

## Triple Heater (San Jiao)

The San Jiao [Triple Heater, Triple Burner, Triple Energiser, Three Heater] is one of the Yang Organs of the Fire Element. The other is the Small Intestine. Considerable ambiguity and debate is associated with the San Jiao Organ. Its exact nature is not clear from the classical texts (Larre and Rochat, 1992a). It is said to 'have a name but no shape' or 'is located separately from the Zang Fu Organs and inside the body'. It may be understood as the functional relationship between the various organs which regulate water metabolism - Lungs, Spleen, Stomach, Kidneys, Small Intestine, Large Intestine and Bladder.

It is possibly best thought of as the overall unity, or pathway, which makes these Organs a complete system - in terms of fluid metabolism. It does not exist as an entity outside these other Organs (Kaptchuk, 1983; Wiseman et al, 1985).

The Huang Di Nei Jing emphasises the San Jiao's control of the body's Water. It is 'where the Water Channel arises' and is the 'official of the bursting water dam' (Kaptchuk, 1983). The Qi of the San Jiao regulates those aspects of the Lung, Spleen, Kidney, Stomach, Large Intestine and Small Intestine and Bladder which are involved in Water movement. Wiseman et al. (1985) refer to it as the global expression of the roles played by these organs.

The San Jiao also defines three areas of the body: the Upper Jiao which includes the head and chest - above the diaphragm; the Middle Jiao, which lies between the diaphragm and the level of the navel; and the Lower Jiao which corresponds to the abdominal area below the navel.

In the Upper Jiao (Heart, Pericardium and Lungs) there is a mist or fog.

In the Middle Jiao (Stomach, Spleen) there is a foam or froth of bubbles - Maciocia (1989) refers to a 'maceration chamber' or 'bubbling cauldron' .

In the Lower Jiao (Kidney, Liver, Large Intestine, Small Intestine, Bladder) there is a swamp, drainage ditch or sluice. The Liver here is associated with its channel pathway (Kaptchuk, 1983).

Cheng (1987) suggests that the main functions of the San Jiao are to govern the various forms of Qi, and to serve as the passage for the flow of Yuan Qi and Jin Ye. It is utilized as the pathway for distribution of Yuan qi which stimulates and promotes the functional activities of the Zang Fu and various tissues throughout the body.

Digestion, absorption, distribution and excretion of food and water is undertaken as a cooperative effort by various Zang Fu organs, including the San Jiao.

Su Wen, chpt. 8, p. 58. "The Triple Burning space is the irrigation official who builds waterways." (Lu, 1990).

Ling Shu, chpt. 18. p. 827: "Man receives energy from grains; when grains enter the Stomach, they are transmitted to the Lungs, so that the five viscera and the six bowels will receive energy. Clear energies are nutritive energies while muddy energies are defensive energies; nutritive energy travels in the meridians while defensive energy travels outside the meridians; both of them constantly travel without a stop ..." (Lu, 1990).

Ling Shu, chpt. 18. p. 829-832: "The Upper Burning Space is originated from the upper opening of the Stomach, travels upward along the esophagus, cuts across the diaphragm, spreads in the middle of the chest, moves through the armpit, travels in the portion of the great Yin (the Lung meridian), returns to the bright Yang (the Large Intestine meridian). And then, it moves upward to the tongue and downward to the bright Yang of foot (the Stomach meridian), constantly travelling along with the nutritive energy..... after fifty circulations, a grand meeting will again take place at the great Yin of hand" (Lu, 1990).

"The energy of the Middle Burning Space, like that of the Upper Burning Space, is also originated from the Stomach, but it is originated after the Upper Burning Space. This is due to the fact that the energy received here must go through the process of excreting the rough substances, steaming the fluids, transforming the refined substances for sending upward to the Lungs where it is transformed into Blood for the maintenance of life as a most precious substance to have a unique privilege of travelling through the meridians, and it is called nutritive energy" (Lu, 1990).

"The energy of the Lower Burning Space discriminately transmits refined substances to the lower section of the Small Intestine (namely, that section of the small intestine which is connected with the jejunum and the large intestine); and it also transmits water to the Bladder by soaking and penetrating. Thus, water and grains always reside in the Stomach first where rough substances are singled out for transmitting to the Large Intestine which becomes the task of the Lower Burning Space. The soaking and penetrating process will proceed downward so that refined substances will be separated from rough substances with the latter to be transmitted to the Bladder" (Lu, 1990).

