

# APPLICATION OF “TIEU SAI HO THANG” IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

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## **Abstract**

*Tieu sai ho thang, a renowned prescription from "Thuong Han Luan" by Truong Trong Canh, is widely used in traditional medicine to harmonize the Shao yang. The prescription consists of seven ingredients: Sai ho, Hoang cam, Ban Ha, Sinh khuong, Nhan sam, Cam thao, and Dai tao. It has the effects of clearing heat and detoxifying, soothing the liver and benefiting the gallbladder, regulating cold and heat, strengthening the vital energy, and improving the body's metabolism. This prescription can be modified to treat specific conditions associated with disharmony between the liver and spleen, such as hepatitis, cholecystitis, bone and joint pain, and neurological disorders. Variations of Tieu sai ho thang, such as Sai ho gia que chi thang, Sai ho gia thuoc duoc thang, and Sai ho que chi can khuong thang, are used based on symptoms and disease patterns. Tieu sai ho thang not only clears heat but also boosts immunity, balances Yin and Yang, and regulates energy and blood, making it suitable for conditions involving cold-heat imbalance, energy stagnation, and diseases caused by external pathogenic factors invasion. It is a representative prescription for harmonizing the Shao yang in Traditional medicine.*

**Keywords:** *Tieu sai ho thang, harmonization of Shao yang*

## **INTRODUCTION**

“Tieu sai ho thang” is a remedy originating from the work “Thuong han luan” by the Sage of Chinese Medicine - Truong Trong Canh. It has been highly regarded by traditional medicine doctors since early on and still holds value today. Below, I would like to introduce the characteristics of “Tieu sai ho thang” and some modified applications of it, along with the corresponding symptoms and indications for colleagues to reference.

In “Thuong han luan”, there are a total of six prescriptions based on “Tieu sai ho thang” that have “Sai ho” in name, including: “Tieu sai ho thang”, “Dai sai ho thang”, “Sai ho gia long cot mau le thang”, “Sai ho que chi thang”, “Sai ho que chi can khuong thang”, and “Sai ho gia mang tieu thang”. Therefore, understanding these prescriptions based on “Tieu sai ho thang” and its modifications provides a clear and thorough understanding of their functions.

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\* Date received: 24/10/2024

\* Date accepted: 15/12/2024

## **I. COMPOSITION, EFFECTS, AND METHODS OF COMBINATION**

“Tieu sai ho thang” is the main remedy for treating the Shao yang syndrome, composed of seven ingredients: Sai ho, Ban ha, Sinh khuong, Nhan sam, Chich cam thao, and Dai tao. The formula uses Sai ho and Hoang cam to clear Shao yang meridian and the heat evil in the Fu organs; it soothes the liver, benefits the Gallbladder, facilitates liver secretion thereby enhancing the body’s metabolic processes. Ban ha and Sinh khuong help harmonize the stomach and alleviate nausea, supporting Sai ho in expelling the evil. Nhan sam, Chich cam thao, and Dai tao warm the spleen energy, strengthening body resistance to dispel pathogenic factor, and prevent the invasion of pathogens into the Tai yin meridian. Thus, while this remedy targets the liver and gallbladder, it also strengthens the spleen and stomach; clearing heat pathogens, it boosts the body’s resistance through diaphoretic, purgative, and emetic methods to achieve the goals of resisting and expelling pathogens; hence it is called a harmonizing method.

## **II. KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND TREATMENT INDICATIONS**

Regarding dosage in “Tieu sai ho thang”: the amount of Sai ho must be greater than that of Nhan

sam and Cam thao for the heat-clearing effects to be effective. If the amounts of Nhan sam and Cam thao exceed or equal that of Sai ho, the desired therapeutic effect cannot be achieved. Therefore, this point should be noted when using this prescription. This remedy has a wide range of applications; it is suitable for both cold damage and miscellaneous diseases. In general, it can treat Shao yang syndrome with symptoms such as bitter mouth, dry throat, blurred vision, alternating episodes of chills and fever, fullness in the chest and ribs, irritability with a tendency to vomit, loss of appetite, tinnitus, red eyes, taut pulse, and a white, moist tongue coating... (from To tham luong phuong). This summarizes the treatment of alternating cold and heat, tidal fever, heat in the body, and fever after being affected by cold damage, highlighting the heat-clearing effects of prescriptions containing Sai ho as primary compared to other clinical syndromes, which should not be underestimated. In “Thuong han luan” it is written: 'For those who suffer from cold damage and wind with symptoms of “Tieu sai ho thang”, it is sufficient to observe one symptom without needing to see all symptoms to use “Tieu sai ho thang”.

