Comparative study on WHO Western Pacific Region and World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies international standard terminologies on traditional medicine: Six-meridian Pattern Identification/Syndrome Differentiation

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Syndrome differentiation of the six meridians, a method used in treating diseases of external contraction, was developed by Zhang Zhong-jing, a sage of medicine in the East Han Dynasty (25 to 220 AD), based on the theory analyzed in the chapter entitled Discussion on Heat Diseases in Plain Conversation, a fascicle of Yellow Emperor’s Canon of Medicine.

Syndrome differentiation of the six meridians studies the progress and changes of the diseases of external contraction, the clinical manifestations of which are classified into two categories, three yin types and three yang types. The three yin types include taiyin syndrome, shaoyin syndrome and jueyin syndrome; the three yang types include taiyang syndrome, yangming syndrome and shaoyang syndrome.

The terms and concepts of syndrome differentiation of the six meridians are all related to those of yin, yang, zang-organs, fu-organs and six excesses. Theoretically speaking, these terms and concepts are quite easy to translate and internationally standardize because most of the concerned terms and concepts have already been analyzed in the parts of syndrome differentiation of zangfu-organs and causes and pathogenesis of diseases. However,

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in the *WHO International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific Region*[^1] (abbreviated as the WPRO Standard), the translation of these terms and concepts still deserves to be discussed because it has made some changes in translation.

In the current translation practice, it has already become a common practice to transliterate *yin* and *yang* and the concerned concepts. But in the WPRO Standard, the translation of these concerned terms and concepts does not follow such a common practice. For instance, instead of translating 太阳, 少阴, 少阳, 太阴, 阳明 and 少阳 as taiyin, shaoyin, jueyin, taiyang, yangming and shaoyang as it does in the current practice, it translates them respectively into greater yin, lesser yin, reversion yin, greater yang, yang brightness and lesser yang, creating some confusion in international standardization of these terms and concepts.

In the WPRO Standard, 23 syndromes are included. While in the *International Standard Chinese-English Basic Nomenclature of Chinese Medicine* compiled by World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies[^2] (abbreviated as the WFCMS Standard), altogether 30 terms are included. This article tries to make a comparative study on these two international standards according to the studies made in the book entitled *International Standardization of English Translation of Traditional Chinese Medicine: Study of Theory, Summarization of Practice and Exploration of Methods*[^3].

六经辨证 six-meridian pattern identification/syndrome differentiation: categorization of patterns/syndromes according to the theory of the six meridians/channels, applied to the diagnosis of acute febrile diseases at different stages, but also useful for the pattern identification/syndrome differentiation of other diseases.

In the translation of 六经辨证 in the WPRO Standard[^1], the English word “meridian” is used to translate the Chinese concept 经. While in the WFCMS Standard[^2], both “meridian” and “channel” are used, reflecting the tendency in the translation of this concept in the current practice. In the definition of the WPRO Standard[^2], “channel” is also mentioned, seeming to show that both ways of translation are acceptable. In the definition, the phrase “febrile disease” seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 热病 which is also frequently translated as “heat disease” in the current translation practice.

太阳病证: 太阳病 greater yang disease pattern/syndrome: a general term for greater yang meridian pattern/syndrome and greater yang bowel pattern/syndrome, occurring at the onset of the febrile disease, chiefly manifested by headache, painful stiff nape, aversion to cold and floating pulse, also called the greater yang disease.

In the Chinese terms 太阳病证 and 太阳病, the Chinese term 太阳 is usually transliterated as “taiyang” which is used worldwide. It seems unnecessary to use a different way of translation in an international standard. Besides, 太阳病证 and 太阳病, though appearing similar to each other morphologically and semantically, are two terms and certainly need to be translated differently for the purpose of clinical application. According to the current practice, 太阳病证 can be translated as “pattern/syndrome of taiyang disease”, while 太阳证 can be translated as “taiyang disease”. In the definition, “greater yang bowel pattern/syndrome” seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 大

阳腑证 in which 腑 refers to the six fu-organs, not just referring to the bowel. The translation of this term will be further analyzed in the following discussion.

