



SUCTION BA GUAN ZI  
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*...In the new world everyone will let available to everybody his experience and his ideas,  
and the other will reward him freely for this...  
(from the book "The Celestine prophecy")*

**Suction cups (Ba Guan Zi):** the technique uses glass cups, in various sizes, that can cause a moxibustion action or a bloodletting type (if associate to scarification or puncture with "triangular needle"). The decompression's action, o a succession of compressions and decompressions, realizes a sort of massage that, also due to the concurrent thermal action, increases the local blood circulation of 300% , helping the exudates reabsorption, and the resolution of inflammatory process, activating the basal metabolism. The suction cups are helpful against the penetration of pathogens as wind-cold-humidity and very used in gastroenterology, rheumatology and gynecology. The cups are divided, based on the development of internal empty space, in "fire cups", "water cups" and "wind cups". The exposure time and the length of the treatment are related to the age, the gender, the constitutional kind and the disease kind. The suction treatment has vascular, spasmolytic, anti-inflammatory, lymphatic drainage, analgesic, detoxifying, trophy stimulating, regenerative and reparative, immunostimulating and antifibrotic therapeutical effects.

### **Suction history**

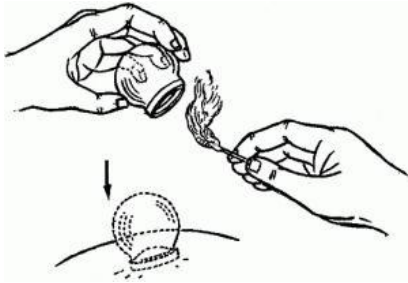
In the beginning it was medical-shaman practice used on the proper skin zone sucking the air through animal horns with an open top. We can find reference to this technique in the Ben Cao Mu Shi Yi where it says that:

" in the cups there's a fire air association, they excrete the harmful wind".

The Chinese cup history begins in 281 DC. It was an ancient medical Taoist practice. Under the Tang dynasty (618DC) and the Quing Manciu (from the 1644 DC) the use was perfected, and it was very used in the Chinese imperial court in that time. The utilization was first registered by **Ge Hong**, in old tractates called "**Manual of emergency prescriptions**".

During that time, Be Hong and some other medical men used animal horns for the suction. That's why in some medical tractates of the Empire the suction was called the "healing horn" technique. During the Tang dynasty, the suction was the main treatment

for pulmonary tuberculosis. It was also use with acupuncture and moxibustion. Actually, between the three ancient medical practices, it became the standard treatment for chronically pulmonary diseases. More recently **Zhao Xuemin**, during the Quing Dynasty, wrote "**Supplement to Compendium of Materia Medica**" in which an entire chapter was dedicated to "fire jar" (huoquan qi). He remarked the values of this treatment, using bamboo or ceramic cups, to relieve wind-cold headache, windy bi syndrome, dizziness and abdominal pain.



The technique consists in introducing fire inside a small glass or bamboo or ceramic cup. The oxygen on the inside burns and causes a leak of warm air which creates a depression. The application of the cup on the skin causes a sucking effect that has the power of removing the Qi/Xue stasis, activating the Qi circulation in the Sun Luo capillaries and the blood in the microcirculation. These

actions can "dissipate on the outside" the Perverse Xieqi Factors COLD HAN and DAMP SHI, activating the organically defences and calming the pain.

The most common misunderstanding about one of the most powerful and beneficial effect of the post- suction is the sign that sometimes is left.

The sucking pulls toxins, pathogen factors, blood poison, lymph, dead cells and cellular rejects from the deep of tissues to the surface letting the oxygenated blood to nourish and cure the underlying areas. So those debilitating agents can be more easily expelled from the body. The deposits are dissipated in few hours or in few weeks, depending on the stagnation quality and on the patient's activity after the treatment.

The colour and the model of the marks depend on the stagnation level of the zone, and go from a bright red to a dark purple, they usually last from 3 days to a week (sometimes even more if the patient is vey sick or sedentary). If there isn't any stagnation, there will be just a pink light sing that will vanish in few minutes or hours. Old trauma or injuries sites may demand more than one treatment. The marks will be lighter as the pathogen will be systematically removed from the body.

#### Skin Reaction after Cupping



Leaving the cups on the skin for too much time can cause detachment and burns.

