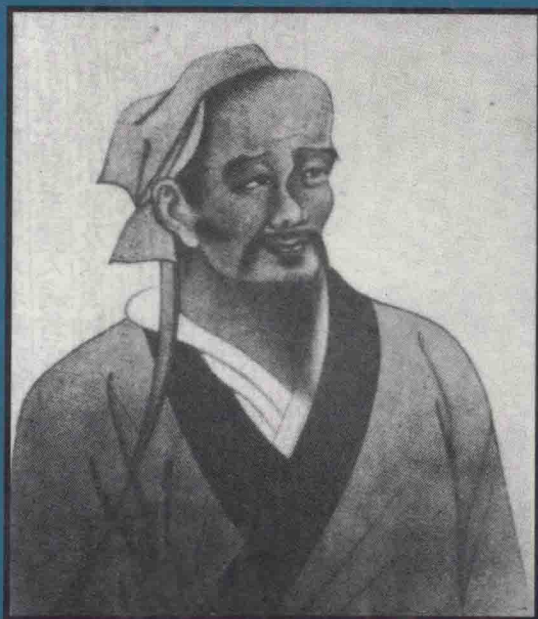


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Master Hua's Classic Of The Central Viscera

A Translation of Hua Tuo's *Zhong Zang Jing*



by Hua Tuo
Yang Shou-zhong



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Editor's Preface

This book is an English language version of *Hua Shi Zhong Zang Jing* (Master Hua's Classic of the Central Viscera). The Master Hua alluded to in the title is none other than the famous Hua Tuo. Hua Tuo is to Chinese, perhaps, the single best known of all Chinese doctors throughout history. More well-known as a folk hero than the Yellow Emperor, Bian Que, or Zhang Zhong-jing, every Chinese person can tell at least one story about Hua Tuo.

Hua Tuo was born in Hao County in Anhui Province. His year of birth is most often given as 110 CE. Hua Tuo studied and mastered various classics but especially bent his attention to matters of medicine and health. He studied formally under the famous physician Xu Zhou and tirelessly continued his medical studies by himself. Eventually, Hua obtained profound medical knowledge in a number of specialties, including internal medicine, gynecology, pediatrics, acupuncture, and surgery. In fact, Hua Tuo is credited with being the first surgeon in the history of the world to do intra-abdominal surgery under general anesthesia. More formulas contain Hua's name than probably any other single Chinese doctor — formulas such as *Hua Tuo Shen Gao* (Hua Tuo's Divine Paste), *Hua Tuo Tong Bian Fang* (Hua Tuo's Free the Stools Formula), and *Hua Tuo Bai Xue Dan* (Hua Tuo's White Snow Elixir). In addition, other famous formulas such as *Shi Xiao San* (Excite Laughter Powder) and *An Tai Fang* (Calm the Fetus Formula) are believed to have been composed by Hua even though his name does not appear as part of theirs.

Hua Tuo is also credited with creating the Five Animal Frolics. This is a system of *qi gong* based on mimicking the movements

of five different animals. It is believed that its regular practice can prevent disease and prolong life. It is perhaps the oldest continually practiced system of *qi gong* in the world today. Another creation of Hua's was a system of self-massage and stretching to limber up the joints. This was a series of specific movements done in a set regime. Further, Hua Tuo is believed to have been the first doctor to recommend bleeding *Wei Zhong* (Bl 40) for the treatment of various ailments including low back pain.

Aficionados of the Chinese martial arts are likely to be familiar with the story of the great general Guan Yu. Pierced by a poisoned arrow in his arm during a battle, General Guan calmly sat playing chess as he allowed a surgeon to clean his flesh down to the bone to remove necrosis. This event is a popular historical subject in Chinese art. The doctor who performed this surgery was none other than Hua Tuo. However, although Hua Tuo was the best known doctor of his day, even being called a *shen yi* or divine physician, he did not seek fame or fortune. When Prime Minister Chen Gui-zeng of Pei and Minister of Defense Huang Wan recommended and tried to persuade Hua to assume government position, Hua Tuo refused. Rather he preferred tending to the medical needs of the people of Jiangsu and Shandong.

As we will see when reading the book contained herein, Hua Tuo's practice was characterized by economy. He tended to use only a very few medicinals per formula or acupoints per treatment even in complex and critical diseases. This seems to go along with Hua's straightforward and even blunt character. These traits also contributed to Hua's death in 207. Called to treat the despot Cao Cao who was suffering from headaches, Hua diagnosed a brain tumor and straightforwardly recommended brain surgery. Cao Cao thought that this was a ruse in order to assassinate him on the operating table and had Hua

Tuo thrown in prison and eventually executed. And that brings us to the history of this book.

