundations of CM, p. 100, p. 149). Very relevant to Gui Pi Tang.

Po is responsible for physical sensations and expressions. It is Yin in relation to the Hun, which is Yang. Where the Hun has a relation more to the Shen, going in and out, the Po has the same function but than for Jing. Because of this more physical function compared to the Hun, I assume that the Hun is more relevant for this paper.

Zhi corresponds to our mental drive and to the determination to pursue our goals (Foundations of CM, p. 123). In the Foundations of CM (p. 159) Zhi is also referred to as memory, with the function of controlling recent memories. I assume the Yi is more important in a direct sense in relation to memory.

The Shen in a large sense, Hun (by deficiency of blood) and Yi are most relevant. Deficiency of Qi and blood is the most important underlying factor. By tonifying and nourishing the formula:

- calm the Shen,
- nourish the Spleen thus balancing the Yi,
- nourish Liver blood thus anchoring the Hun and calming the Mind

Concluding

With regards to the functions of Blood production, the related organs that also correspond to the use of Gui Pi Tang are: Liver, Heart and Spleen.

The relevant pathological patterns are: deficiency and loss of blood, (though not acute and/or due to heat), Qi deficiency and Yin deficiency. Though with Yin deficiency it should be noted that this is not the prime aim for Gui Pi Tang, but it can be used for this when the proper conditions are met.

The pathologies of the Mind that are related to Gui Pi Tang are summarized with Kidney and or Spleen deficiencies leading to deficient fire. The related faculties mostly involved are the Yi and Hun are mostly involved.

With regard to 5 element pathology it is the child (Spleen) draining the mother (Heart).
4. Conclusion and discussion
The aim of this paper is to better understand the clinical applications of Gui Pi Tang. To this end these questions were at its core

- What is the detailed formula composition?
- For which patterns and indications can it be used?
- What are key discriminators for use of this formula versus related ones?

The literature research done to this end provides a qualitative framework in two ways. First a detailed analysis of the formula itself provides insights of its building blocks and overall actions and indications. Second a broader scope of related formulas and their actions, indications and distinguishing elements are used to differentiate. This second table is designed as an aid to address the difficulty of clinical practice where multiple formulas can be considered for similar identical patterns.

Normally pattern identification should dictate top down which formula is most relevant for a proper treatment. However if and when multiple formulas could be considered, either due to this being the result of pattern identification or due to lack of experience, this stratifying table (table 2) can help. Knowing which formulas are used in similar but slightly different patterns also allow the reader to make assessments for modifying other formulas by assessing which herbs are added or removed in comparison to Gui Pi Tang.

The most relevant background for the use of Gui Pi Tang is chronic Qi and Blood deficiency and bleeding, caused by overwork and worrying. The principal pathological process is:

Spleen deficient (by worrying and/or overwork) \(\rightarrow\) lack of Blood production i.e. Blood deficiency \(\rightarrow\) no Blood to nourish the Heart.

Important secondary pathologies that are addressed by Gui Pi Tang are Phlegm, Blood stagnation and a disturbed Mind (amongst other forgetfulness). The most relevant pattern are: deficiency of Qi, Blood and Yin (Kid/Sp). With relation to the Mind and Heart: Qi, Yang, Blood and Yin deficiency and Phlegm misting the heart are the most relevant patterns.

Because deficiency is the key parameter, the more patterns are related to excess modifications should be considered, or the choice of formula should be changed. The same holds up for stagnation patterns.

This paper is limited because it is centered on Gui Pi Tang. With the background of chronic Qi and Blood deficiency, bleeding forgetfulness etc. this paper provides a clinical framework. However the chosen related formulas could be elaborated to greater numbers. Also a more systematic approach e.g. looking at herbal formulas that address bleeding due to deficiency could have been chosen. This would be a relevant follow up for future research.

Due to the qualitative nature of this paper it might be less relevant in a statistically driven Western scientific environment. However the impact to society is that the chronic Qi and Blood deficiency, due to overwork is extremely common. That means that a better understanding of how this formula also could lead to improvements in the lives of a lot of people. The intent is that this paper, modestly, provides a framework for a clinical setting. By detailing the different building blocks and key discriminator symptoms/indications the reader is inspired to adopt the formula and its modifications to meet their clinical needs.
5. Literature