

# *Research on Traditional Chinese Medicine as a Substitute for Tea: An Example of Shiwei Wendan Decoction*

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**Abstract:** Traditional Chinese medicine, instead of tea, follows the theoretical system of traditional Chinese medicine, namely the principles of reason, law, prescription, and medicine. As one of the dosage forms of traditional Chinese medicine, it is renowned for its simplicity, economy, and high efficiency. Nowadays, it is extensively used in clinical practice and daily health care, with its precise therapeutic effects being confirmed. With the concept of the homologous origin of medicine and food, this dosage form is gradually becoming suitable for clinical application. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, prescription dosage forms developed rapidly, integrating traditional dosage forms such as tea and pill powder to evolve a unique method of administration. This article begins with a historical exploration of substitute tea drinking and takes Shiwei Wendan Decoction, a renowned prescription from the Yuan Dynasty, as an example to specifically investigate the application value of tea substitute beverages in clinical settings.

## 1. Introduction

Traditional Chinese medicine instead of tea drink, also known as tea therapy and medicinal tea, is a flexible and convenient way to use traditional Chinese medicine by finely grinding the monodor or compound Chinese herbal medicine, and then brewing or boiling juice with boiling water. It is also mixed with tea and can be used at any time. It is a flexible and convenient way to take traditional Chinese medicine. The evolution of the dosage form of tea substitute is rooted in tea culture, medicinal tea tradition and the homology concept of medicinal and food. Its process can be subdivided into three stages: tea is used as medicine, then tea is used as a prescription, and finally medicine can replace tea. Medicine in the Song Dynasty played a very important role in the history of Chinese medicine in the whole. The development of traditional Chinese medicine forms flourished in the Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties. The Song and Yuan Dynasties were used as a dividing line to analyze and discuss the historical development of tea agents and the characteristics of the use of medicinal tea in the Song and Yuan Dynasties, and took Shiwei Wendan Decoction as an example to study the clinical value of tea drinking prescriptions.

## 2. Age research analysis of tea agent

### 2.1. Before Song and Yuan-the initial development of tea agents

"Tea for drinking was discovered by Shennong's family, but it is famous for its origin from Duke Zhou of Lu" [1]. The role of tea as a medicinal plant was first seen in the legendary myth of Shennong's taste of herbs, indicating that our ancestors in ancient times knew the medicinal value of tea, and for the first time in the "Fan Jiang Pian" written by Sima Xiangru of the Western Han Dynasty, tea was used as A drug is recorded in writing. At this time, tea is used by doctors to treat diseases in a single form as the main medicine. Doctors in all dynasties have attached great importance to the medicinal value of tea and expounded the efficacy and mechanism of tea: "Bitter tea is beneficial to eat for a long time", "tea can (mainly) sleep well", "tea is bitter and cold, which can best reduce fire... For all kinds of diseases, the fire will be cleared down" [2].

In the "Guangya" of the Three Kingdoms period, the initial preparation method of using tea into medicine is recorded. It is mentioned that people pick tea to make tea cakes, bake tea cakes into red before use, mash the powder and pour them into boiling water, and add green onions, ginger and dead stalks to sober up the gods [3]. This method is also known as "porridge tea". The tea slowly transitions from the main drug to the combination.

In the Tang Dynasty, the tea industry developed to its heyday. Wang Anshi's "Lun Cha Shu" said: "The use of tea is equivalent to rice salt, and it can't be done in a day." It can be seen that tea culture was popular in this period. The development of tea drinking culture promotes the study of the efficacy of tea as a traditional Chinese medicine. Tang Ben Cao clearly records the medicinal efficacy of tea. Since then, tea and its efficacy have been separated from mainstream Chinese herbal works. The emergence of Tang Ben Cao combs and summarizes the taste effect of tea for the first time, marking the fusion and maturity of tea culture and traditional Chinese medicine culture. The book "Wai Tai Mi Yao" was first recorded in the book, and the production process of the dosage form was described: The medicinal herbs were rinded to make cakes, and it was used to "mash it in the mortar, take enough at any time, and fry it instead of tea" [4]. "New Tea Drinking Formula" [5] was the first to innovate a new dosage form of medicinal tea. The whole prescription does not contain tea. However, its use is "fried instead of tea". Although this recipe is mixed compared with ordinary tea in the production process, taste and smell. It still has a significant impact on replacing tea with medicine in later generations. The form of tea therapy gradually transitions from soup to powders, granules and tea substitutes. At this stage, the types of tea agents not only cover a single formula that simply uses tea to treat diseases, but also includes compound formulas combined with other traditional Chinese medicinal materials, laying a solid foundation for the development of medicinal tea culture and prescriptions for subsequent generations.