太阳经证 greater yang meridian pattern/syndrome: one of the patterns/syndromes of the six meridians due to attack of pathogenic wind-cold on the greater yang meridian of the body surface, usually seen in the initial stage of the contraction, marked by chills and fever, headache and painful stiff nape, and floating pulse.

According to the current practice, 太阳经证 should be translated as “taiyang meridian pattern/syndrome” instead of “greater yang meridian pattern/syndrome”. In the definition, the word “pathogenic” certainly refers to the Chinese concept 邪, used to modify the causes of diseases, especially the so-called six excesses. This is a common practice in the current translation. However, in the WPRO Standard[1], 风邪 (pathogenic wind), 寒邪 (pathogenic cold), 热邪 (pathogenic summer-heat), 湿邪 (pathogenic dampness), 暑邪 (pathogenic dryness) and 火邪 (pathogenic fire) are just simply translated as “wind, cold, summer heat, dampness, dryness and fire”. According to the theory of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), these six climatic conditions are the normal changes of weather in different seasons, not necessarily the causes of diseases. Only when they have suddenly or excessively changed can they cause diseases.

太阳腑证 greater yang bowel pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome in which the urinary bladder (greater yang bowel) is attacked by the pathogen in an unrelieved greater yang meridian.

In TCM, the Chinese concept 腑 includes bowels, but not just bowels. In fact, 腑 covers a number of the internal organs, including gallbladder, stomach, large intestine, small intestine, bladder and sanjiao (三焦) which is rendered as triple energizer in the WPRO Standard[1] on acupuncture and moxibustion nomenclature. In the definition, the word “pathogen” is used to translate the Chinese concept 邪 which is now often rendered as “pathogenic factor” to maintain the traditional feature of this concept. Such a way of translation is also used in the WPRO Standard. The expression “unrelieved greater yang meridian” seems difficult to understand. In this expression, “greater yang meridian” seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 太阳经 which is commonly rendered as “taiyang meridian”.

太阳伤寒证: 太阳伤寒 greater yang cold damage pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome caused by pathogenic cold attacking the greater yang meridian, chiefly manifested by fever, chills, absence of sweat and floating pulse, also called the greater yang cold damage.

In the Chinese terms 太阳伤寒证 and 太阳伤寒, the concept 伤寒 is currently translated either as “exogenous febrile disease” or as “cold attack”. To translate it as “cold damage” is certainly a literal translation, basically equivalent to the original term in meaning and form. Besides, 太阳伤寒证 and 太阳伤寒 are two separate terms and need to be translated separately. According to the current practice, 太阳伤寒证 can be translated as “taiyang cold damage/pattern syndrome” while 太阳伤寒 can be translated as “taiyang cold damage”.

太阳蓄水证: 太阳蓄水 greater yang water-retention pattern/syndrome: a type of greater yang bowel pattern/syndrome marked by disordered water metabolism, chiefly manifested by impaired urination and thirst but vomiting immediately after the ingestion of water, also called as greater yang water-retention.

In the Chinese terms 太阳蓄水证 and 太阳蓄水, the Chinese character 蓄 means to store up or save up. In TCM, 蓄 usually means accumulation or retention. So in both the WPRO Standard[1] and the WFCMS Standard[2], 蓄水 is translated as water retention. But 蓄 in 蓄血 is rendered as “amassment” in the WPRO Standard[1], and “accumulation” in the WFCMS Standard[2]. Actually, 蓄 in 蓄水 and 蓄血 means the same thing and should be translated in the same way. In the definition, the expression “impaired urination” may be the translation of the Chinese term 小便不利 which is usually translated as “inhibited urination” in the WPRO Standard[1]. Besides, it is also necessary to translate 太阳蓄水证 (pattern/syndrome of taiyang water retention) and 太阳蓄水 (taiyang water retention) separately because they are separate terms.

