

GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

简明中医学（英文版）

唐利龙 黄卫东 梁 岩 / 主编



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PREFACE

For the purpose of introducing Traditional Chinese Medicine to foreign friends with medical knowledge but without Chinese Language proficiency, we wrote General Introduction Of Traditional Chinese Medicine in English. TCM is known as the crystallization of the wisdom of the Chinese people achieved in their long-term efforts for treating diseases. For thousands of years, this system of medicine has made indelible contributions to the prosperity of the Chinese nation. Now, it represents the advantage and distinguishing feature of Chinese nation, in coordination with modern medicine. At the same time, TCM has also had a notable impact on the health of mankind and the culture of the whole world.

TCM was established on the basic concepts of the correspondence between man and nature, the integrity of the human body and mind, and the maintenance of a dynamic balance of life activities under the influences of the internal and external environments. In light of these concepts, TCM started the study of the human body from the functions aspect. A unique theoretical system, and rich and effective techniques and measures were thus developed for disease prevention and control, and health protection. Tempered and improved by practice of thousands of years, TCM has become an important aspect of medical science.

Along with the changes in human disease spectrum and the concept of health, as well as the aging of the population, TCM is gaining more and more acceptance, and displaying its special advantages and charms. It's characterized by the preventive viewpoint—"to prevent disease and avoid complications after illness sets in," the "bio-socio-psycho-environmental" medical model, and unique system of individualized diagnosis and treatment in accordance with climatic and seasonal conditions, geographical localities and the patients' constitution. The curative techniques such as herbal medication , acupuncture, tuina(manipulation and massage)

and dietotherapy, as well as the theory of maintaining good health—“integration between human and nature, harmonization between body and mind, and combination of action and stability”, are attracting attention among medical circles all over the world.

This book mainly introduced the basic theory of TCM, such as the philosophical basis, fundamental concepts, causes and mechanisms of diseases, the unique methods of TCM diagnosis, herbs and herbal formulas, commonly used patent medicines, the meridians system and acupoints, TCM chronology. So we could see this book as a mini-encyclopedia of TCM, and we hope it is helpful to those TCM fans and students.

Tang-Lilong
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CONTENTS

Chapter 1	Introduction	001
Chapter 2	Yin Yang & Five elements theory	050
Chapter 3	The phase of Zang-fu viscera theory	074
Chapter 4	The qi, blood and body fluid theory	117
Chapter 5	The meridians and collaterals theory	134
Chapter 6	Etiological or Causal Factors in TCM	148
Chapter 7	The Treatment Methods in TCM	183
Chapter 8	Diagnostic methods of TCM	196
Chapter 9	Chapter syndrome differentiation	246
Chapter 10	Chinese medicine	271
Chapter 11	Formulae of Traditional Chinese Medicine	284
Chapter 12	The meridian system	368
Chapter 13	Acupoints	379
Chapter 14	Techniques of Acupuncture and Moxibustion	394
Chapter 15	Food & Diet Therapy of TCM	402
Appendix I	TCM Chronology	660
Appendix II	General TCM Terms Glossory	679
Appendix III	Summary Chart of Pulse Diagnosis Indications	687
Appendix VI	General Deficiency and Excess of Yin and Yang	689
Appendix V	The clinical meanings of normal signs & symptoms in TCM	692

Chapter 1 Introduction

I. The main history of TCM

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has a long and rich history. The fact that TCM has existed for thousands of years, and is still used today is a testament to its value as a form of healthcare.

The isolation of China throughout history plays a role in TCM's lack of development in other world civilizations. However, with the opening of China in 1972 it has been spreading to Western and European countries. TCM's practice has been shaped over time by many factors including culture, philosophy, politics, religion, and science.

Today, we think of China as being one united country, but this is only a recent development in the country's history. Throughout the centuries, China was made up of many states that were often at war with each other and repeatedly united and divided. These states were ruled by dynasties and were feudalistic societies.

Development of TCM, therefore, was not always a sequential build up of knowledge based on the previous dynasty's contributions. How the individual practiced TCM was influenced largely by his teacher's views. Even today, we see these differences. For example, different TCM practitioners may prescribe a person with the same symptoms and signs different herbal remedies. Each herbal remedy will cure the symptoms and signs even though they have different ingredients. The success of the treatment is measured through observation and how the patient feels.

TCM plays a very important part in medicine's history. Understanding TCM through a historical context gives insight to this ancient form of medicine and establishes its validity as a healthcare system.

Antiquity 2200 BC

During this period, different clans began to form, and survival was based on overcoming struggles with nature. As the early inhabitants hunted for food, they discovered that some foods could relieve illness while others were poisonous and even could cause death. The discovery of fire was especially important because it allowed people to eat cooked food that was more easily digested.