Whenever a Chinese tells a story about Hua Tuo, they not infrequently conclude with the statement, "Isn't it a pity that such a great doctor did not leave behind any written records of his theories and techniques?" And usually the listeners of this tale will shake their heads in centuries old agreement. This is because, for a thousand years or more, Chinese scholars have been unanimous in their belief that Hua Tuo burned all his books while in prison. The story goes that just before his execution, Hua asked his jailer to become his disciple and receive from him his written medical testament, saying that the material it contained would save many lives. However, being himself afraid of Cao Cao and behaving somewhat analogously to Simon Peter on the night of Christ's crucifixion, the jailer refused the offer. At that, Hua Tuo asked the jailer to bring him some fire and consigned the writings to the flames. Thus it has been repeated over and over by generation after generation that Hua Tuo burned *all* his books before his death.

This story appears in Chen Suo's *San Guo Zhi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*) in a section entitled, "The Biography of Hua Tuo". Chen lived only some twenty years after Hua and, therefore, it can be assumed that he had firsthand and reputable knowledge about Hua Tuo. Specifically, what Chen Suo says is:

In prison, Hua Tuo showed one *juan* [or book] to the jailer, saying, "This is a book that can bring life again to people. The jailer, however, dared not accept it, fearing violation of the law. Not insisting further, Hua Tuo asked for some fire and committed the book to the flames.

In Chinese, a famously terse and often ambiguous language, one does not use numerals unless one means to be absolutely specific. In particular, Chen Suo is known as an especially terse

and laconic writer. If Chen Suo wrote one *juan*, he meant just one *juan*. The word *juan* originally referred to scrolls made from bamboo slats. In premodern Chinese texts, this word is used similar to the English word volume. A book might be made up of one or even scores of *juan*. Therefore, a single *juan* hardly implies the life-time written product of a famous scholar-doctor like Hua Tuo. How many imprisoned literati in all cultures and throughout history have written a book to occupy their time and as their last testament to the world? But that in no way means that such a book is all such a person wrote in their entire life.

It seems quite strange that scores of generations of erudite Chinese scholars could so have misinterpreted this single line. However, it is this story which is used to bolster the long held opinion in the minds of Chinese that Hua Tuo left no written records behind. Thus this book, *Master Hua's Classic of the Central Viscera* has been held as a spurious forgery for many centuries. Since the above line from Chen Suo is, in fact, flimsy evidence of this assertion, it is no wonder that in the scholastic literature other arguments denying the authenticity of this book have been advanced. One of the main, seemingly corroborating pieces of evidence advanced by proponents of the belief that this work is a forgery is its preface by Deng Chu-zhong.

Deng Chu-zhong says that he is the grandson of Hua Tuo. He then goes on to recount a very interesting story of how Hua Tuo and then he himself came by the information contained in this book. As the reader will see when they come to this preface below, Hua Tuo supposedly received this book as a revelation from two immortals while wandering alone in the mountains. These immortals began by saying that Hua Tuo should not be given this book because he was not humble and compassionate enough, presumably knowing that Hua was hidden within ear shot. When Hua Tuo burst out that he truly and ardently desired the medical knowledge contained in this book, the two

immortals charged him with certain moral obligations and made certain prophecies about his life. Hua then received the book and became a great doctor.

Years after Hua's death, Deng Chu-zhong had a prophetic dream about this book suggesting that it lay hidden and ignored in a box among Hua Tuo possessions. Deng asked his mother about such a box and when he opened it, sure enough this book was inside. Feeling that he himself was not a worthy receptacle of the information it contained, he passed it on to his son.

It is this preface which seems to be one of the key sticking points in the crawl of generations of Chinese scholars who have refused to accept this book as an authentic work by Hua Tuo. It must be remembered that the scholar-doctors who are responsible for the vast majority of Chinese medical literature were Confucian. Reading Deng's account, one is presented with a mythic archetype common to much Daoist literature. The story of a solitary seeker chancing upon some immortal or god in some mountain or jungle fastness and receiving from that spiritual personage some special, revealed wisdom is an oft-repeated one. It is common to Central Asian shamanism and the Chinese Daoism and Tibetan Buddhism which, in varying degrees, both arose from this shamanism.

