

# Spirits of the Points: The Three-Heater Official

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The three-heater (*san jiao*) official is responsible for the distribution of heat throughout the entirety of the body, mind and spirit. No organ or function can operate optimally if its environment is too hot or too cold. This official works to provide an optimal temperature in which all organs and functions, both physical and non-physical, can thrive. It makes possible the easy ebb and flow of relationships, allowing us to be in perfect sync with others and the world around us.

## Three Heater (*San Jiao*) 1: Rushing the Frontier Gate

A frontier is a boundary – in this case, not between nations, but between us and the world. In ancient times, cities were walled for protection. There were gates in the walls that allowed entry to those deemed welcome. We have, metaphorically, such a wall that protects us from outside threats.

At times, we need to open the gate and enter into relationship with the outside world with full enthusiasm, warmth and openness. At other times, we need to keep the gate closed, remaining more guarded, private and well-protected. This point allows for quick adjustments so the gate can open and close with instinctual immediacy.

If stuck closed, we may miss the warmth that is available to us. Out of fear, perhaps from past hurts, we may needlessly keep out those whose love would nourish us. We remain shy, cold, isolated, and closed off. If stuck open, we may allow entry indiscriminately, even to those who would hurt or endanger us, or those who would break our heart.

As the metal point of the meridian, the point allows us to sense and receive what is of quality, value and inspiration. It also eliminates the waste from within us and admits nothing but what is pure, good and aligned with our spirit.

## Three Heater 2: Fluid Secretion Gate

As the water point of the meridian, this gate allows fluid secretions to flow smoothly, appropriately and at the right temperature. As water controls fire, too much water will put the fire out; too little will let it blaze uncontrollably. This gate controls the flow.

Warmth needs to reach every corner of the body, mind and spirit in precise amounts. The fluidity of water allows it to penetrate and reach every organ, function and cell as needed. Mentally, without proper flow, the mind can become stuck, fixated and stubborn. In the opposite extreme, we may be awash in thoughts, drowning in mental chatter, unfocused, unstable, and unable to concentrate.

At the spirit level, we may feel alone, disconnected from others, cold, frigid, incapable of giving or receiving love; or so desperate for love, connection and warmth that we open our floodgates inappropriately – inviting warmth, affection and intimacy from those who are dangerous or unavailable, or expressing it to those who are unreceptive. When this gate is operating properly, we interact with safety, harmony, calmness, and security.

### Three Heater 3: Middle Islet

An islet is a small island, protected by the surrounding sea. The term *middle* refers to the center or core of ourselves. The Chinese character is that of a target with an arrow in its center. At our core, we are spirit – pure awareness, immovable and unchanging.

This point can take a fire-imbalanced patient who has become distracted and attached to thoughts, beliefs, regrets, fears, and other transient phenomena to a place of separation from those attachments – to a place of calm and stillness, protected and safe. At times, we need to be fully engaged in the flow and busyness of life. At times, we need the privacy of isolation. We consider this point for the fire-imbalanced patient who needs to find the proper balance between the two.

As the wood point of the meridian, this point is often used when the pulses show a relative excess of energy in the wood element, particularly the gallbladder – mother to the three heater – and a relative deficiency in the three heater itself. In this situation, tonifying SJ 3 would transfer the excess from the wood to the fire.

This is using the point as a "tonification point." It would be akin to taking wood from the woodpile and placing just the right amount on the fire which is running low, thus fueling the fire and sustaining it at just the right temperature.

Relationships need sustained fire to endure. Without the fuel to sustain, they simply burn out. The same applies to our relationships with work, projects, recreation, creativity, and physical, intellectual and spiritual pursuits. Consider a time when you began a relationship or a project with great enthusiasm and passion, only to devolve into disinterest and coldness. Fire gives the impulse to start. Wood provides the fuel to endure.

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*Author's Note:* There are many interpretations and uses of these points in various traditions; the preceding is not intended to encompass all possibilities. English translations of point names are those taught by Professor J.R. Worsley and appear in *Traditional Chinese Acupuncture, Volume 1: Meridians and Points* by J.R. Worsley; Element Books, 1982.

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