### III. MODIFICATIONS AND COMBINATIONS

The “Tieu sai ho thang” formula is widely used in clinical practice. Depending on specific symptoms, it can be modified and combined with other medicinal ingredients to enhance therapeutic effectiveness. Therefore, we need to remember the herbs, dosages, main symptoms, and usage criteria of “Tieu sai ho thang”. Please introduce as follows:

- If there are additional symptoms such as headache, fever, and a floating pulse, indicating external syndrome, “Tieu sai ho thang” can omit Nhan sam and add Que chi to induce sweating, resolving the exterior pathogens. At that point, the formula is called Sai ho que chi thang, which can not only treat exterior symptoms but also address heart palpitations and energy rising to the chest.

- If there is abdominal pain accompanied by a cramping sensation, feeling like a tight rope, this indicates disharmony between the liver and spleen, leading to the contraction of muscles and blood vessels. In this case, we should remove Hoang cam (which is bitter and cold) and add Bach thuoc to soothe the liver and regulate the blood vessels. This formula is called “Sai ho gia thuoc duoc thang”, and it can also treat irregular menstruation and

dysmenorrhea caused by disharmony of energy-blood.

- If there are also Tai yan external syndrome that haven't resolved, along with painful and restless limbs, and internally there is Shao yang energy stagnation with fullness in the upper abdomen, we should add Que chi and Bach thuoc. This combination helps harmonize the Nourishing and defensive (nutritive and defensive) aspects externally while regulating energy and blood internally, leading to recovery. This formula is called Sai ho que chi thang, which combines “Que chi thang” with “Tieu sai ho thang”. Based on the experience, this can treat chronic hepatitis with splenomegaly by simply omitting Nhan sam and Dai tao, adding Miet giap, Mau le, Hong hoa, and Tay thao; it has shown very good efficacy. This formula can also effectively treat functional neurological disorders.

\* Discussion: As we know, “Tieu sai ho thang” harmonizes the exterior and interior, while “Que chi thang” regulates nourishing and defensive, harmonizing energy and blood. The combination of these two formulas can effectively treat the entire body through the interplay of exterior and interior, as well as the upper and lower aspects of energy and blood. Specifically, it

treats concurrent Tai Yang and Shao Yang syndromes, such as in cases of acute and chronic hepatitis and early-stage cirrhosis, a small amount of blood-activating herbs like Hong hoa and Tay thao can be added, along with softening endured mass herbs like Miet giap and Mau le. Since Que chi and Bach thuoc regulate nourishing and defensive and balance energy and blood, while Sai ho promotes liver and gallbladder function, adding Miet giap helps to eliminate mass and relieving fullness; Hong hoa and Tay thao activate blood flow and are very effective. Furthermore, this formula is neither too cold nor too hot, allowing for prolonged use. Taking 10 to 20 doses pose no issues.

For treating early-stage cirrhosis, “Sai ho que chi thang” should omit Dai tao due to the need to relieve fullness in the hypochondrium.

To treat functional neurological disorders (vague and unclear symptoms), “Sai ho que chi thang” can be used.

- For treating “Bi syndrome (Chung ty)” which modern medicine currently views as a musculoskeletal disease accompanied by liver energy stagnation and painful joints, the pain can be very severe; if there is also fullness in the chest and ribs, “Sai ho que chi thang” is also very effective.