Those familiar with Tibetan Buddhism, for instance, will recognize in Deng's story all the typical elements common to Tibetan stories of revealed knowledge. The candidate is in retreat or wandering in some solitary fastness, often in meditation or dream. They over-hear some god or goddess speaking about them, often seemingly derogatorily. This is intended to remove any remaining traces of egotism or hubris in the candidate. Then the candidate is not only given the revealed knowledge but is also charged with instructions on their personal moral behavior and injunctions as to the propagation of the revelation. In the Tibetan tradition, such revelations are called *terma* or hidden

treasures. In Deng's case, his tale is analogous to the species of *terma* Tibetans call *yang ter* or twice hidden. Hua Tuo first received it in the mountains and then Deng received it again in a dream after it had lain hidden again for some years.

In all probability, many Confucian scholars must have been hostile to the idea of such mystically revealed knowledge. Their ideal was wisdom gained through years and years of reading and scholarship. That someone could suddenly be the receptacle of some special knowledge imparted through a means other than reading and scholarship would have been a slap in the face of many Confucian scholars and a potential repudiation of their lifetime pursuits. Nonetheless, cultures throughout the world have believed and do believe to this day that individuals can gain special knowledge, including knowledge about medical matters and techniques, through vision, trance, channeling, and intuition. Tibetan medical students to this day go into retreat to gain special insight and skills in such otherwise difficult to learn aspects of their art as pulse diagnosis. American Indian healers still conduct their vision quests. And there are tens of thousands of American patients who feel they have been healed by techniques supposedly channeled to Edgar Cayce.

Whether immortals, gods, and goddesses exist objectively is a profound and difficult metaphysical and epistemological question. Nevertheless, that one can gain special knowledge through mystical vision or intuition is something that has been documented over and over again throughout world history. Sometimes, persons who are the recipient of such revelations were previously ignorant in the field of the revelation. Just as often, however, they are persons who have spent their entire lives studying and thinking only to receive in a flash an entire new theory or system. One has only to think of Newton and even Einstein to know that such sudden bursts of inspiration do occur even to scholars and scientists and that such revelations

do not diminish the stature of the person to whom they are revealed. Rather, they often confirm or complete that stature.

I believe that it was Confucian bias which accounts for this book's long being considered apocryphal by Confucian scholar-doctors or *ru yi*. Kenneth DeWoskin, in *Doctors, Diviners and Magicians of Ancient China* in a chapter entitled "Biographies of the *Fang Shi*", identifies Hua Tuo as a *fang shi*. *Fang shi* literally means a master of prescriptions. However, DeWoskin uses this term to identify masters of spiritual methods of healing. He places these *fang shi* midway in the historical development from *wu shi* or shamans to *dao shi* or Daoist adepts and further identifies Hua Tuo as one of these *fang shi*. Historically, it must also be remembered that Hua Tuo lived right at the time that Daoism arose in China as a distinct religion. Zhang Dao-ling, the first pope of religious Daoism, had his own revelatory vision during the lifetime of Hua Tuo.

Whether Hua Tuo can be considered a Daoist himself is a moot point. At the very least, he did live at a time when, as Joseph Needham points out, there was a conflict between the Confucian scholastics and the intuitive iconoclasts. However, it is indisputable that Hua Tuo has been canonized as a Daoist saint retroactively. Tao Hong-jing, the great Daoist patriarch and Chinese doctor who compiled the *Ben Cao Jing Ji Zhu* (*The Commentary on [Shen Nong's] Ben Cao*), makes one of the earliest mentions of Hua Tuo's Five Animal Frolics as a Daoist practice in his *Yang Sheng Yan Ming Lun* (*Treatise on Lengthening Life and Cultivating One's Nature*), a book included in the *Dao Zang* or *Daoist Canon*. Likewise, the *Tai Shan Lao Jun Yang Sheng Jue* (*The Most High Lord Lao's Techniques for Nourishing Life*), another Daoist canonical work, also attributes the Five Animal Frolics to Hua Tuo and considers these part of Daoist self-cultivation. Further, the 16th century *Chi Feng Sui* (*Red Phoenix Marrow*), a collection of Daoist longevity techniques, mentions Hua Tuo and his Five Animal Frolics as part of Daoism. And finally, the

Collection of Biographies of Daoist Sages identifies Hua Tuo as a Daoist, even if historically this may not be totally accurate.

The point I am making here is that Chinese Daoists most definitely have claimed Hua Tuo as their own. His statue appears on Daoist altars and there is even a system of Daoist medical divination called *Hua Tuo Qian* where the devotee first supplicates Hua Tuo and then shakes a tube of bamboo slats on which herbal formulas are inscribed. Whichever one falls out of the tube first is believed to have been indicated by the divine doctor, Master Hua, as appropriate for the supplicant to take. Ken Cohen, one of the few Westerners to have been initiated as a Daoist priest and a contemporary teacher of the Five Animal Frolics, not only claims Hua Tuo as a Daoist divinity but also says that the exact same story about two immortals in a cave is told within his lineage concerning Hua Tuo's receipt or discovery of the Five Animal Frolics.

