

CHINESE
CULTURE

MEDICINE

LIANG YONGXUAN
ZHAO XIN
ZHEN XUEYAN

Shanghai Scientific, Technical and Cultural Press





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Contents

| | | |
|--|----|--|
| Foreword | 5 | |
| The Evolution of Ancient TCM | 8 | |
| A Brief Introduction to TCM and Chinese Traditional Culture | 10 | |
| The Spread of Ancient Medical Knowledge | 17 | |
| The Skills and Virtues of Ancient Doctors | 23 | |
| Aspects of Ancient TCM | 31 | |
| Basic TCM Theories | 44 | |
| The Foundation Works of TCM – <i>The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine</i> | 46 | |
| Sun, Moon and Yin, Yang – the Yin-yang Theory of TCM | 49 | |
| Starting with Five-colored Soil – the Five-elements of TCM | 53 | |
| Man Is an Integral Part of Nature – the Holistic View of TCM | 58 | |
| | | The Essence, <i>Qi</i> and <i>Shen</i> of the Chinese People 61 |
| | | Blood and Body Fluids 69 |
| | | TCM on the Five Internal Organs (Viscera) 72 |
| | | Why Do We Get Sick? 84 |
| | | The Diagnostic Methods of TCM 87 |
| | | Syndrome Differentiation 98 |
| | | Treating Disease by Preventing Illness before It Begins 101 |
| | | About Traditional Chinese Medicine 104 |
| | | The Origins of Traditional Chinese Medicine 106 |
| | | The Rich Variety of Traditional Chinese Medicine 110 |
| | | Processing Traditional Chinese Medicine 114 |
| | | The Natures and Flavors of Traditional Chinese Medicine 118 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Forms of Traditional Chinese Drugs | 122 |
| The Combination of Medicine | 128 |
| The Modern Development of TCM | 131 |

Acupuncture, Moxibustion and Other

| | |
|---|-----|
| External treatments | 134 |
| Channels, Network Vessels and Acupoints | 136 |
| Acupuncture and Moxa-moxibustion | 145 |
| External Treatments to Treat Internal Illness | 151 |

TCM Theories

| | |
|--|-----|
| about the Cultivation of Health | 160 |
| Balance and Health | 162 |
| Emotions and Diseases | 165 |
| The Homology of Medicine and Food | 168 |
| Nourishing the Body with the Five Grains | 172 |
| Health Maintenance in the Four Seasons | 176 |
| Moderate Movement and Rest | 180 |

The Development of TCM

in Modern Times

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Competition between TCM and Western Medicine | 186 |
| The Integration of Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine | 188 |
| The Combination of Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine | 192 |
| Modern TCM Education | 199 |
| Modern TCM Diagnoses and Treatments | 197 |
| The Medicine of China's Ethnic Groups | 199 |

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| | |
|--|-----|
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| | |
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| | |
|--|-----|
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| Modern TCM Diagnoses and Treatments | 197 |
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Foreword

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a vast treasure trove of priceless knowledge that has been built up over thousands of years by the Han people and other ethnic Chinese groups. The aim of TCM is to cure diseases and alleviate suffering. To do this it focuses on the harmony between



A Traditional Chinese Medicine store.



A TCM doctor feels the pulse of a patient. TCM has unique theories and diagnosis and treatment methods.



TCM is understood and accepted by more and more people from many different cultural backgrounds. Many foreign doctors come to China to learn TCM.

people and nature. It is based firmly on the traditions of the past, and draws on ancient philosophical concepts for both its theoretical framework and its unique diagnostic and treatment methodologies.

TCM emphasizes the close ties between individuals and society, stresses the unity of heaven and mankind and values a holistic view of the world. Its most important concepts, such as *qi*, *yinyang* and *wuxing* (five elements), highlight the unique understanding the ancient Chinese had of the functions of the human body, including their comprehensive knowledge of the interrelationship and interactions of the body's viscera (*zang* and *fu*).