At the same time, the generation of heat led to other findings. The earliest beginnings of using herbs, acupuncture, and moxibustion to cure disease were seen. While using hot stones to warm a specific area of the body, inhabitants realized that pressing them against certain parts of the body could help alleviate certain sicknesses. They also found that by using bone needles and pricking themselves in a particular spot could relieve pain in other areas of the body. In addition, there were clan members who became specialists in these techniques, and were known as shamans (wu). The practice of medicine was very much integrated with magic to cure illness.

The Yellow Emperor and the Fire Emperor

Two well-known legends at the time were those of the Yellow Emperor whose name was Huang Di, and the Fire Emperor who was bestowed the title Shennong. Shennong has numerous meanings in Chinese such as “divine farmer”, the “heavenly husbandman”, and a more modern interpretation as a distinguished doctor. It is unclear whether these emperors actually existed but some historians date their existence back to 2500 to 2700BC.

Both of these important figures are the attributed author's of two well-known books that have contributed significantly to TCM. These are the Huang Di Nei Jing (The Yellow Emperor's Medicine Classic) and the Shennong Bencaojing (Classic of Herbal Medicine). In actuality these books were written much later in history. It was common in ancient time's for the Chinese authors to assign authorship of books to the great teachers or important persons who influenced them.



Shen Nong

The Shang Dynasty 1700-1100BC

About the Shang

The Shang people, one of China's earliest ancestors, lived in the Yellow River basin of China. During this period, medical principles were very primitive in form, and based on myths and legends as well as experience. Inscriptions on oracle bones of buffalo and tortoise shells describe the use of wine and hot water as medicine, and the use of needles and bronze knives as surgical instruments. In addition, these oracles shed light on a number of diseases and illnesses.



oracle bones

The Shang believed their existence was closely tied with the universe where they were located in the center with the heavens positioned above and the earth positioned below. The Shang also believed that the earth was “flat and divided into three concentric squares.” The concept of the universe was used to explain the laws of nature. Relationships were formed between the cosmos and humans. For example, the skin of the human body corresponded with the flat texture of the earth, the five internal organs corresponded to the five elements of wood, fire, water, earth, and metal, and the eyes and ears related to the sun and moon in the heavens.

The Zhou or Chou Dynasty approx. 1100-221BC

Western Zhou

The Western Zhou people migrated to the Shang region in 1111 BC, initially adopting the Shang's customs. However, over time people started to rebel against the ancient customs and beliefs. It was an age of political and social unrest with a breakdown in the morals of the people. Feudalistic states were constantly at war with one another.

Confucianism and Taoism

Two important persons emerged from this period. One was Confucius (557-479 BC). Confucius was a social reformist and a teacher. He wanted to restore order in this time of chaos. His contemporary, Lao-zi (born in 590 BC), was the founder of Taoism. Taoism teachings were more philosophical whereas Confucianism teachings were more practical. Even today their philosophies are still important in the Chinese culture, and have helped shape the practice of

Chinese medicine.

Eastern Zhou

An organized medical system developed during this period.

Court Physicians

According to the book Rites of Zhou or Rites of Chou, which recorded the ceremonies or systems for that time, the Eastern Zhou period had an organized medical system in which court officials of the emperor were trained in a variety of medical specialties. For example, jiyi were physicians who cured internal illnesses, yangyi were physicians who cured external illnesses such as wounds, skin problems, broken bones and other traumatic injuries, and shiyi were physicians who dealt with dietary problems. The first official Chinese veterinarians also appeared during this time.

Spring/Autumn Period

A number of physicians contributed a great deal of knowledge to TCM in this period. One notable physician was Bian Que. Bian Que's skills were based on the four fundamental examination procedures of Chinese medicine. He would observe his patient's tongue, nose, ears, face, eyes, mouth and throat, listen to his patient's speech, coughing, or other bodily vibrations, take a complete history of the patient's problem, and lastly he would feel the patient's pulse. Bian Que also believed illness was caused by the imbalance of yin and yang. Using these examination techniques, Bian Que was an expert in many fields of medicine including gynecology, pediatrics, ophthalmology, psychiatry and otorhinolaryngology (ENT).

Warring States Period

During the Warring States Period China's feudalistic government split into seven different states. It was around this time period that the yin/yang philosophy and the use of five elements to describe causes for illness, were further developed and their uses began to be taught in schools and written about in books.

Huang Di Nei Jing (The Yellow Emperor's Medicine Classic)

Although the Huang Di Nei Jing book's authorship is attributed to the Yellow Emperor, it was

actually written by several authors over a long period of time. This book is further divided into two sections. The first is the Suwen (The Book of Plain Questions) that was written in the late Spring/Autumn and the Warring States periods. The second part is called the Lingshu (The Vital Axis) and was written sometime in the second century BC with revisions taking place up to the Han Dynasty (206BC– 25AD). This book is very significant because it was one of the earliest concise medical writings about Chinese medicine. Beyond medicine, this book also presents ethical, philosophical and religious considerations; the three themes that run through the book are the theory of Taoism, yin and yang, and the five elements.