- If accompanied by thirst, a desire to drink, a red tongue with a thin, dry yellow coating, this reflects heat in the stomach and insufficient body fluids. In this case, we need to remove Ban ha and Sinh khuong, adding Qua lau can, Mach mon, and Sa sam to clear heat and nourish fluids; if the body fluids and energy are also depleted, leading to more pronounced thirst, we should increase the amount of Nhan sam. This formula can also be used to treat diabetes if the patient's condition aligns with Shao yang.

- If accompanied by difficult urination, an unsettled epigastric region, a taut pulse, and a moist, smooth tongue coating, it is due to a deficiency in the Shao yang San Jiao (Thieu duong tam tieu), leading to watery pathogen causing illness. This formula excludes Hoang cam and adds Phuc linh and Trach ta to help expel watery evil and facilitate urination, allowing the illness to resolve on its own. This formula is called “Sai ho gia phuc linh thang”. If Bach truat is added, it can also treat difficult urination, diarrhea, thirst, and restlessness.

- If accompanied by chest heat, feeling of oppression over the chest, constipation, and a rapid, smooth pulse, exclude Nhan sam and add Hoang lien; after a while, this is called “Sai ham hop phuong”, which can also treat chest

pain and epigastric pain. After taking the medicine, one will experience many yellow bubbles in their stool, leading to recovery.

- If accompanied by cough, a moist white tongue coating, a taut and moderate pulse, this indicates cold dampness attacking the lungs, causing lung energy lacks warmth. Exclude Nhan sam, Dai tao, and Sinh khuong, and add Can khuong and Ngu vi tu. This formula is called “Sai ho khuong vi thang”, which is complementary to “Sai ham hop phuong”, with one treating phlegm heat and the other treating cold dampness.

- If accompanied by fullness and distension in the lower ribs and enlarged liver and spleen due to energy and blood stagnation, exclude Dai tao and add Miet giap, Mau le, Dan bi, and to eliminate mass and relieving fullness. This formula is called “Sai ho miet giap thang”. If Nhan sam, Sinh khuong, and Ban ha are excluded, it can also treat yin deficiency with a lingering mild fever.

- If accompanied by constipation, severe abdominal pain, persistent vomiting, a very bitter mouth, irritability, distension and pain in the ribs, a taut and forceful pulse, and a sticky yellow tongue coating, this is due to plenitude heat in the gallbladder and stomach, with functional

activities of energy is obstructed and energy regulation is not smooth. Exclude Nhan sam and Cam thao, and add Dai hoang, Chi thuc, and Bach thuoc, resulting in the “Dai Sai ho thang”, which has the effect of resolving both Shao yang and Yang ming pathogens. This formula is clinically used for women with menstrual pain, acute cholecystitis, acute appendicitis, and various acute abdominal pains recognized and utilized by modern medicine. When analyzing this prescription, we need to pay attention:

\* Conclusion: The condition treated by “Dai sai ho thang” is a plenitude syndrome, not a asthenia syndrome, so Nhan sam, Cam thao, and Dai tao are excluded. Concurrently, the condition treated by “Dai sai ho thang” has plenitude syndrome, stagnation and pain; thus, Dai hoang is used to disperse plenitude syndrome, Chi thuc to relieving fullness, and Bach thuoc to alleviate acute pain.

- If accompanied by evening hectic fever, discomfort on both sides of the ribs, a bitter mouth, and feeling of the oppression over the chest, reduce the dosage of this formula by half and add 6-9g of Mang tieu, called “Sai ho gia Mang tieu thang”, which has the effect of harmonizing Shao yang and regulating the Stomach's dryness

fire syndrome, but with a milder purging effect compared to Da sai ho thang.

- If accompanied by loose stools, abdominal distension in the afternoon, difficult urination, thirst, feeling of oppression over the chest; or soreness in the lower back, numbness in the fingertips, a taut and moderate pulse, and a pale tongue with a white coating, this indicates gallbladder heat and spleen coldness, with unbeneficial activating of energy and unnourished body fluids; the prescription excludes Nhan sam, Dai tao, Ban ha, and Sinh khuong; and adds Que chi, Can khuong, and Mau le, Thien hoa phan. This formula is now called “Sai ho Que chi can khuong thang”, which complements “Dai sai ho thang”, one treating stomach’s plenitude syndrome and the other treating spleen coldness. It is also noted that due to the influence of Shao yang on the spleen and stomach, there is variation: cold and heat, plenitude and asthenia syndrome. Clinically, this formula is used to treat chronic hepatitis that presents with abdominal distension and loose stools, with a tendency toward Shao yin cold pathology, showing relatively good therapeutic effects. If there is diabetes with a Shao yang deficiency, this formula is also appropriate.