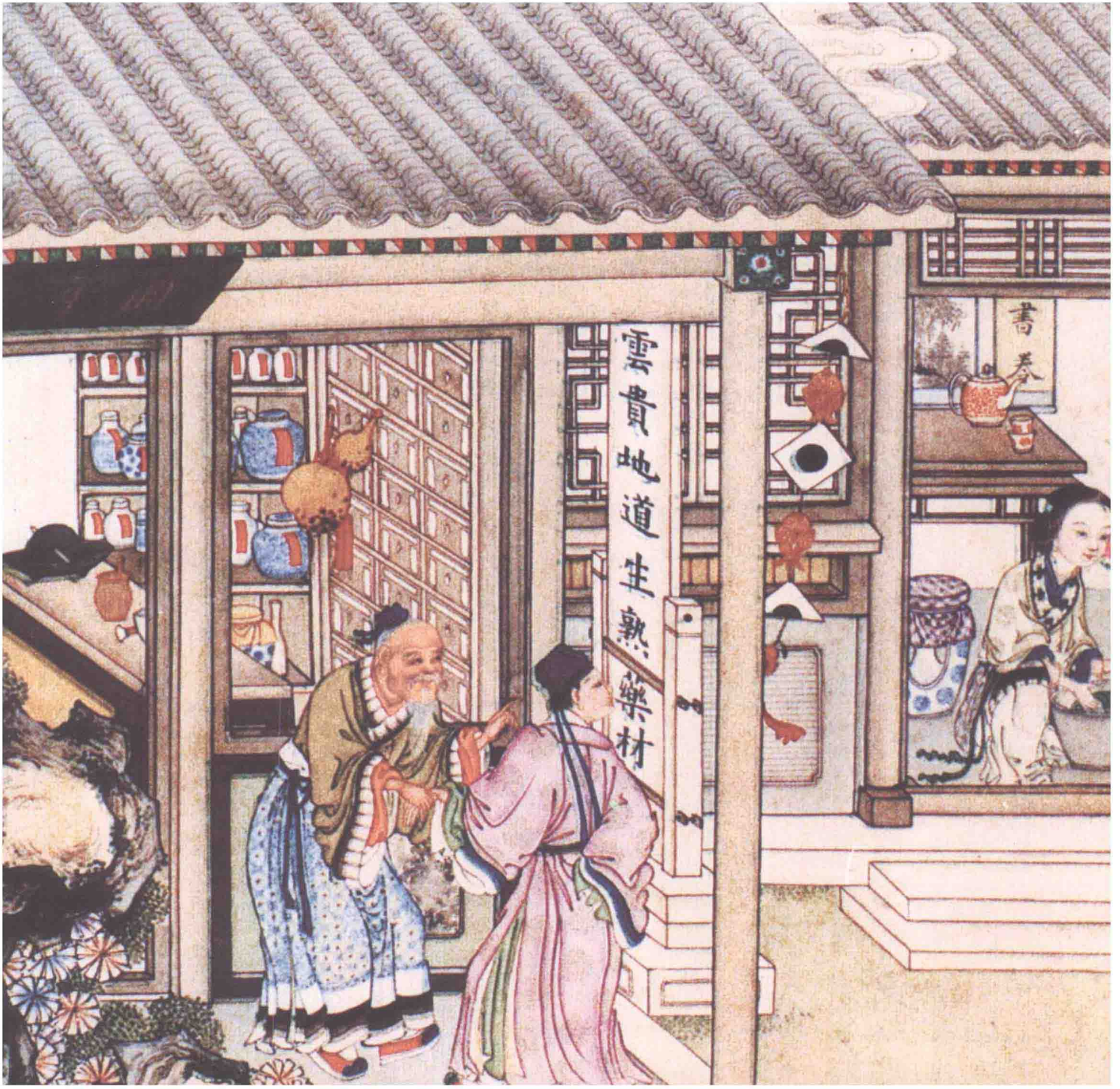
TCM incorporates a deep understanding of both nature and human beings. For example, TCM practitioners can produce medical resources from plants, animals and minerals to provide the basic means of treating diseases. TCM practitioners can also identify the mechanisms that causes disease, make diagnoses based on a patient's symptoms and then treat them with herbs and other medicines or procedures.

TCM also encompasses disease prevention and practitioners can recommend diets and other healthcare regimes that can effectively extend a person's lifespan. Moreover, the magic of acupuncture and moxibustion also play an important role in TCM. Both are techniques that have won the recognition of people from many countries.


The fascinating 2000-year history of TCM is closely linked with the names of many famous doctors from across the ages. Many ancient medical books and effective treatment approaches have been passed down from them. These provide a wealth of knowledge that later generations have benefitted from.

Over time, TCM has made an enormous contribution to the health and longevity of the Chinese people. It still plays a vital role today. As a dazzling pearl at the heart of oriental medicine, TCM has also had a great influence on Japan, Korea, southeastern Asian countries and other neighbors.