阳明病证: 阳明病 yang brightness disease pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome marked by exuberant yang and dryness-heat in the stomach and intestines occurring in the course of an externally contracted disease, manifested by abdominal distention with constipation, tidal fever and deep and replete pulse, also called the yang brightness disease.

In the Chinese terms 阳明病证 and 阳明病, the Chinese concept 阳明 is traditionally transliterated as “yangming” which is still used worldwide now. Obviously, it is unnecessary to translate such a
commonly used term in such a different way. In the definition, the expression “externally contracted disease” seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 外感病 which is now translated quite differently, such as exogenous disease, disease due to exogenous pathogenic factors, etc. Comparatively speaking, “externally contracted disease” seems more expressive and equivalent to the original term. In TCM, 阳明病证 (syndrome of yangming disease) and 阳明病 (yangming disease) are two separate terms and need to be translated separately.

阳明经证 yang brightness meridian pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome caused by exuberant pathogenic heat flooding in the yang brightness meridian and spreading over the body but not yet inducing constipation, characteristically manifested by high fever without chills, profuse sweating, strong thirst and large surging pulse.

In the term 阳明经证, Chinese term 阳明 is commonly transliterated as “yangming”. It seems quite unnecessary to change such a common practice. In the definition, the expression “exuberant pathogenic heat” seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 炙热内盛 which is also frequently translated as “hyperactivity of pathogenic heat”. In the WPRO Standard[11], the Chinese character 盛 is often translated as “exubrance” or “exuberant”. Comparatively speaking, to unitarily translate 盛 as “exubrance” or “exuberant” seems more practical for both expressing the meaning and standardizing the translation of this Chinese character. The expression “large surging pulse” seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 脉洪大, in which the Chinese character 洪 literally means flooding, frequently translated as “full”. Obviously, “surging” is more expressive than “full”.

阳明腑证 yang brightness bowel pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome caused by accumulation of pathogenic heat in the stomach and large intestine, manifested by tidal fever, abdominal distension, fullness and pain, constipation, agitation or even delirium.

It is mentioned previously that 病 in TCM refers to six internal organs and “bowel” is just one of these six organs. The clinical manifestations of this syndrome still include sweating over hands and feet, and deep and replete pulse.

少阳病证 少阳病 lesser yang disease pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome in which the pathogen exists between the exterior and interior of the body, marked by alternating fever and chills, fullness and choking feeling in the chest and hypochondriac region, dry throat and string-like pulse, also called the lesser yang disease.

In the terms 少阳证 and 少阳病, the Chinese concept 少阳 is commonly transliterated as “shaoyang”. It is unnecessary to change such a common practice. This disorder is caused by invasion of pathogenic factors into the gallbladder, which is the fu-organ of shaoyang, that leads to dysfunction of the gallbladder and disorder of meridian qi. The common clinical manifestations include bitter taste in the mouth and dizziness. In the definition, the expression “fullness and choking feeling in the chest and hypochondriac region” seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 胸胁满闷 in which 闷 is often translated as “oppression”. To translate it as “choking feeling” is certainly expressive, but seems a little bit wordy.

少阳经证 lesser yang meridian pattern/syndrome: a lesser yang pattern/syndrome involving the gallbladder meridian, marked by alternating chills and fever, chest and hypochondriac pain and fullness, no desire for food and drink, irritable disposition, desire to vomit, bitter taste in the mouth, dry throat, dizzy vision, white tongue coating and string-like pulse.

The commonly used translation of 少阳经证 is “shaoyang meridian pattern/syndrome”, not “lesser yang meridian pattern/syndrome”. In fact, the Chinese character 少 in 少阳 is an approach of categorization, not necessarily means lesser. In the definition, the expression “string-like” pulse is certainly the translation of the Chinese term 脉弦 or 弦脉, in which the Chinese character 弦 means taut or wiry. That is why 脉弦 or 弦脉 is usually translated as “taut pulse” or “wiry pulse”, which is also occasionally used in the WPRO Standard[11].