\* Conclusion: In the passage 155 of the “Thuong han luan” : “If after 5-6 days of cold damage,

sweating occurs but there is still the use of purgative methods causing tightness and slight hardness in the chest, difficult urination, thirst without vomiting; yet there is sweating on the forehead, alternating episodes of chills and fever, and feeling of oppression over the chest, this indicates that the illness has not resolved, and one should use the “Sai ho que chi can khuong thang”. This passage describes the condition treated by the “Sai ho que chi can khuong thang” due to a mismanagement of cold damage, leading to pathogenic factors entering the Shao yang, causing activating of energy is irregular and body fluids are not dispersed. This means that the Shao yang pathogen has not resolved, accompanied by spleen cold and damage to the energy and fluids, resulting in unfavorable energy activation, hence a combination of asthenia syndrome and cold. It can also be said that there is a chance for a shift towards Yin syndrome, a Tai yin disease (deficiency of health energy), which is why the “Sai ho que chi can khuong thang” is used.

In the presence of Shao yang with an evil, there will alternating episodes of chills and fever, and feeling of oppression over the chest, requiring the harmonization of Shao yang with “Tieu sai ho thang”; on the other hand, the presence of a Shao yang with a pathogen, with

deficient body fluids and poor energy activation, results in difficult urination and sweating on the forehead. Therefore, Que chi and Can khuong are added to assist with energy activation, and Thien hoa phan is added to nourish and disperse fluids.

- If accompanied by high fever, extreme restlessness, severe thirst, sweating, but no constipation, a yellow tongue coating, and a dry mouth, “Tieu sai ho thang” should exclude Ban ha and Sinh khuong; instead, add Sinh thach cao and Tri mau. This formula is now called “Sai bach thang”, treating "Three yang combination disease" with the main criteria of: restlessness and fever, and thirst, showing definite effectiveness.

- If symptoms of “Sai bach thang” are also accompanied by joint pain and fatigue, despite a high fever, with cold legs, a sticky yellow coating, this indicates a combination of heat and dampness. Use the “Sai bach thang gia thuong truat” to treat it.

- If there is pain in the liver area, a preference for fried foods, frequent vomiting, fatigue, short yellow urination, a thick sticky tongue coating, and elevated liver enzymes, this indicates long-term wetness heat in the liver and gallbladder leading to toxicity, unresolved stagnation turning into

illness. Xiao Sai ho should exclude Nhan sam, Cam thao, and Dai tao; instead, add Nhan tran, Tu Phuc linh,...

This formula is now called “Sai ho giai doc thang”:

Sai ho (*Radix Bupleuri chinensis*) 15g; Hoang cam (*Radix Scutellariae*) 10g; Nhan tran cao (*Herba Artemisiae Scopariae*) 30g; Tho Phuc linh (*Rhizoma Smilacis glabrae*) 15g; Chich cam thao (*Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae*) 10g; Tho miet trung (*Eupolyphaga seu Steleophaga*) 10g; Tay thao (*Radix Rubiae*) 10g.

Specifically treating acute and chronic hepatitis clinically.

- If the symptoms of hepatitis are present as in (14), with a dark purple complexion, irritability, body weight gain, fatigue or numbness in the lower back, a thick sticky tongue coating, difficulty in taking medicine, and a taut or soft weak pulse, this indicates relatively severe wetness heat with a tendency towards stagnation. Use “Sai ho giai doc thang”, adding Sinh thach cao, Hoat thach, Han thuy thach, Truc diep, and Song hoa (Kim ngan hoa). This formula is now called “Sai ho tam thach giai doc thang”, treating hepatitis with excellent effects in clearing heat, detoxifying, and reducing liver enzymes.