In 1973 and 1974, excavation of the Mawangdui tombs revealed medical writing dating back to 168 BC. One text called the Wushier Bingfang (The Fifty-two Prescriptions), detailed 52 ailments and 52 prescriptions, and was the earliest written reference of Chinese pharmacology. Despite the fact that these writings are the earliest known Chinese medical references, the Huang Di Nei Jing (The Yellow Emperor's Medicine Classic) still remains one of the most respected and studied texts on Chinese medicine. Even today scholars on Chinese medicine still refer to the wealth of knowledge in this book.

Qin Dynasty 221 – 207 BC

About the Qin

Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi was the first emperor to unite China. He did this not only through force, but also by standardizing systems throughout the country such as currency, writing, weights and measurements. His policies were strict and many nobles and scholars disliked them. He put 460 scholars to death as a warning to those who considered opposing them. His most infamous act was the “burning of the books” in 213 BC. As a result, many important writings from ancient China were lost. Fortunately some texts on divination, medicine and agriculture were saved. Eventually his empire fell apart with the uprising of the peasants that led to the founding of the Han Dynasty.

Han Dynasty 206 BC – 220 AD

About the Han

Liu Bang launched the Han Dynasty in 206 BC and adopted the systems and harsh laws

initially put in place by Emperor of the Qin Dynasty. During the years of 9 to 23 AD, Wang Man founded a new dynasty called the Xin, which marked a break between the Western and Eastern Han. However, his reign was short lived and in 23 AD a rebel peasant army, the Red Eyebrows put Wang Mang to death signaling the beginning of the Eastern Han Dynasty.

During this period, nomadic tribes were constantly invading China. As a result the Western Han Dynasty expanded its empire into what is today known as Mongolia, Manchuria, Korea, South China, Vietnam, and Central Asia. The Silk Road in Northwest China was a popular communication and trade route. The Han dynasty was also a time of innovation with vast developments in the arts, philosophy and technology. For example, Zang Heng (78-139AD), a scientist and astronomer, invented the first seismograph in the 2nd century.

Development of Medical System and Education

Apprenticeships were a common means of educating new physicians in the Western Han Dynasties. These apprenticeships were mostly handed down through families because this insured a steady and reliable income. The prestige of the doctor was based on how many generations the family had been practicing medicine. In fact, one medical book from that period warned against taking medication from a physician if his family had been practicing medicine for less than three generations. The selection of apprentices was a stringent process. Even the Huang Di Nei Jing (The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine) emphasized a careful selection of the apprentice since his success would bring the master fame. Other ways of becoming a doctor included studying prescriptions made by other doctors in a pharmacy or by self-study of medicine.

Examinations to recruit qualified physicians were introduced during the Han Dynasty. Emperor Yuan in 43 BC required all his attendant officials who were doctors to be tested. Interestingly, this examination was not necessarily based on medical knowledge, but rather the ability to be "simple in life, honest in dealings, polite in social intercourse, and good in conduct."

Basic medical service on a national level was also introduced during this dynasty. Physicians were divided into two groups. There were the imperial court physicians who attended to the emperor, and the physicians who attended to the army and the common people within the provinces of the empire.

Shennong Bencaojing (Classic of Herbal Medicine)

One of the most important medical books to come out of the Han Dynasty was the Shennong Bencaojing (Classic of Herbal Medicine). The word bencao means “essential herb”. While its attributed author is the Fire Emperor discussed earlier, no one knows for sure who wrote it. What is known is that it was written between the 1st and 2nd century BC, and is considered to be the earliest complete Chinese pharmacopoeia reference.



Shennong Bencaojing
(Classic of Herbal Medicine)

This book lists a total of 365 Chinese medicines from which 252 were of plant origin, 67 from animals, and 46 from minerals. Each medicine was divided into one of three categories. The superior category included 120 medicines, which were considered to be non-toxic and contain invigorating effects to preserve vitality or prolong life. One of the most famous herbs in this category is ginseng (*Panax ginseng*). The second category included average medicines of which 120 were listed. Medicines in this category were used to prevent illness and restore the individual's vitality. However, the medicines listed here containing herbs such as Chinese angelica (*Angelica sinensis*) and ephedra (*mahuang*) could sometimes be toxic and should be used carefully for certain ailments. The third category included 125 inferior medicines that were considered to be toxic with side effects, and were specifically used for therapeutic purposes to treat diseases. Croton (*Croton tiglium*) is an example of an herb in this category which helps to relax the bowels, relieve edema (swelling) or eliminate phlegm evils.