### 2.2. After the Song and Yuan Dynasties-Tea innovation

"Tea originated in the Tang Dynasty and flourished in the Song Dynasty". Influenced by politics, economic, social and culture. Song people are very fond of tea. Tea occupies a great position in the daily life of Song people. Looking through the information, it can be found that tea service providers account for about 80% of tea prescriptions [6], and tea soup is mostly used to deliver tea. Another important form of tea prescription is also recorded in the book of the Song Dynasty - medicinal tea, that is, using tea-free drugs. After undergoing a process similar to tea-making, tea drinking became customary, involving ordering and frequent consumption, which aligns closely with the modern concept of tea-drinking agents. "Taishenghuifang" was the first to introduce the notion of medicinal tea. Its "Medicinal Tea Prescriptions" document a total of eight medicinal teas, five of which consist solely of non-tea ingredients. These ingredients are roasted using tea-making techniques, and at the

conclusion of the process, they are fried and served in lieu of tea. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, to minimize the waste of medicinal materials, maximize the efficacy of limited quantities, simplify medication intake, and better control the preparation of medicinal substances while fostering medical advancements, traditional Chinese medicine flourished. The preparation of mature medicinal forms, such as pill and powder blends, integrated with tea culture to innovate new tea-based dosage forms. Due to societal, economic, cultural, and political influences, medicinal tea gained popularity since the Song dynasty. Influenced by official prescriptions, the use of medicinal tea dosages became more widespread and standardized, encompassing various tea group formulas, tea delivery formulas, and substitute tea drinking formulas. In the use of the production of tea prescription, "such as tea making method", "milling for the end" and "based on the sencha" are proposed. Medicine methods related to tea, such as "time-indisting" and "unrestrained" [7], because medicinal tea is simple and easy to make and effective, the treatment scope of medicinal tea is constantly expanding, involving up to 214 main syndromes. The well-known "Chuanxiong Tea Dispersion" and "Lianhuafeng Tea Pills" are the famous medicinal tea potents in the Song Dynasty [8], and are also typical representatives of the combination of tea and traditional Chinese medicine.

With the development of the times, the number of medicinal tea records has gradually increased in prescriptions. There are 38 medicinal tea prescriptions in the Yu Yao Yuan Fang of the Yuan Dynasty, and about 1,500 medicinal tea prescriptions are recorded in the Puji prescription of the Ming Dynasty. After the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the number of tea-free tea-free prescriptions also increased more than 20 tea-free prescriptions recorded in the Compendium of "Ben Cao Gang Mu". The tea-drinking-free prescriptions in the Qing Dynasty became an important part of court medicine and was an important dosage form for the prevention and treatment of diseases in the Qing Dynasty royal family [8].

### 3. Forms and usage of medicinal tea in the Song and Yuan Dynasties

Among the tea prescriptions after the Song Dynasty, the powder dosage form has the most obvious impact on it. Powder originated in the pre-Qin Dynasty and can be traced back to "Zhou Li" [9, 10] and developed in the Han and Tang Dynasties. Zhang Zhongjing, Sun Simiao and others further developed and enriched the theory of the application of powders [11, 12] and flourished in the Song and Yuan Dynasties. The application degree of powder in the Song and Yuan Dynasties once surpassed the decoction and became the mainstream preparation of medicinal materials [10, 13, 14], and declined in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The production process of the powder includes careful grinding of the required medicinal materials, and then evenly fusion to form a dry powder preparation for internal or external use. This process is highly similar to the preparation process of tea substitutes. The intention of the historical display of the two is shown in Figure 1.

