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Where Was Wuling San Placed? Reorganization of the Three Methods for Treating Water in Shanghan Lun Zhu and Shanghan Lun Yi

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Abstract

Shanghan Lun Zhu and Shanghan Lun Yi, both associated with Ke Qin, each present “three methods for treating water” across the upper, middle, and lower burners, yet Wuling San does not occupy the same position. In the inspected Shanghan Lun Zhu witness, Xiao Qing Long Tang, Shi Zao Tang, and Wuling San occupy the upper, middle, and lower positions respectively. In Shanghan Lun Yi, Wuling San is paired with Xiao Qing Long Tang in the upper-burner clause, while Gui Zhi Qu Gui Jia Ling Zhu Tang occupies the lower clause. We compared normalized transcriptions, independent public transcriptions, and facsimile pages. The result shows that the symptom–method–formula arrangement was not stably repeated under the same heading. It does not by itself establish authorial intent, the exact moment of revision, or an edition genealogy. Contemporary formulary and paediatric uses provide secondary context for other editorial units in which Wuling San was invoked.

Keywords: Wuling San · Shanghan Lun Zhu · Shanghan Lun Yi · Ke Qin · source criticism · three burners

Is a formula position fixed within one authorial system?

When looking up Wuling San, we usually begin by asking what the formula is used for. Yet opening two books associated with Ke Qin raises a prior question. Both Shanghan Lun Zhu and Shanghan Lun Yi divide the treatment of water into the upper, middle, and lower burners, but they place Wuling San differently: below in one book and above in the other. This study asks whether that difference is merely

verbal or whether the whole passage has been reorganized. Bibliographic and formula information helped locate the candidate passages, after which the wording around `治水有三法` and `五苓散` was checked directly in transcripts and public facsimiles. Search and automated summaries helped locate the texts; the judgment rests on the two primary passages reproduced below.

Ke Qin's system in prior scholarship —and an unasked textual difference

Scholarship on Ke Qin has chiefly explicated the six-channel and pattern-differentiation system of Shanghan Lun Yi. Jang and Hong interpret the six channels not as a fixed anatomical map but as a system for distinguishing presentations and deploying methods and formulas ^[6]. Lee, through the “Explanation of Greater Yang Disease,” argues against reducing Greater Yang to the Bladder channel alone and reads it as a layered domain involving the Heart, Lung, and nutrient–defence circulation ^[7]. These studies provide the background for reading a formula's location as a contextual relation rather than a fixed label.

The located scholarship, however, does not directly collate the two “three methods” passages from Shanghan Lun Zhu and Shanghan Lun Yi across the same four columns—symptom, location, method, and formula. The contribution here is therefore not a new total account of Ke Qin's doctrine. It turns the existing systemic reading into a narrower reproducible comparison and identifies where a fixed tag such as “Wuling San = lower burner” breaks even within the same attributed corpus.

Shanghan Lun Zhu: Wuling San in the lower burner

The inspected Shanghan Lun Zhu passage assigns dry retching and cough to water in the upper burner and Xiao Qing Long Tang; epigastric fullness to the middle burner and Shi Zao Tang; and inhibited urination to the lower burner and Wuling San ^[1]. The transcript agrees with facsimile PDF pages 66–67 (printed pages 53–54). In this witness, Wuling San occupies the third position, which draws off water below.

Source passage

Shanghan Lun Zhu, “Three methods for treating water”

Normalized text byte 98,499; facsimile PDF pp. 66–67, printed pp. 53–54

其治水有三法：干呕而咳，是水在上焦，在上者发之，小青龙是也；心下痞满，是水在中焦，中满者泻之，十枣汤是也；小便不利，是水在下焦，在下者引而竭之，五苓散是也。

Translation. There are three methods for treating water. Dry retching with cough is water in the upper burner; what is above is released, as with Xiao Qing Long Tang. Fullness below the heart is water in the middle burner; fullness in the middle is drained inward, as with Shi Zao Tang. Inhibited urination is water in the lower burner; what is below is drawn off and exhausted, as with Wuling San.

What this passage supports. This witness aligns symptom, location, method, and formula in three slots and places Wuling San in the third, lower-burner slot. It establishes the arrangement in this witness, not a universal or fixed location for the formula.

Shanghan Lun Yi: Wuling San in the upper burner

Under the same heading in Shanghan Lun Yi, vomiting immediately after drinking is added to the upper-burner description, and Wuling San is paired with Xiao Qing Long Tang. The lower burner is described as heat entering the bladder with inhibited urination, for which Gui Zhi Qu Gui Jia Ling Zhu Tang is assigned ^[2]. The complete clause was verified in the transcript and on facsimile PDF page 39 (printed page 31).