The Daoist nature of this book is borne out by the text itself and especially in the final section titled Book Three. This last book or chapter is composed of sixty-eight formulas and treatments. First of all, many of these formulas' names include reference to immortals (*xian*) and fairies (*ling*), such as *Tian Xian Yuan* (Celestial Immortal's Pills). Others' names make reference to known shaman or proto-Daoists, such as Zuo Ci in *Zuo Ci Zhen Ren Qian Jin Di Huang Jian* (True Person Zuo Ci's Thousand [Tael] of Gold Rehmanniae Decoction). There is even a formula named after the famous Daoist Ge Hong's grandfather, Ge Yuan, who is himself now identified as a great Daoist practitioner. In addition, a great many formulas are called *dan* or elixirs, and the compounding of elixirs is a well-known Daoist endeavor as we will see below.

Secondly, many of the formulas contain the stones and metals which became a part of Daoist alchemy. The compounding of an external elixir (*wai dan*) has been a concern of Daoists and proto-

Daoists for at least two millennia. Typically, such external elixirs contain such otherwise poisonous ingredients as mercury, cinnabar, realgar, lead, alum, and sulphur, all of which are common ingredients in the formulas of this section. In addition, these formulas contain very elaborate and detailed methods for processing these ingredients, presumably to make them less toxic. This processing is also consistent with Daoists' long held interest in and pioneering of chemistry in their search for external elixirs.

Third, the processing of several formulas in this section contain either sympathetic magical injunctions, such as manufacturing the medicine outside "of the sight of fowl, dogs, and women", austerities, purification processes, meditation, or prayers and incantations to the "divine doctors". This is a far cry from modern TCM but is consistent with both *wu shi* and *dao shi* religico-medical practices.

And fourth, an otherwise inordinately large proportion of the formulas in this section concern themselves with either prolonging youth or resurrecting one from the jaws of death. This too belies the common Daoist preoccupation with physical immortality. As we shall see below, Hua Tuo is credited today with being the first and most famous Chinese doctor to emphasize prognosis. Although this can be and certainly in modern materialist China is seen from a purely secular point of view, this interest in the time of death seems to me an extension in this Daoist concern with avoiding or postponing death. When read from this perspective, all such sections in this book dealing with prognosing death appear quite similar to the Omens of Death section within Tibetan Buddhist medicine. In Tibetan Buddhism, human life is seen as the unique vehicle for spiritual growth and perfection. If one knows in advance when they are going to die, they can take precautions to avert death if possible. If not possible, they can redouble their practice of self-cultivation, thus maximizing this life's spiritual progress, or they can

begin practicing certain yogic techniques associated with the process of dying itself.

Based on Deng's preface and an analysis of the contents of this book, I think it is fair to say that this is one of the earliest Daoist or proto-Daoist books within the Chinese medical literature. If written by Hua Tuo in the Han Dynasty, then this book is a proto-Daoist Chinese medical classic. If written later and only attributed to Hua Tuo, it can be seen as a most definite example of a Daoist lineage of Chinese medicine. In either case, this book is not part of the strictly Confucian Chinese medical literature, even though its author does use theories, such as five phases theory, shared by the Confucian *ru yi*.

In China today, those responsible for shaping TCM mostly belong to or at least continue the Confucian lineage of Chinese medicine. Although dialectic materialism has replaced Confucianism as the state philosophy, there is still a bias against the role of Daoism in recounting the development of Chinese medicine. Although the non-religious medical theories of *fang shi* and Daoists such as Hua Tuo, Ge Hong, Sun Si-miao, Tao Hong-jing, and Liu Wan-su are mentioned in classes and books on the history of Chinese medicine taught at TCM colleges and published in the PRC, the role of Daoism, its philosophy and practice, is never discussed or considered relevant. In fact, in 1983, when I was a student at the Shanghai College of TCM, the party line was that the period from the late Han through the Tang Dynasties was a time of religious superstition which worked directly against the further development of Chinese medicine.

Recently, in a lecture in the Netherlands at an international acupuncture and Oriental medicine convention, Ted Kaptchuk analyzed the contents of Sun Si-miao's *Qian Jin Yi Fang* (*Supplement to the Formulas [Worth a] Thousand [Tael] of Gold*). In that lecture, Dr. Kaptchuk compared a recent Chinese biography of

Sun Si-miao hailing him as an opponent of superstition, to the fact that large parts of the above mentioned work are devoted to detailed instructions on incantation, charms, and exorcism. Dr. Kaptchuk's point was that the current regime has simply attempted to rewrite the history of Chinese medicine to fit their own ideas about truth and reality. This to me is none other than a continuation of the old argument between the Confucianists and intuitive iconoclasts mentioned above, and I think this argument has played a part in how the *Hua Shi Zhong Zang Jing* has been seen by Confucian *ru yi* for the last thousand years.