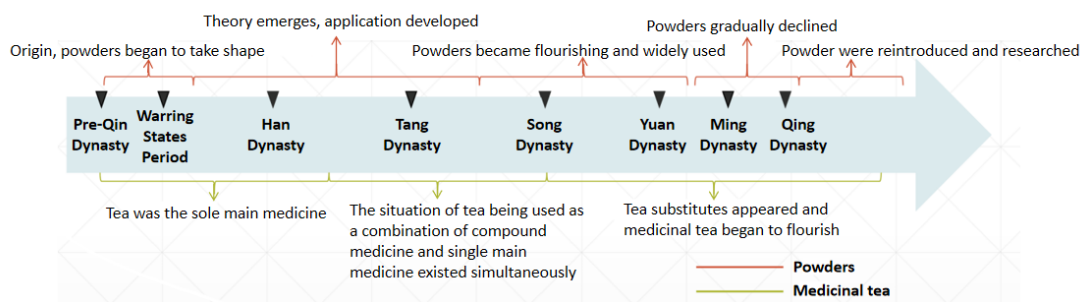


Figure 1: The schematic diagram of the historical development of powders and tea substitutes

The three official herbal studies written in the Song Dynasty include a total of 580 medicinal tea prescriptions, including pills, powders, tea and other dosage forms. The most common dosage forms

are pills, with a total of 293; the second is the powder, with a total of 191, accounting for 50.52% and 32.93% of the medicinal tea respectively. In addition, the dosage forms taken abroad are mainly loose [15] (see Figure 2 for the proportion of the dosage forms). In the 65 existing folk prescriptions of the Song Dynasty, a total of 40 tea prescriptions have been sorted out, accounting for the largest proportion in the form of powders, accounting for half of the tea prescriptions written in the Minxiu Prescriptions. Due to the further development of social customs, medical and household medicine in the Yuan Dynasty on the basis of the previous dynasties, there was a high degree of consistency in medicinal tea culture in the Song and Yuan Dynasties [16]. Studies have shown that the dosage form of loose agents in the Song and Yuan Dynasties accounted for 41.6% and 29.41% of medicinal tea prescriptions respectively. The description of "unrestrained time (unrestrained time)" accounted for 31.02% and 26.47% of the loose agent respectively [17]. The medicinal tea prescription is mainly composed of pill dispersion. The medicinal materials are crushed into coarse or fine powder, so that the medicinal ingredients are fully released, easy to preserve and convenient to take. (Figure 2)

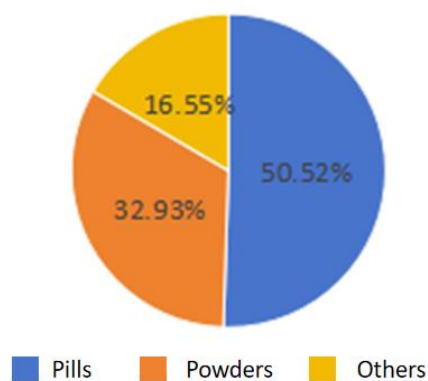


Figure 2: The proportion of official herbal medicine and tea formulations in the Song Dynasty

#### 4. Advantageous characteristics of traditional Chinese medicine instead of tea

As a traditional Chinese medicine dosage form, traditional Chinese medicine substitute tea drink has continuously optimized and innovated its own advantages in historical development. In today's society, it can still play the role of disease prevention and treatment, longevity, health care and other functions.

##### 4.1. Simple production

The substitute tea drink for Traditional Chinese Medicine aims to fully exert its disease prevention and treatment effects based on the principle of TCM differentiation and treatment. Compared to traditional decoctions, doctors typically select clinically proven prescriptions and drug combinations, featuring a limited number of medicinal ingredients. The chosen medicinal materials are mostly mild, primarily comprising plant leaves, tablets, roots, and fruits. The medicinal flavor is straightforward, and the therapeutic effect is specific.

##### 4.2. Convenient use

Traditional tea substitute drinks are mostly in the form of decoction tea, which has greatly saved the time of decoction. Nowadays, most tea substitutes only need to be brewed in boiling water for a few minutes. It is convenient to operate. Not only is it no longer limited by the time of frying, but

also the area of the tea bag is small and easy to carry. It can be brewed and taken at any time, freeing people from the shackles that they can't cook medicine and have no time to boil medicine, which greatly meets people's needs for taking medicine.