Ling Shu, chpt. 30. p. 893-894: "Energy refers to the substance that initiates from the Upper Burning Space, spreads the flavours of five grains, warms up the skin, fills up the body, moistens the hair, like irrigation by fog and dew" (Lu, 1990).

"When the Middle Burning Space (Stomach and Spleen) receives food energy, it will transform it into red fluids which is called Blood..... The Stomach is the great sea of five grains" (Lu, 1990).

Nan Jing, Q. 31. p. 1196: "The Triple Burning Space is the passage of water and grains and it is the beginning and ending of (the) energy mechanism" (Henry Lu, 1990).

" The Upper Burning Space is located in between the region below the Heart and the diaphragm and around the cardiac orifice; it is in charge of receiving but not excreting ..." (Lu, 1990).

"The Middle Burning Space is located around the middle of the Stomach, neither above nor below; it is in charge of digesting water and grains ..." (Lu, 1990).

"The Lower Burning Space is located around the upper opening of the Bladder; it is in charge of separating the clear from the muddy, and of excreting but not receiving in order to facilitate transmission..." (Lu, 1990).

Nan Jing, Q. 38. p. 1202: "There are only five viscera, but there are six bowels; why is that? The so-called six bowels actually include the Triple Burning Space which is a separate channel

for the original energy in charge of various energies; but it has name without shape and its meridian belongs to the little Yang of hand. Thus the Triple Burning Space is an additional bowel, and when this additional bowel is added to the five regular bowels, we have a total of six bowels" (Lu, 1990).

Nan Jing, Q. 39. p. 1203: "There are five bowels and six viscera; why is that? The six bowels include five regular bowels; and when we say that there are six viscera, we mean to refer to the five viscera plus one additional Kidney, namely, the left Kidney and the right Kidney which is called life door. Life door is the residence of pure energy and Spirit in store of semen in men and connected with the womb in women, and its energy is in communication with the Kidney. Hence there are a total of six viscera"

"How come there are five bowels? Each of the five viscera corresponds to one bowel, and there is one additional bowel called the Triple Burning Space which does not belong to the five viscera. Hence there are only five bowels" (Lu, 1990).

Nan Jing, Q. 66. p. 1235-1236: "The lake points [Yuan pts.] on the five meridians of viscera are also places where the energy of the Triple Burning Space resides. Why are the lake points [Yuan pts.] called the starting points just because they are the places where the energy of the Triple Burning Spaces resides? The moving energy of Kidneys below the navel is the root of human life, and it is also the root of the twelve master meridians, and that is why, it is called the starting (original) energy - [Yuan qi]. The Triple Burning Space is a separate channel of the original energy, and it is in charge of the flow of three energies (namely, nutritive energy, defensive energy, and assorted energy) for distribution among the five viscera and six bowels. The word "starting" (or original-[Yuan]) is an honorary name of the Triple Burning Space; and this is why the places where the energy of the Triple Burning Space resides are called starting points [Yuan pts.]. When the five viscera and the six bowels are diseased, the starting points may be used for treatment" (Lu, 1990).

Considerable juxtapositional analysis of the San Jiao (the TCM concept vis-à-vis WMB) is undertaken in Davis (1996a,b,c,d).

'The Triple Heater is responsible for the opening up of passages and irrigation. The regulation of fluids stems from it.' (Su Wen, chpt 8. Larre & Rochat, 1992b, 1992d).