少阳腑证 lesser yang bowel pattern/syndrome: a lesser yang pattern/syndrome associated with heat binding in the gastrointestinal tract, marked by alternating chills and fever, chest and hypochondriac pain and fullness, incessant vomiting, epigastric cramp, irritable disposition, constipation or heat bind with circumfluence, reddened tongue with yellow dry coating and forceful string-like pulse.

According to the current common practice, the normal translation of 少阳病证 should be “shaoyang fu-organ pattern/syndrome”. In the definition, the expression “heat binding” may be the translation of the Chinese term 热结 which is usually translated as “heat stagnation” or “heat retention”. However,
in the current translation practice, the Chinese concepts 湿 and 郁 are also frequently translated as “stagnation”, as in “qi stagnation” (气滞) and “heat stagnation” (热郁); the Chinese concepts 停 and 积 are often translated as “retention”, as in “water retention” (水停) and “food retention” (食积). In order to make the translations of these Chinese concepts distinct, it seems practical to use the English word “bind” to translate 结. In fact in the WPRO Standard[1], “bind” is used almost unitarily to translate 结. For the purpose of standardization, such a translation is certainly advisable. The expression “heat bind with circumfluence” is obviously the translation of the Chinese term 热结旁流, which is a morbid condition of retention of pathogenic heat and dryness, leading to the accumulation of dry feces in the intestine and discharge of foul watery fluid, usually seen in the excess syndrome of yangming fu-organ. This complicated term is often translated as “retention of pathogenic heat with watery diarrhea”. Comparatively speaking, “heat bind with circumfluence” appears more concise and equivalent to the original term.

太阴病症: 太阴病 greater yin disease pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome characterized by decline of spleen yang with production of cold-dampness, and manifested by anorexia, vomiting, abdominal fullness and dull pain, diarrhea and weak pulse, also called the greater yin disease.

The Chinese concept 太阴 in the terms 太阴病症 and 太阴病 is traditionally transliterated as “taiyin” and is currently used as a standard translation worldwide. Besides, 太阴病症 and 太阴病 are two separate terms in TCM and need to be translated differently. If 太阴病症 is translated as “pattern/syndrome of taiyin disease”, then 太阴病 can be simply rendered as “taiyin disease”. In the definition, the expression “decline of spleen yang” is obviously the translation of the Chinese term 脾阳虚衰. Such a translation is used quite common in the current translation practice. However, in many other places in the WPRO Standard[1], the Chinese concept 脾 is rendered as “debilitation”.

大阴中风证 greater yin wind stroke pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome of greater yin deficiency cold combined with exterior wind-cold, marked by aversion to wind, fever, sweating, abdominal fullness and pain alleviated by warmth and pressure, and watery diarrhea.

The Chinese concept 风 in 大阴中风证 is somewhat similar to apoplexy in modern medicine. In order to maintain the traditional features of TCM, 风 is also frequently translated as “wind stroke”. According to the current translation practice, 大阴中风证 may be reasonably translated as “taiyin wind stroke pattern/syndrome” instead of “greater yin wind stroke pattern/syndrome”.

少阴病证: 少阴病 lesser yin disease pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome occurring at the late stage of an externally contracted disease, marked by deficiency cold of the heart and kidney, and manifested by aversion to cold, listlessness, irritable disposition, insomnia, cold limbs, diarrhea with undigested food and fine pulse, also called the lesser yin disease.