- If accompanied by jaundice (the entire body and sclera of the eyes are yellow), bright yellow

color, hot body and feeling of oppression over the chest, bitter mouth, nausea, fear of fishy smells, fatigue with loss of sensation, rib pain, chest fullness, loss of appetite, dark yellow urine, constipation, thirst with abdominal distension, a thick yellow coating on the tongue, and a smooth taut pulse. This is due to wetness heat evil, stagnation affecting the liver and gallbladder, leading to jaundice. The recommended treatment is “Tieu sai ho thang” without the ingredient Nhan sam, Cam thao and Dai tao; and adding Nhan tran, Dai hoang, and Chi tu. The current formulation is named "Sai ho nhan tran cao thang," which treats acute hepatitis jaundice, typically effective within three months. If jaundice improves but urine remains dark yellow or if stool is still pale like bird droppings, treatment should not be stopped early; it is essential to treat until fully recovered to prevent relapse.

- If accompanied by chest fullness and feeling of oppression, fear, babbling, feeling of oppression over the chest, and difficulty urinating. This reflects energy and fire mutually stagnate, causing the mental to be disturbed and unable to remain calm or settle. Use “Tieu sai ho thang” without Cam thao; add Que chi, Phuc linh, Dai hoang, Long cot, and Mau le. The current formulation is "Sai ho gia long cot mau le thang" effective for releasing stagnation

and clearing heat, relieving convulsion and tranquillizing. However, due to the toxicity of the herb "Dien dan," it should be used in small doses and not for extended periods, ensuring proper wrapping.

#### IV. CLINICAL APPLICATIONS

**Case 1:** A 34-year-old male of Tran family with chest fullness, experiencing night-long delirium, terrifying dream, restlessness and mental unease, spontaneous transpiration, and constipation. He has a history of epilepsy, with anxiety and fear. Observed to be sluggish with a greenish complexion, a red tongue with yellow-white coating, and a taut deep pulse. Diagnosis: liver and gallbladder energy stagnation with Yang ming bowel heat leads to a disturbed spirit that can not be calmed or settled.

Treatment need: dispersing the stagnated liver energy and stomach, relieving convulsion and tranquillizing. Prescription:

Sai ho (*Radix Bupleuri chinensis*) 10g; Hoang cam (*Radix Scutellariae*) 10g; Sinh khuong (*Rhizoma Zingiberis*) 15g ; Long cot (*Fossilia Ossis Mastodi*) 15g; Mau le (*Concha Ostreae*) 15g; Dai hoang (*Rhizoma Rhei*) 06g (to be added later); Phuc than (*Poria*) 10g; Que chi (*Ramulus cinnamomi*) 06g; Dai tao (*Fructus Zizihii jujubae*) 5 fruits

After one dose, bowel movements improved, chest fullness



decreased, and mental stability was restored, although some nausea persisted, the epigastric region discomforted: adds Truc nhu and Tran bi. Two additional doses led to full recovery.

**Case 2:** A 54-year-old female of the Nguyen family with right upper quadrant pain radiating to the epigastrium, severe pain unrelieved, although she used modern medications. Examination revealed obesity, facial flushing, a yellow sticky tongue coating, and a strong smooth taut deep pulse. Reported constipation for 3-4 days, bitter mouth with occasional vomiting, unable to eat. Diagnosed as cholecystitis due to gallstones in modern medicine. The author suggests: side pain with constipation, bitter mouth with vomiting, yellow and sticky tongue coating, and smooth taut pulse indicate liver and stomach energy fire interacting with stagnation, causing energy and blood stasis, leading to pain that worsens when there's obstruction. Appropriate treatment for soothing the liver and stomach, clearing heat and relieving stagnation.