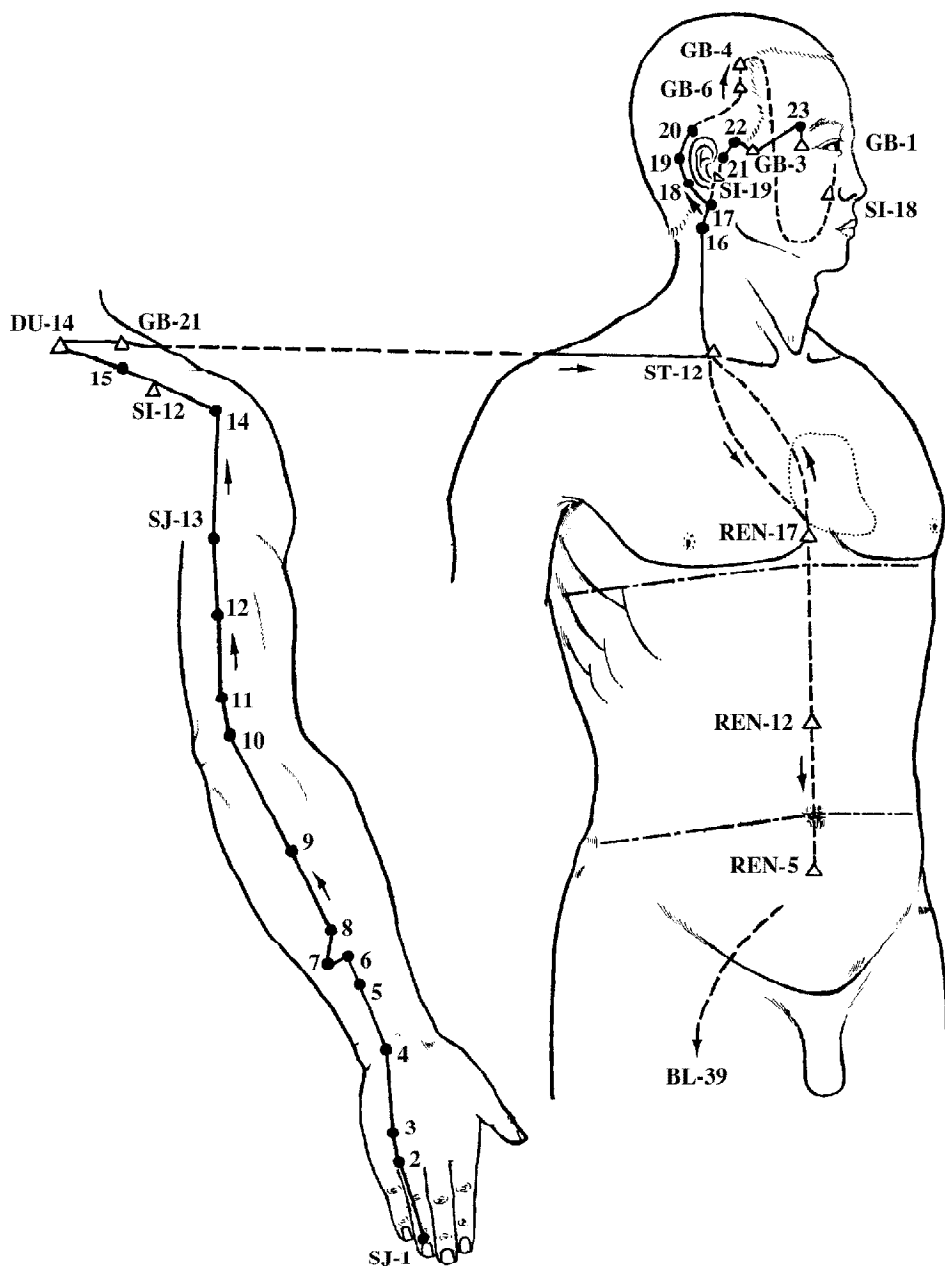
## **Shou Shao Yang San Jiao Jing San Jiao Channel of hand Shao Yang**

### **PRIMARY SAN JIAO MERIDIAN**

The primary San Jiao Channel of hand Shao Yang begins at the medial (ulnar) side of the tip of the 4th finger (SJ-1, Guan Chong), and travels up between the 4th and 5th metacarpal bones on the dorsum of the hand to the posterior wrist (SJ-4, Yang Chi). It travels up the posterior midline of the forearm between the radius and ulna bones, and runs over the lateral aspect of the olecranon process at the elbow (SJ-10, Tian Jing). It then ascends the posterolateral aspect of

the arm to the shoulder (SJ-14, Jian Liao) where it intersects the Small Intestine Channel of hand Tai Yang at SI-12 (Bing Feng). It then runs to the midline of the upper back where it meets Du Mai at DU-14 (Da Zhui).