But how does TCM conceptualize the human body? How does it understand the causes and effects of illness? What are its major theories and ideas? What are the details of its herbal treatments and how do acupuncture and moxibustion therapies work? In this book, you will find the answer to these questions, and many more.



The Evolution of Ancient TCM



A Brief Introduction to TCM and Chinese Traditional Culture

Astronomy, mathematics, agriculture and medicine were the four major scientific subjects of ancient China. Of these four, Medicine was deemed as the most humanistic. Ever since these early times, TCM has been deeply influenced by traditional Chinese culture and has influenced it in turn.

“Good Official” or “Good Physician ”

“If I cannot be a good official, I’ll be a good physician” was a saying often used by ancient Chinese scholars. Physician was the second career choice for intellectuals in ancient times. Why?

“Benevolence (*Ren*)” is the supreme principle of Confucianism, the theoretical system founded by Confucius (557-479BC). Originally, benevolence referred to the friendship between people. However, benevolence, as defined by Confucianism, requires people to do things benefiting society or others. Medicine, as “a science that can save people” and relieve pain and cure disease, conforms with Confucian thought on benevolence and was thus called the “Benevolent Science” in ancient China. Influenced by such thinking, Confucian scholars devoted themselves to Medicine if they did not have opportunities in politics or government. They realized that medicine could bring as great a benefit to people as could “benevolent political measures”. They therefore recognized that they might be able to fulfill their responsibility to be “benevolent” through the practice of medicine.

Zhongyong (the golden mean) is an integral part of Confucianism. This concept says that it is fundamentally important to maintain the balance of everything and to bring opposing sides into harmony. This approach has had a deep influence on the attitudes of Chinese people to a wide range of questions and problems and widely penetrates all aspects of traditional medicine. According to TCM theories, the human body consists of *yin* and *yang*. When the *yang* and *yin* are in dynamic balance, a person is healthy. When the *yang* and *yin* are disordered, i.e. the balance is broken, a person gets ill. Thus, all TCM therapies aim at balancing *yin*, *yang*, alongside *qi* (vital energy) and blood, and aims to bring all these elements into “harmony”.



The 300-year-long Tong Ren Tang is the most famous TCM store in China. Its name shows the profound influence of *Ren* (Benevolence) on Confucian culture.



The Hu Qingyu Tang is a TCM store in southern China that was founded in 1874. It is comparable in importance to the northern Tong Ren Tang. Four characters meaning “medicine means benevolence” (inscribed by the founder) are still visible on its gate tower.

Balance and stability are also emphasized in TCM. For example, the herbs in a TCM prescription are arranged in strict accordance with the hierarchy of “emperor, minister, assistant and attendant”. This is done to harmonize the properties of the herbs, by restricting the toxicities of some herbs and strengthening or changing the functions of others. This enables herbs of various properties to form a new organic whole in which they are at their most effective.

Jingxue refers to the study of Confucian Classics. It involves interpreting their literal meanings and elaborating the philosophical connotations they had for the ancient Chinese. The evolution of *Jingxue* has had a great influence on TCM. Ancient Chinese doctors applied *Jingxue* research to the development of their medical principles. Most of them focused on TCM classics such as *The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic* and *Treatise on Febrile and Miscellaneous Diseases*. This study helped them develop new views, establish new schools, improve medical theories and promote effective medical practices. Even today, these two books are deemed as classics of TCM.

New studies are continuously being carried out on the initial theories of TCM. The application of *Jingxue* research on TCM study makes the evolution of TCM quite similar to that of Confucianism.

The Shared Roots of TCM and Taoism

As the Chinese saying goes, “medicine and Taoism share the same origin, and Taoists are often physicians.” Taoist theories, thoughts and practice are closely related with TCM: Not only are the theories of ancient Taoists often found in TCM classic texts, but some Taoists themselves, such as Ge Hong (284-364) and Tao Hongjing (456- 536), were also famous medical scientists and made outstanding contribution to the development of TCM.

Ancient Taoists studied alchemy to become immortal. Despite, the unattainable nature of their goal, it can be argued that their experiments helped lay the foundations for pharmaceutical chemistry. As early as the Han, Wei and Jin dynasties, Taoists refined mineral medicines for the treatment of diseases. These medicines included mercury ointment for acariasis treatment and mercury preparations for defecation.

From the Tang Dynasty onwards, Taoists developed calomel, hydrargyrum oxydatum crudum, hydrargyrum chloratum compositum and other TCM medicines. These were used in surgery and for dermatological complains. The Taoists also refined elixirs for oral administration.