Ginseng

Superior category



Chinese angelica

the second category



Ephedra



Croton tiglium

The third category

Prominent Physicians of the Han Dynasty

During the Han Dynasty several prominent physicians emerged. Chunyu Yi (215-167 BC) was the first doctor to keep “medical records” on the patients he treated. Guo Yu, who was the court physician of Emperor He, and Fu Weng were two doctors of the first century AD who were renowned for their skills in acupuncture and moxibustion.

Zhang Zhongjing also known as Zhang Ji (150~219AD) was considered to be a ‘sage of medicine.’ He penned a book called *Shanghan Zabinglun* (Discourse on Fevers and Miscellaneous Illnesses), which dealt with the treatment of many febrile conditions. The book contains

six parts, which correspond to the six pairs of meridians. It is significant because it discusses diagnosis and treatment methods based on an assessment of the symptoms of different pathological conditions. Later in the Song dynasty (960-1279AD), his book was rewritten and divided into two books called *Shanghanlun* (Treatise on Febrile Diseases) and *Jinkui Yaolue* (Summary from the Golden Chest).



A copy from *Shanghan zabinglun*
(Discourse on Fevers and Miscellaneous Illnesses)

Hua Tuo (141-208 AD) was a contemporary of Zhang Zhongjing. He traveled from town to town



Hua Tuo

treating patients and learning from other doctor's practices. He is famous for his skill as a surgeon and his use of anesthesia. The anesthesia was given as a powder called mafeisan that was dissolved in a fermented drink before performing surgery. It has been suggested the powder may have been hemp since its uses were unknown at that time. Besides performing surgeries, Hua Tuo also recommended the use of physical exercises for his patients. He devised movements that were similar to the movements of five different animals. These were the tiger, deer, bear, monkey and bird. It is said that one of his disciples Wu Pu lived to be 90-years-

old due to these exercises. Another of Hua Tuo's disciples called Fan A was a great acupuncturist. He devised methods to extend its use to the back and thorax. Unfortunately many of Hua Tuo's works have been lost, and surgery became unpopular because most Chinese beliefs and laws of the time did not look favorably on it.

Dong Feng was another well-known physician who practiced towards the end of the Han Dynasty during the reign of Emperor Xian.



Physical exercises – tiger, deer, bear, monkey and bird movements.

About the Chinese Middle Ages

Renowned French, Chinese historian Jacques Gernet called the period from 200-581 AD, the Chinese Middle Ages. The Han Dynasty ended with the military taking over China and splitting the country into three kingdoms.

During this time, the Northern Chinese were considered to be more militant and less sophisticated than their Southern counterparts. At the same time, Buddhism was rapidly spreading throughout all parts of China. The Northern Wei especially welcomed the religion's presence because it was seen as a way to consolidate power. Buddhism also led to the influx of Indian culture into China.

As a result, knowledge concerning mathematics, astronomy and medicine flourished during this period. Many monks had medical knowledge because it was a necessity when making long pilgrimages to be able to administer medical care when no doctors were available.

Development of Physician Education

During this time, medical education was elevated to a higher standard. In 443 AD, Qin

Cheng-zu, an imperial medical officer, petitioned Emperor Wen of the Song Kingdom to appoint physicians to teach medical students. It was the first time the government assigned teachers to educate students on Chinese medicine. Although the Imperial Academy was established in 124 BC, it mainly focused on teaching subjects such as literature, philosophy and administration. Little emphasis was placed on medicine. However, by 493 AD, the Imperial Academy had expanded to include lectureships and chairs for teaching Chinese medicine.

Acupuncture and Moxibustion

Acupuncture, known as zhenjiu in Chinese, was widely accepted by the Chinese population. Its use may have originated out of the Chinese fascination of relieving referred pain, defined as pain that manifests in one part of the body but originating from somewhere else. Many of the physicians mentioned previously such as Qin Yueren, Zhang Zhongjing, Hua Tuo, and Fan A used this therapy when treating patients. The Lingshu (The Vital Axis), a book from the Huang Di Nei Jing (The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine) has a whole section dedicated to the use of acupuncture.



Meridian with acupuncture points

Zhenjiu Jiayijing (The ABC of Acupuncture and Moxibustion)

The man who wrote what is considered the bible of acupuncture and moxibustion was Huangfu Mi (215~282 AD). His biggest contribution was a book called Zhenjiu Jiayijing (The ABC of Acupuncture and Moxibustion), which is considered to be the earliest complete reference guide to acupuncture and moxibustion. This book starts by discussing TCM concepts involving anatomy, and physiology and progresses to describing the theory of meridians. In addition, it outlines the location of the acupuncture points, discusses the techniques used to manipulate the needles, and describes the clinical applications and therapeutic benefits of both acupuncture and moxibustion.