As it crosses back (anteriorly) over the shoulder, it intersects the Gall Bladder Channel of foot Shao Yang at GB-21 (Jian Jing), then enters the supraclavicular fossa (ST-12, Que Pen), penetrating to the Interior and travelling to the mid-chest region where it meets Ren Mai at REN-17 (Dan Zhong). There it connects with the Pericardium Organ. It then descends Internally through the diaphragm into the abdomen, thereby homing successively through, and linking, each of the three body cavities (Jiaos), [upper (REN-17, Dan Zhong), middle (REN-12, Zhong Wan), and lower (REN-5, Shi Men)], of its pertaining Organ the San Jiao.



An Internal branch descends from the San Jiao Organ to connect to its lower Sea/Uniting-He point at BL-39 (Wei Yang). A branch emerges from this point and follows the course of the Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang to join with the Bladder Organ.

A branch separates in the mid-chest region (at REN-17, Dan Zhong), and rises to emerge in the supraclavicular fossa (ST-12, Que Pen). It then runs superficially up the neck, and behind and above the ear. It intersects the Gall Bladder Channel of foot Shao Yang at GB-6 (Xuan Li) and GB-4 (Han Yan) in the hairline on the lateral forehead. It then winds down across the cheek (Internally) to the infraorbital region, where it intersects the Small Intestine Channel of hand Tai Yang at SI-18 (Quan Liao).

Another branch separates behind the ear at SJ-17 (Yi Feng), enters the ear, then reemerges in front of it. This branch intersects the Small Intestine Channel of hand Tai Yang at SI-19 (Ting Gong). It then crosses in front of the Gall Bladder Channel of foot Shao Yang at GB-3 (Shang Guan), and travels along the zygomatic arch to the lateral end of the eyebrows, to SJ-23 (Si Zhu Kong). It terminates at the outer canthus of the eye, at GB-1 (Tong Zi Liao), where it links with the Gall Bladder Channel of foot Shao Yang.

There are 23 points on the San Jiao Meridian, and 14 points intersecting on other Meridians. This Meridian pertains to the San Jiao Organ and connects with the Pericardium Organ.

#### FLOW OF QI/ DISTRIBUTION OF POINTS:

**Upper Limb:** SJ-1 (Guan Chong), SJ-2 (Ye Men), SJ-3 (Zhong Zhu), SJ-4 (Yang Chi), SJ-5 (Wai Guan), SJ-6 (Zhi Gou), SJ-7 (Hui Zong), SJ-8 (San Yang Luo), SJ-9 (Si Du), SJ-10 (Tian Jing), SJ-11 (Qing Leng Yuan), SJ-12 (Xiao Luo), SJ-13 (Nao Hui).

**Shoulder, Neck, Trunk:** SJ-14 (Jian Liao), SI-12 (Bing Feng), SJ-15 (Tian Liao), DU-14 (Da Zhui), GB-21 (Jian Jing), ST-12 (Que Pen), REN-17 (Dan Zhong), REN-12 (Zhong Wan), REN-5 (Shi Men).

**[Lower Limb:** BL-39 (Wei Yang)].

**Head, Neck:** SJ-16 (Tian You), SJ-17 (Yi Feng);

i) SJ-18 (Chi Mai), SJ-19 (Lu Xi), SJ-20 (Jiao Sun), GB-6 (Xuan Li), GB-4 (Han Yan), SI-18 (Quan Liao).

ii) SI-19 (Ting Gong), SJ-21 (Er Men), SJ-22 (He Liao), GB-3 (Shang Guan), SJ-23 (Si Zhu Kong), GB-1 (Tong Zi Liao).

#### MERIDIANS INTERSECTED BY THE SAN JIAO CHANNEL:

Gall Bladder Channel of foot Shao Yang: GB-1 (Tong Zi Liao), GB-3 (Shang Guan), GB-4 (Han Yan), GB-6 (Xuan Li), GB-21 (Jian Jing).

Small Intestine Channel of hand Tai Yang: SI-12 (Bing Feng), SI-18 (Quan Liao), SI-19 (Ting Gong).