#### **4.3. Significant therapeutic effect**

Substitute tea drinks are not limited by time. Continuous intake can maintain a long-term blood concentration in the human body. The taste of the medicine is sweet and light, which has a good effect on the treatment of diseases, health care, and post-illness conditioning. At the same time, the medicinal materials select the leaves, flowers, roots, fruits and other medicinal materials of plants. After processing them into coarse particles, the contact area is increased. The medicinal effect is faster and the effect is long-lasting.

#### **4.4. Affordable price**

Due to the small size of tea bags, they can be brewed repeatedly within a day, and the effective analysis is more complete, which greatly saves the amount of medicinal materials and reduces the waste of medicinal materials. Under the premise of ensuring the curative effect, increasing the bioavailability of medicinal materials not only saves medicinal materials and reduces waste, but also greatly reduces the medical expenses of patients and reduces the burden on patients due to the low price.

### **5. Theoretical discussion of Shiwei Wendan Decoction of warm gall soup**

Because tea drinks possess the dual nature of both medicine and tea, they can exert different effects depending on the combination of various medicinal herbs, in addition to the thirst-quenching effect of tea itself. In the Song Dynasty, there were vendors specializing in medicinal tea, who cooked it for customers to drink. These teas mostly possessed medicinal properties such as dispelling cold, invigorating qi, and promoting fitness, and were known as "soup medicine." Taking Shiwei Warm Gallbladder Soup as an example, this recipe was first published in Wei Yilin's "Shi Yi De Xiao Fang" and "Dafangmai XinYang," which primarily treats symptoms of timidity, phlegm, and turbid internal disturbance. The method of taking this prescription is described in the original book as follows: "Up-Far. Four yuan per serving, half a cup of water,..., no specific time limit." The recommendation for taking this prescription is to consume it infrequently, regardless of the time, which aligns with the way of consuming tea substitutes. The reasons for this recommendation are as follows.

#### **5.1. Social change promotes the integration of dosage forms**

The evolution of social development has promoted the advancement of traditional Chinese medicine culture, with its dosage forms being particularly evident. During the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties, there was significant social unrest, particularly at the end of the Tang Dynasty, the beginning of the Song Dynasty, and during the transition between the Song and Yuan dynasties. Wars were frequent, leading to a surplus of medicinal materials relative to demand. To conserve medicinal materials, facilitate portability, and innovate dosage forms, various changes were made. Additionally, the government compiled official medical texts, advocating the preparation of pharmaceutical preparations and their upstream and downstream effects. Both hospital pharmacies and medical texts emphasized the importance of new dosage forms. On the other hand, during these periods of historical stability, the foreign trade situation flourished. Chinese doctors incorporated advanced ingredients and pharmaceutical technologies from foreign medicines. For example, the process of flower dew

agent in Arabic medicine is studied and utilized by Chinese doctors, enriching the form of dosage forms [18]. Tea is first respected in the upper class, and then promoted to the common people. The rich and the poor can talk about tea ceremony. Tea has become one of the necessities of people. Tea penetrates into daily life, which has an impact on the culture of traditional Chinese medicine and promotes doctors to further innovate new preparation processes. The fusion of the two cultures collides with a new generation of tea or medicinal tea culture.

## 5.2. The influence of Taoist culture and Xujiang medicine

The earliest Taoist group in China was born in Jiangxi, and the Jiangxi Lijiang River Basin has become one of the important birthplaces of Taoism in China. Influenced by Taoist culture, the Yanjiang doctor's family advocates the art of Taoist medicine and is quite proficient in the refining of Taoist pills and elixirs [19]. It is rich in Taoist characteristic dosage forms such as the good use of ointment pills and medicine. Among many drinks, Taoism will only regard tea as a thing to cultivate life and nourish nature. In the view of Taoism, drinking tea can not only enrich spiritual life and cultivate emotions, but also has the effect of clearing fire and eyesight, pleasant and nourishing health care, which coincides with the Taoist health concept. Drinking tea can not only heal the body but also heal the mind. Wei Yilin is one of the representatives of Xujiang medicine. He is deeply influenced by Taoist culture. He is not only good at using dosage forms such as paste Danwan powder, but also pays attention to the concept of health preservation in the process of practicing medicine. His book also reflects the concept of Taoism medicine. The way of taking "dispersely and take it casually" contains the Taoist idea of self-cultivation with tea.