Whatever the case may be, not long ago, the Ministry of Health & Hygiene in the People's Republic of China funded a research project which enlisted the aid of numerous scholars. These scholars were charged with the task of going through 10,000 premodern books on Chinese medicine in an attempt to identify those most deserving of further research and study. This committee eventually came up with a list of 11 premodern books of primary importance to the history and study of Chinese medicine. On this list, the *Hua Shi Zhong Zang Jing* appears in the company of the *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen* (*The Yellow Emperor's Internal Classic: Simple Questions*), *Ling Shu Jing* (*The Classic of the Spiritual Axis*), and *Zhen Jiu Jia Yi Jing* (*The ABC Classic of Acupuncture/Moxibustion*).

Along with this state-endorsed elevation in importance of the *Zhong Zang Jing* has come numerous attempts to authenticate this work as Hua Tuo's. Contemporary scholars in the People's Republic have pointed out that Deng's preface is not found in the earliest extant versions of the *Zhong Zang Jing*. Thus they have often taken the tack of repudiating this problematic preface. At least one such repudiation of which I am aware says that Deng could not have been related to Hua since no true Chinese grandson would slander their forebear by even mentioning the immortals' initial criticisms of Hua. This line of reasoning assumes that Deng abided by Confucian standards of

filial piety, when the wording of his preface clearly suggests that he was a practicing Daoist. It is not even clear to me that this Deng was talking about a physical relationship to Hua. In my mind, he might have been speaking of his place in a spiritual lineage in which Hua Tuo was a *shi fu* or master/father. Ken Cohen also feels that this is a very likely possibility.

Further, this line of reasoning is naive in terms of this story being a mythic archetype common to ancient Central Asian beliefs which still survive to this day on the fringes of the People's Republic and in overseas Chinese communities. Other attempts to authenticate this book focus on explaining textual chronological anomalies. These are easily explained as due to different standards of scholarship in ancient China and the fact that books such as this were passed down in hand-copied versions for hundreds of years before they were first printed.

Although, to Chinese, the issue of this book's truly having been written by Hua Tuo may be important, this does not seem such a crucial problem to me as a Western reader and practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Hua Tuo is such an important folk hero to the Chinese, anything having to do with him is a matter of serious debate and research. But, as Li Cong-fu, editor of the Chinese version from which this English translation has been made, says:

In evaluating works ancient or modern and in deciding whether a medical work should be passed down or not, what should be of paramount importance is its instructional value. If it presents false knowledge, false learning, no matter what it is, it should not be passed down. If it imparts true knowledge, true learning, even a forged work merits propagation. That the *Zhong Zang Jing*, though eclipsed for no other reason than the assertion that it was written under a false name, has lived more than 1,000 years cannot be accounted for but by...the fact that it is a medical classic most profound in its

physiology, pathology, the design of its formulas, and its pharmacology after the *Nei Jing* and *Nan Jing* (*Classic of Difficulties*) and that it has manifestly had a great impact on later generations.

I believe that for Western practitioners this is the most important issue in presenting this work. The question is, "Does *Master Hua's Classic on the Central Viscera* contain useful and instructive information on the study and practice of Chinese medicine?" For me, the answer is, "Most definitely yes."

For instance, in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the *ba gang* or eight principles or parameters play an important role in the categorization of patterns and in the process of diagnosis. In modern TCM, these eight parameters are internal and external, hot and cold, vacuity and repletion, and yin and yang. As medical concepts, all of these find their classical origins in the *Nei Jing*. However, only in the *Zhong Zang Jing* are these for the first time integrated into a coherent system and related together under a discussion of the viscera and bowels.

Granted, Hua Tuo's eight parameters are slightly different from our modern eight. Hua Tuo's eight are composed of vacuity and repletion, cold and hot, life and death, and favorable and unfavorable prognoses. However, this only underscores the fact that Hua Tuo placed more importance on prognosis than any other doctor in the history of Chinese medicine. In the *Zhong Zang Jing*, there is a wealth of instructive information on the process of prognosing disease.

This helps bear out the credibility that Hua Tuo could, upon examination, foretell the survival or death of his patients. For instance, once a patient went to Hua Tuo and was told, "Your disease has become chronic and you should undergo abdominal surgery. However, even that will only succeed in lengthening your life by not more than 10 years." The patient, being in great