Source passage

Shanghan Lun Yi, “Three methods for treating water”

Normalized text byte 65,836; facsimile PDF p. 39, printed p. 31

其治水有三法：干呕而咳，水入即吐，是水气在上焦，在上者汗而发之，小青龙、五苓散是也；心下痞硬，硬满而痛，是水气在中焦，中满者泻之于内，十枣汤、大陷胸是也；热入膀胱，小便不利，是水气在下焦，在下者引而竭之，桂枝去桂加苓术是也。

Translation. There are three methods for treating water. Dry retching with cough and vomiting as soon as water is taken indicate water qi in the upper burner; what is above is released through sweating, as with Xiao Qing Long Tang and Wuling San. Hard, painful fullness below the heart indicates water qi in the middle burner; fullness in the middle is drained inward, as with Shi Zao Tang and Da Xian Xiong Tang. Heat entering the bladder with inhibited urination indicates water qi in the lower burner; what is below is drawn off and exhausted, as with Gui Zhi Qu Gui Jia Ling Zhu Tang.

What this passage supports. Under the same heading, the upper clause gains a symptom and Wuling San, the middle gains Da Xian Xiong Tang, and both the lower symptom and formula change. The observed difference is therefore a reorganization of the whole schema, not merely the movement of one formula.

Reorganization rather than repetition

The difference is not merely the movement of one formula. Shanghan Lun Yi expands the upper-burner symptom and method, adds Da Xian Xiong Tang to the middle, and changes the lower-burner symptom and formula. The entire symptom–location–method–formula relation is reorganized. The direct comparison supports the bounded conclusion that the two inspected texts do not repeat one stable schema.

There are three rivals. First, an intentional authorial revision is possible, but remains unresolved because authorial-copy status, publication sequence, and edition genealogy have not been established. Second, a one-formula move from lower to upper does not fit the evidence: the upper symptom and method, the middle formula, and both lower symptom and formula also change. Third, later editing, transcription, or edition history may account for part of the difference and cannot yet be excluded. The strongest conclusion is therefore not an authorial motive but the observed difference between the relational schemas of the two inspected passages.

Table 1. Symptom–method–formula arrangement in the two witnesses

Location	Shanghan Lun Zhu	Shanghan Lun Yi
Upper	Dry retching/cough → release → Xiao Qing Long Tang	Dry retching/cough/vomiting water → sweating → Xiao Qing Long Tang + Wuling San
Middle	Epigastric fullness → drain → Shi Zao Tang	Hard painful fullness → drain → Shi Zao Tang + Da Xian Xiong Tang
Lower	Inhibited urination → draw off → Wuling San	Heat in bladder/inhibited urination → draw off → Gui Zhi Qu Gui Jia Ling Zhu Tang

Note. Translations are working renderings for comparison and do not state modern clinical indications.

Contemporary context and limitations

In contemporary material, Gujin Mingyi Fanglun contrasts Wuling San and Zhen Wu Tang through excess and deficient water; Xiaoer Tuina Guangyi presents a concise paediatric entry for diarrhoea and inhibited urination; and Youke Zhengzhi Zhunsheng invokes it in contexts of inhibited urination and acute fright-wind ^[3, 4, 5]. These are contextual witnesses, not direct genealogical evidence explaining Ke Qin’s two passages.

This study compares acquired facsimiles and normalized transcriptions and does not collate every surviving edition. Bibliographic dates remain provisional metadata, and no modern clinical effectiveness or safety claim is evaluated.

Conclusion

The answer is no: Wuling San does not occupy the same place. It represents lower-burner water in Shanghan Lun Zhu, but is paired with Xiao Qing Long Tang in the upper burner in Shanghan Lun Yi, where another formula takes the lower position. Because other slots change too, the observed difference is a reorganization of the passage rather than a one-formula move. Retrieval over large classical corpora must therefore capture not only formula-name occurrences but the surrounding symptom–location–method–comparison relations.

Declarations

Author contributions (CRediT)	Yeonseung Choe: Conceptualization, Classical medical framing, Writing – review & editing · Baekrokdam Research Commons (BRC): Investigation, Data curation, Validation, Writing – original draft
Data availability	Document, passage, and facsimile hashes, page locators, and internal evaluation decisions are released without redistributing source texts.
Funding	No external funding.
Competing interests	The author organisation is connected to Korean-medicine clinical and research infrastructure. This article does not recommend formula use.
AI use disclosure	Automated tools supported source routing, question decomposition, and independent entailment checks. Generated answers were not treated as evidence; both passages were rechecked by hash and facsimile page. Three atomic claims passed a unanimous internal evaluation separated from drafting.
Ethics	Only public literature was used; no patient data or clinical intervention was involved.

References

1. 柯琴. 傷寒論注. Inspected normalized transcription and public facsimile, printed pp. 53–54. [Source](#)

2. 柯琴. 傷寒論翼. Inspected normalized transcription and public facsimile, printed p. 31. [Source](#)

3. 羅美. 古今名醫方論. Inspected normalized transcription and public facsimile.

4. 熊應雄. 小兒推拿廣意. Inspected normalized transcription; contextual witness.

5. 王肯堂. 幼科證治準繩. Inspected normalized transcription; contextual witness.

6. 張祐彰, 洪元植. 柯琴의 의학이론에 대한 연구: 『傷寒論翼』을 중심으로. 대한한의학원전학회지. 2002;15(2):120–144. [Source](#)

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