This prescription is classified in the series of warm gallbladder soup, and the source of warm gallbladder soup can be traced back to the "Ji Yan Fang" "after treating serious diseases, it is insomnia after treating serious diseases. Therefore, it is also appropriate to take this decoction method". It was originally used to treat the symptoms of palpitations and insomnia in patients recovering from serious diseases. The medicinal properties are warm and hot, and the reuse of ginger, so life warms gallbladder. In "San Yin Fang", the warm gallbladder soup greatly reduces the amount of ginger and increases the amount of Fuling by one or two, highlighting the work of Zhuru's clearing gallbladder and stomach. In later generations, it is called warm gallbladder soup. It is said that the so that the so-called warm gallbladder broth is used to drink, add bamboo ru to clear away the heat, ginger to stop vomiting, and add agarium to break the reverse, and help each other. Although it does not cure the gallbladder and the gallbladder and heat of the so-called phlegm and heat of the gallbladder. The name of warmth is the warmth of mildness. This prescription is the same as that of the San Yin Fang, which treats deficiency and timidity, phlegm and internal disturbance syndrome. If the heart qi is insufficient, if the heart is out of health, it is easy to be restless and terrified. If you are afraid, timid, timid and gallbladder, and you can't excrete normally. If you cross the stomach, your stomach qi will be discorded, and the rise and fall is abnormal. If the stomach qi is unlucky, it will produce phlegm and damp. However, the focus of "San Yin Fang" focuses on clearing gallbladder and stomach, and there are limitations in the obvious treatment of heart qi and blood deficiency. Shiwei warm gall soup is based on the removal of Zhuru from the San Yin Fang. At the same time, several herbs such as ginseng, cooked ground, Wuweizi, Zhiyuan and Suan Zaoren have been added. On the basis of warm gall soup, it is more effective to replenish qi and blood as removing phlegm.

## 5.3. Clinical application prospects

### 5.3.1. Coronary heart disease combined with anxiety and depression

Coronary heart disease is a common cardiovascular disease in clinic. Its essence is that coronary

atherosclerosis stenosis leads to an ischemic heart disease, which affects the patient's quality of life and threatens the patient's life. Drug intervention is usually used for patients with a low degree of coronary artery stenosis. For patients with more than 75% of coronary artery stenosis, interventional treatment is preferred to delay progression and reduce the risk of adverse events. Regardless of the degree of stenosis, coronary artery stenosis and myocardial ischemia always exist. Patients will still feel chest tightness and discomfort in the anterior area, and occasionally have hidden pain. At the same time, after intervention, patients will face problems such as long-term use of antiplatelet drugs and stenosis in the stent. The dual burden of body and economy makes patients prone to anxiety and depression, and other psychological problems. For patients with coronary heart disease, attention should be paid to their mental health. Wang Yingwei [20], Zhang Xuemei [21] and others have achieved good therapeutic effects in the treatment of patients with coronary heart disease combined with anxiety and depression with Shiwei Wendan Decoction of warm gall soup, effectively improving the anxiety state of patients.

### 5.3.2. Cardiac neuropathy

The main feature of cardiac neuropathy is the dysfunction of the cardiovascular system, which may be accompanied by other related symptoms of neuropathy. Its clinical manifestations are diverse, with mild and severe symptoms, and most patients have no obvious organic lesions. Shen Jinling [22] and others randomly divided patients with cardiac neuropathy into two groups. The results showed that the total efficiency of the treatment group was 96.15%, and it was believed that the addition or reduction of Shiwei Wendan Decoction warm gall soup had a better therapeutic effect on cardiac neuropathy. Li Chuanjie [23] and others also came to the same conclusion.