Prescription:

Sai ho (*Radix Bupleuri chinensis*) 15g; Hoang cam (*Radix Scutellariae*) 10g; Ban ha (*Rhizoma Pinelliae*) 10g; Sinh khuong (*Rhizoma Zingiberis*) 15g; Bach thuoc (*Radix Paeoniae lactiflorae*) 10g; Uat kim (*Rhizoma curcumae*

*longae*) 10g; Dai hoang (*Rhizoma Rhei*) 10g; Chi thuc (*Fructus aurantii immaturus*) 10g; Tran bi (*Pericarpium Citri reticulatae perenne*) 12g; Mau le (*Concha Ostreae*) 12g;

Taken three times a day, pain decreased, allowing sleep, with bowel movements once a day after two doses; thereafter, pain and nausea improved, and switched to medication for harmonizing the stomach and achieved relief.

**Case 3:** A 54-year-old male of Pham family with hepatitis, abdominal distention, diarrhea, anorexia, and radiating rib pain unrelieved although using medications. Examination showed taut moderate pulse, pale tongue with white coating; the illness has affected the liver disease affecting the spleen with spleen yang being the first to become weakened.

Treatment with Sai ho “Que chi can khuong thang”:

Sai ho (*Radix Bupleuri chinensis*) 12g; Hoang cam (*Radix Scutellariae*) 5g; Chich cam thao (*Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae*) 10g; Can khuong (*Rhizoma Zingiberis*) 10g; Que chi (*Ramulus cinnamomi*) 10g; Thien hoa phan (*Radix Trichosanthis Kirilowii*) 12g; Mau le (*Concha Ostreae*) 12g.

After four doses, abdominal distention and diarrhea resolved, appetite improved, and overall condition stabilized. Then, focus on

harmonizing the liver and spleen, using herbs that promote dampness elimination, and administer in pill form for long-term use.

**Case 4:** A 29-year-old female of Le family experiencing vomiting for three years, with post-meal nausea, vomiting bitter, phlegmy fluid, and right lower quadrant and the epigastrium pain, presenting with a taut deep pulse and white tongue coating. The condition of flank distention and vomiting sour and bitter fluid is due to stagnation liver and gallbladder energy, with internally generated phlegm-dampness causing disharmony between the liver and stomach, leading to poor flow and unbeneficial drainage. Appropriate treatment to relieve liver and gallbladder stagnation and clear heat phlegm to cease vomiting.

Prescription:

Sai ho (*Radix Bupleuri chinensis*) 12g; Hoang cam (*Radix Scutellariae*) 10g; Ban ha (*Rhizoma Pinelliae*) 10g; Tran bi (*Pericarpium Citri reticulatae perenne*) 10g; Truc nhu (*Caulis Banbusae in Taeniis*) 10g; Huong phu (*Rhizoma Cyperi*) 10g; Uat kim (*Rhizoma curcumae longae*) 10g; Mau le (*Concha Ostreae*) 12g; Dang sam (*Radix codonopsis*) 8g; Cam thao (*Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae*) 5g;

After three doses, improvements were noticed, with three additional doses leading to complete recovery.

## V. CONCLUSION

Doi Thien Chuong, the author of “Quang on dich luan”, wrote: *"The simultaneous use of cold and heat is called harmonization method (hoa phap); combining supplementation and dispersal is called harmonization; resolving both the exterior and interior is called harmonization; simultaneously resisting pathogenic factors and strengthening the body's righteous energy is called harmonization."* The harmonization method is a treatment method that not only eliminates pathogenic factors but also adjusts the functional capacities of the organs. It is neither biased toward cold or heat nor focused solely on supplementation or dispersal. With its exceptionally balanced and comprehensive nature, it is highly suitable for conditions involving evil invasion of Shao yang, liver-spleen disharmony, cold intestines with hot stomach, and energy-blood-nourishment-protection imbalance. Its applications are incredibly extensive, encompassing both narrow and broad meanings:

- In the narrow sense, the harmonization method refers specifically to harmonizing the Shao yang.

- In the broader sense, it includes harmonizing the Shao yang, regulating the liver and spleen, soothing the liver and harmonizing the stomach, and adjusting the stomach and intestines.

- “**Tieu sai ho thang**” is the quintessential and essential formula for harmonizing the Shao yang. Its use should not be limited to resolving Shao yang disorders alone; rather, its applications should be elevated and understood comprehensively. These range from regulating cold and heat, adjusting organ function, and harmonizing energy and blood, to ultimately balancing yin and yang.

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