It's a point type of treatment and usually used on dispersion, it doesn't re-balance the energetic system, but it works towards the problem.

Could be match with a Moxa treatment: if it's done after the suction we will have a bracing action on the point; if it's done before the suction we will have a more dispersive action.

An important point is the 14GV used to lower the temperature.

### **Instructions.**

In Japan the suction is made, with a diagnostic purpose, on the SHU points of the Bladder's Meridian spine.

The suction suits the treatment of all the painful syndromes, respiratory and gastrointestinal pathology, many syndromes of depression with strong anxious elements. Because it restart the energetic circle, it can be used anytime there is the suspicion of an altered (static) circle. Could be use match to Acupuncture, Massage and Moxibustion (as said before).

In orient it's used also for snake bites.

### **Contraindications:**

The suction cups must not be used when there is: convulsions, skin infections, ulcers and skin sore, oversensitive or allergic skins, alteration of haemostasis with capillary fragility, pregnancy.

### **Indications.**

Recommended when the cause is:

- Wind

in the illness where the wind conveys cold (cooling syndrome) or cold and damp (joint problems; BI syndrome)  
12BL to avoid the wind to enter.

- Qi and Xue stagnation

in painful situations caused by qi and xue stasis "blood is qi's son and qi is blood's commander"  
back Shu points.

- Digestive system's illness

diarrhea, poor appetite, abdominal pain  
12CV Zhong Wan  
13-14 LV liver that attacks the spleen (nervous diarrhea)

④ Asthma or strong respiratory forms

17CV shanzhong increase wei qi

Back Shu

13BL LU shu

14BL PC shu

On strong or chronic forms used on the back shu.

④ Chronic lumbar pain from Ki deficit or perverse qi or stasis

penetration of perverse energy or blood stagnation (herniated lumbar)

40BL Weizhong

④ Ashi points treatment

symptomatic points, painful when pushed.

④ Joint phlegm stagnation

damp is hard to deal with because it's sticky and goes downwards.

## METHOD

There are many methods related to the quantity of suction and length of the cup application: less intense is the suction less we leave the cup on (it falls off by itself); but when the suction is intense the cup stays on longer and the treatment is very strong (we have tissues detachment and rise to the appearance of bruises). They are divided in:

weak suction

medium suction

strong suction

The choice is related to the subject, the pathology and the application zone. We have the:

moving suction

we put on the zone gel or oil and, after creating vacuum, we drag the cup. It's really painful but effective (usually on back, TH meridians, GB, B.)

### needle suction

reinforce the needle action; it's used in full condition with the aim of draw blood and energy towards the outside; or also to tone up drawing Xue e Qi towards the zone.

### Moxa suction

it's used to tone up and move the Qi: the moxa is applied on the needle, left there burning completely and when it stops smoking we apply the cup.

### Full suction

bloody method: we make the spot bleeding, apply the cup that fill up with blood (hypertension).

In the veterinary field suction has a big obstacle in the fur presence, so it needs bald or shaved zones. Also the use of fire to obtain the vacuum can be dangerous for the dog's fur.

There are some special cup with a pump that can make the vacuum without using the fire, which make the use easier but still on shaved skin. The suction can be use as major therapy or matched with other methods (needle- massage) to increase the effects.

## METHODOLOGY

At the beginning we need to shave the area or use an already bald zone following a surgery.

We can use weak or medium suction, with needle or moxa and with all the devices that we said before.

It has great toning action, reactivates Qi and Xue on stasis and/or chronic situation, and can be used also before a classic acupuncture treatment. Can be done in 2 ways:



- leaving the cup on between 5 and 15 minutes
- making a sort of fast vacuum and de-compression to quickly reactivate the energy.

A classical use on dogs is after they had a hemilaminectomy surgery. The zone is already bald. Usually the zone upward the operation is more sensitive so more painful, so it's better not to treat. But downward, by the fact that there isn't deep sensitivity, it's not painful and can be used to reactivate the Qi.



Another use is on contractures of the paravertebral muscle in old subjects (arthrosis Bi syndrome) or contractures linked to incorrect walking.  
Can be used on knee's joints injuries (ligament, meniscus injuries) before an acupuncture treatment.



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