### 5.3.3. Insomnia

Insomnia belongs to the category of "sleeplessness" in traditional Chinese medicine, which is mainly due to the imbalance of qi and blood, the loss of yin and yang in the viscera, resulting in the loss of mental health, and most of them show the type of heart, gallbladder and qi deficiency. Cao Hongbo et al. [24] used Shiwei Wendan decoction to treat 47 cases of insomnia with combined acupuncture, and detected the level of tumor necrosis factor (TNF- $\alpha$ ), interleukin 6 (IL-6), and brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) in serum, with a final efficiency of 87.23%, which can improve BDNF in serum and improve the sleep quality of patients. In addition, Zhang Dong [25], Wang Jigai [26] and others have concluded that Shiwei Wendan Decoction has a good effect on improving the sleep quality of patients.

### 5.3.4. Others

Wu Hongwen et al. [27] believe that Hcy plays an important role in the production of anxiety. Shiwei Wendan decoction can reduce the level of serum Hcy, thus improving the anxiety symptoms of patients with phlegm turbid internal disturbance arrhythmia. Chen Yiqiang [28]] and others added and subtracted on the basis of Shiwei Wendan Decoction, combined with modern people's physique to create "Xiong's Shiwei Wendan Decoction" for the treatment of ventricular premature beats and other diseases, which can significantly reduce the frequency of patients' ventricular premature beats and effectively relieve related symptoms. Gao Yongjin [29], Song Zhe [30] and others will also apply this prescription to the treatment of male sexual dysfunction, and have also made good progress.

## 6. Discussion

At present, Shiwei Wendan decoction can be clinically used to treat coronary heart disease, angina

pectoris, ventricular premature beat, cardiac neurosis, insomnia and other diseases. In particular, it has an obvious effect on double heart disease. The main manifestations of double heart disease is that cardiovascular disease and mental disease exist at the same time. At present, people with cardiovascular disease are very prone to suffer from psychological diseases, showing insomnia, anxiety and other symptoms. The unhealthy psychological state stimulates the activity of sympathetic nerve, endocrine system and platelets, leading to coronary artery spasm, plaque rupture, causing arrhythmia, myocardial ischemia, and even myocardial infarction and other serious cardiovascular events. This vicious circle worsened the disease and formed a dangerous state [31]. The ten-flavor warm bile soup instead of tea itself can replenish qi and blood, calm the mind, and have an excellent intervention effect on patients with heart deficiency and timidity, turbid phlegm internal disturbance. On the other hand, biheart disease is difficult to intervene and has a long course. At present, clinical practice is mainly drug treatment and psychotherapy, advocating "biological-psycho-social" medical model intervention. It can be used in the form of substitute tea to treat diseases, which can achieve its unique advantages: First, diseases with a long course of disease require patients to have better compliance. At the same time, the patient's medical expenses will increase with the increase of the course of the disease. In the long run, the pressure of expenses makes patients very prone to inertia, which greatly affects the cure of the disease and increases the pain of patients. Tea substitute has the characteristics of "simple and efficient", which can greatly reduce the medical expenses of patients and improve the compliance of patients. "Mild treatment of chronic diseases" maintains the blood concentration of the active ingredients of the drug in the body to achieve the purpose of long-term effectiveness. The drug effect is consolidated, which has a good effect on the treatment of chronic diseases. Secondly, the concept of the same origin of medicine and food contained. It can avoid the psychological burden of patients taking medicine for a long time, relieve patients' anxiety, and play a comforting and auxiliary treatment role.

## 7. Summary

Chinese herbal tea drinks have a long history, advantages such as simplicity and low cost, good taste, and obvious clinical effects. With the deepening of people's concept of health care, more and more people choose to use traditional Chinese medicine tea drinks to recuperate their bodies and even treat some chronic diseases, which shows that tea substitutes have great room for development. However, it is necessary to recognize that there are still many shortcomings in substitute tea, such as how to effectively and fully stabilize the precipitation of medicinal herbs, and the clinical treatment is mainly assisted. It is difficult to deal with complex diseases alone. The new effect value of traditional Chinese medicine tea drinking needs to be deeply explored, which is of great significance for promoting the application and development of traditional Chinese medicine in the treatment of chronic diseases.

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