Stomach Channel of foot Yang Ming: ST-12 (Que Pen).

Urinary Bladder Channel of foot Tai Yang: [BL-39 (Wei Yang)].

Du Mai (Governing vessel): DU-14 (Da Zhui).

Ren Mai (Conception Vessel): REN-17 (Dan Zhong), REN-12 (Zhong Wan), REN-5 (Shi Men).

#### MERIDIANS INTERSECTING ON THE SAN JIAO CHANNEL:

Pericardium Channel of hand Jue Yin: SJ-1 (Guan Chong)

Small Intestine Channel of hand Tai Yang: SJ-22 (He Liao)

Gall Bladder Channel of foot Shao Yang: SJ-17 (Yi Feng), SJ-20 (Jiao Sun), SJ-22 (He Liao)

Yang Wei Mai (Yang linking Vessel): SJ-15 (Tian Liao), [SJ-13 (Nao Hui)]

#### SAN JIAO SPECIAL POINTS/ COMMAND POINTS:

SJ-1 (Guan Chong): Metal, Well-Jing.

SJ-2 (Ye Men): Water, Spring, Gushing-Ying.

SJ-3 (Zhong Zhu): Wood, Stream, Transporting-Shu.

SJ-4 (Yang Chi): Yuan-Source.

SJ-5 (Wai Guan):  
i) Luo-Connecting  
ii) Master point, Yang Wei Mai (Yang linking Vessel);  
Coupling point, Dai Mai (Girdle Vessel).

SJ-6 (Zhi Gou): Fire, River, Traversing-Jing. Horary point.

SJ-7 (Hui Zong): Xi-Cleft, Accumulation.

SJ-8 (San Yang Luo): Group Luo-Connecting point of the Yang Meridians (San Jiao, Small Intestine, Large Intestine) of the upper limb.

SJ-10 (Tian Jing): Earth, Sea, Uniting-He.

BL-39 (Wei Yang): lower Sea, Uniting-He point of the San Jiao Channel.

REN-5 (Shi Men): front Alarm-Mu, Collecting point.

Upper Jiao Alarm-Mu, Collecting point: REN-17 (Dan Zhong)

Middle Jiao Alarm-Mu, Collecting point: REN-12 (Zhong Wan)

Lower Jiao Alarm-Mu, Collecting point: REN-5 (Shi Men)

REN-7 (Yin Jiao) Special Command point of the Lower Jiao

BL-22 (San Jiao Shu): back Associated-Shu, Transporting point.

#### PRIMARY SAN JIAO MERIDIAN SIGNS/SYMPTOMS:

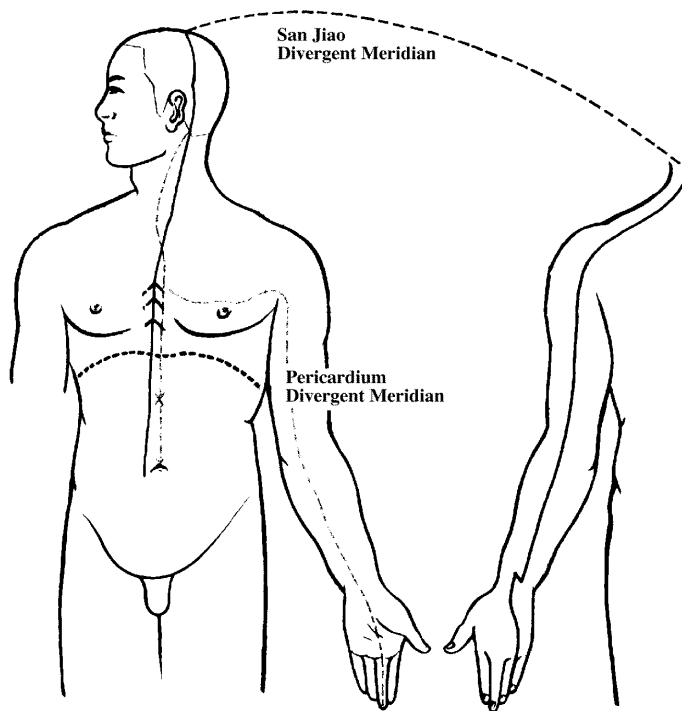
Sore and swollen throat, pain in the cheeks and jaw, pain and redness of the eyes, deafness, pain behind the ears and on the posterior and lateral aspect of the shoulder and upper arm.