The Chinese concept 少阴 in 少阴病证 and 少阴病 is traditionally transliterated as “shaoyin” and is currently used as a standard translation worldwide. Besides, 少阴病证 and 少阴病 are two separate terms in TCM and thus need to be translated differently. If 少阴病证 is translated as “pattern/syndrome of shaoyin disease”, then 少阴病 can be simply rendered as “shaoyin disease”. In the definition “listlessness, irritable disposition” refers to one single Chinese term 烦躁易怒 which means listlessness with irritability.

少阴表寒证 lesser yin exterior cold pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome arising when pathogenic cold invades the lesser yin and then the greater yang concurrently in a patient with yang deficiency constitution, and manifested by fever, aversion to cold, headache, absence of sweating, cold limbs, listlessness, white tongue coating and sunken pulse.

The currently common used translation of 少阴表寒证 is “shaoyin exterior cold pattern/syndrome”, not “lesser yin exterior cold pattern/syndrome”. In the definition, the expression “sunken pulse” is certainly the translation of the Chinese term 脉沉, which is frequently translated as “deep pulse”. However, “sunken pulse” is also quite often used in the current translation practice.

少阴寒化证 lesser yin cold transformation pattern/syndrome: a lesser yin pattern/syndrome with cold transformation of the pathogen which invades the heart and kidney, usually manifested as aversion to cold, cold limbs, sleepiness, lienteric diarrhea, pale tongue and sunken faint pulse.

The currently common used translation of 少阴寒化证 is “pattern/syndrome of shaoyin cold transformation” or “shaoyin cold transformation pattern/syndrome”. This pattern or syndrome is
caused by deficiency of yang qi in the shaoyin meridian, resulting in transformation of cold with yin after interior invasion of pathogenic factors and superabundance of cold yin. The common clinical manifestations still include no fever and frequent desire for sleep. In the definition, the expression “pale tongue” may refer to the Chinese term 舌淡, which means that the tongue is light-colored, not so serious as pale.

少阴热化证 lesser yin heat transformation pattern/syndrome: a lesser yin pattern/syndrome with heat transformation of the pathogen, manifested by irritable disposition, insomnia, dry mouth and throat, reddened tongue tip and fine rapid pulse.

The currently common used translation of 少阴热化证 is “pattern/syndrome of shaoyin heat transformation” or “shaoyin heat transformation pattern/syndrome”. This pattern or syndrome is caused by deficiency of yin and excess of yang in the shaoyin meridian, resulting in transformation of pathogenic factors into heat with yang.

厥阴病证: 厥阴病证 reverting yin disease pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome occurring at the latest stage of three yin disease characterized by interweaving of cold and heat or yin and yang in a critically ill case, also called the reverting yin disease.

The Chinese concept 厥阴在 厥阴病证 and 厥阴病 is traditionally transliterated as “jueyin” and is now used worldwide as a standard translation. Besides, 厥阴病证 and 厥阴病 are two separate terms in TCM and thus need to be translated differently. If 厥阴病证 is translated as "pattern/syndrome of jueyin disease", then 厥阴病 can be simply rendered as “jueyin disease”. This syndrome usually occurs at the advanced stage of cold damage with opposition between yin and yang, alternate chills and fever as well as retaliaion of excessive heat. The common clinical manifestations include wasting-thirst, upward counterflow of qi to the heart, pain and heat in the heart, hunger without desire to eat and ascarisemia after taking food.

厥阴热厥证 reverting yin heat reversal pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome occurring at the latest stage of an externally contracted disease when the pathogen prevents the extremely exuberant yang heat from reaching the exterior, and manifested by cold extremities, flushed face and congested eyes, scorching hotness of the chest and abdomen, thirst, irritable disposition, restlessness and inability to sleep, short voidings of reddish urine, constipation, reddened tongue with yellow coating and rapid slippery pulse.