(mainly from Ellis et al., 1988; O'Connor & Bensky, 1981)

#### SAN JIAO ORGAN SIGNS/SYMPTOMS:

Abdominal distension and fullness, or hardness/stiffness and fullness in the lower abdomen, dysuria, urinary frequency and urgency, oedema of the skin, enuresis, nocturia. (mainly from Ellis et al., 1988; O'Connor & Bensky, 1981)

## SAN JIAO DIVERGENT MERIDIAN



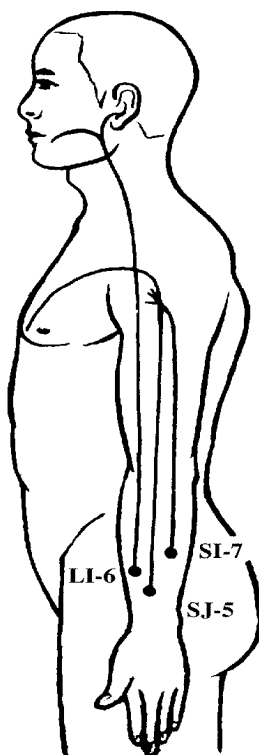
The San Jiao Divergent Meridian leaves the primary San Jiao Channel at the vertex, near DU-20, Bai Hui. From there it descends through the supraclavicular fossa and down through each of the three body spaces (Jiaos) of the San Jiao Organ. It disperses in the chest.

(mainly from Ellis et al., 1988; O'Connor & Bensky, 1981)

### Ministerial Fire Divergent Meridians

(from Cheng 1987, p. 90)

## SAN JIAO LUO (CONNECTING) MERIDIAN



The San Jiao Luo Vessel separates from the primary San Jiao Channel at SJ-5 (Wai Guan), 2 cun proximal to the wrist. It travels proximally along the posterior aspect of the upper limb, crosses the shoulder and disperses in the chest, where it unites with the Pericardium Channel of hand Jue Yin.

### Signs/ Symptoms:

Shi: spasms and cramps of the muscles around the elbow, restrictions in elbow movement.

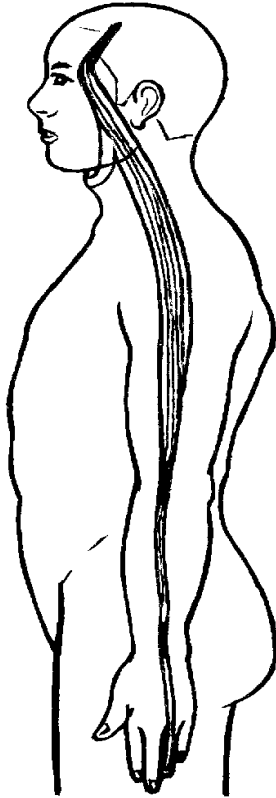
Xu: atony and flaccidity of the muscles around the elbow

(mainly from Ellis et al., 1988; O'Connor & Bensky, 1981)

### Yang Luo Meridians, Upper Limb

(modified from Cheng 1987, p. 91)

## SAN JIAO MUSCLE-TENDINO (SINEW) MERIDIAN



The San Jiao Muscle-Tendino Meridian (MTM) begins at the tip of the 4th finger. It binds at the dorsum of the wrist, then continues up the forearm and binds at the elbow (olecranon). It then travels up the lateral aspect of the arm onto the shoulder. From there it ascends the neck where it unites with the MTM of the Small Intestine Channel of hand Tai Yang.

A branch separates at the angle of the jaw and connects with the root of the tongue.

Another branch proceeds upward in front of the ear and runs to the outer canthus of the eye. It then travels across the temple and binds at the side of the forehead.

### **Signs/ Symptoms:**

Stiffness, strain or muscle spasms and pain along the course of the Sinew Meridian, curled tongue.

(mainly from Ellis et al., 1988; O'Connor & Bensky, 1981)

### **San Jiao Muscle Tendino Meridian**

(from Cheng 1987,  
p. 104)