The translation of 厥阴热厥证 might be reasonably changed into “jueyin heat reversal pattern/syndrome” or “heat reversal pattern/syndrome of jueyin”. In the definition, the expression “congested eyes” may refer to the Chinese term 目赤 which is often simply rendered as “redness of eyes” or “reddened eyes”. The expression “short voidings of reddish urine” may be the translation of the Chinese term 小便短赤 which means scanty reddish urine. In this Chinese term, the Chinese character 短 literally means “short”, but actually means “little” in this specific term. Besides, to use “voiding” to refer to the discharge of urine seems quite unique, but seldom used in the current translation practice.

厥阴寒厥证 reverting yin cold reversal pattern/syndrome: a pattern/syndrome occurring at the latest stage of an externally contracted disease characterized by reversal cold of the extremities and hardly perceptible or skipping pulse.

In the term 厥阴寒厥证, 厥阴 is traditionally transliterated as “jueyin” and 寒 is commonly translated as “syncope”. Such a way of translation is adopted in the WFCMS Standard[5]. However, in the WPRO Standard[1], 寒 is generally translated as “reversal”. But to translate 厥阴寒厥证 as “reverting yin cold reversal pattern/syndrome” sounds awkward in pronunciation and morphology because “reverting” and “reversal” share the same morphological structure. In the definition, the expression “reversal cold of the extremities” seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 四肢厥冷 which means extreme coldness of the four limbs. To translate “厥冷” as “reversal cold” sounds a little bit strange. The expression “hardly perceptible pulse” may be the translation of the Chinese term 脉微欲绝 which is also translated as “indistinct pulse” or “insensible pulse” in the current translation practice.

太阳蓄血证: 太阳蓄血 greater yang blood amassment pattern/syndrome: a type of greater yang bowel pattern/syndrome in which the pathogen combines with blood and remains in the lower abdomen, marked by lower abdominal cramps or fullness with rigidity, polyuria, delirium, amnesia, dark stool, and sunken choppy or sunken bound pulse, also called the greater yang blood amassment.

The Chinese concept 太阳在 the terms 太阳蓄血和太阳蓄血 is traditionally transliterated as “taiyang” and now is commonly used as a standard translation. Besides, 太阳蓄血证 and 太阳蓄血 are two separate terms in TCM and thus need to
be translated differently. If 太阳蓄血证 is translated as “pattern/syndrome of taiyang blood amassment”, then 太阳蓄血 can be simply rendered as “taiyang blood amassment”. In Chinese, 蓄 means to store up or to save up. However, in the WPRO Standard[1], 蓄 is translated either as “retention” as in “water retention” (蓄水) or as “amassment” as in “blood amassment”. Such a varied translation seems to make a certain sense in revealing the underlined meaning of 蓄 in different concepts. In the definition, “sunken choppy pulse” seems to be the translation of the Chinese term 脉沉涩 which is now translated quite differently, such as “deep unsmooth pulse”, “sunken inhibited pulse” or “deep rough pulse”. In the WPRO Standard[1], the Chinese character 涩 is usually translated as “inhibited”. Such a consistency is certainly necessary to maintain in the translation of 脉沉涩. In the WFCMS Standard[2], the Chinese character 蓄 in both 蓄水 and 蓄血 is translated as “accumulation”.

热入血室证 pattern/syndrome of heat entering blood chamber: a pattern/syndrome marked by penetration of heat into the uterus, which causes abdominal pain, menstrual disturbances, alternating fever and chills, and delirium at night.

热入血室证 is usually caused by invasion of virulent toxin during menstruation. Clinical manifestations are alternating chills and fever, or distending pain in the chest, hypochondria and lower abdomen, or abnormal quantity of menorrhea. In this term, the Chinese concept 血室 literally means blood room and thus is often translated as “blood chamber”. In TCM, 血室 means three things, namely, thoroughfare vessel, liver and uterus. In this specific term, 血室 refers to uterus. However, in order to maintain the original morphological feature, it is rendered as “blood chamber”.

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WHO 西太区与世界中医药学会联合会中医名词术语国际标准比较研究: 六经辨证

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关键词：语言学；科学术语；翻译；英语；中医名词；六经辨证