Medicine and Astrology:  
Their Encounter on a Cross-cultural Occasion

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Introduction

Many cultures have witnessed a link between medicine and astrology. The tie between healing and astrology can be attributed to the sharing of some common ground insofar as medicine and astrology have often shared the idea of a correspondence between the macro- and micro-cosmos, or more precisely, between the heavens and the body. In medieval Europe, medical astrology prevailed for several centuries, and, despite the overwhelming acceptance of what we now call modern biomedicine, it has still not died out completely.1 For example, in India today, physicians still draw on astrology in healing patients.2

In China, too, an influential and long-term interaction between medicine and astrology exists, although Chinese practitioners have not relied as heavily on astrology as their Indian peers. The medical technique Taisu mai 太 素 脉 (Grand Plane Pulses) is said to enable the physician to predict a patient’s fortune as well as his or her health. This technique was practiced inside the Imperial Palace and can be found in Imperial compilations of medical texts.3 Outside of the Palace, there also exists evidence that indicates that some medical thinkers of the past considered astrology important to the practice of medicine. As the great physician Sun Simiao 孫 思 邈 (seventh century) mentions in the beginning of his Beiji qianjin yaofang 備 急 千 金 要 方 (Essential Prescriptions Worth a

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Thousand, for Urgent Need), in order to become a great physician (dayi 大醫) it is essential to master Confucian and Taoist canons, the Book of Changes (Yijing 易經) and astrology.4

In the past, medical theorists have proposed inauspicious geomancy or astrology as the etiology for such serious diseases as leprosy.5 The famous physician Wang Kentang 王肯堂 (1549-1613) indicates his belief in geomancy and astrology in his Yugangzhai bizhu 鬱岡齋筆麈 (Jottings of the Study of Repose Hill). He records a case in which a specific disease’s occurrence can be predicted by geomantic theory.6 Unfortunately, due to the limits of our available sources, it is not possible to know Wang Kentang’s exact thinking on the interplay between medicine and astrology.

Despite the paucity of evidence in medical manuals regarding how knowledge of astrology could make one a great physician, there do exist some indications, such as Sun Simiaoj’s suggestion that physicians could use fate-calculating techniques to predict illnesses. Yuan Shushan 袁樹珊 (b. 1881), a minor physician but prominent fortune teller in the early twentieth century, provides such examples in pre-modern China. His works and commentaries on fortune-telling theories were a must for readers during the Republican period (1912-1949), and even today publishers continue to re-issue them. Five of his astrological cases mention a customer’s health disorders. In three of the cases, Yuan warned that the customer should keep an eye on his own fate in order to secure better health; for the others, based on a Five Phase combination of their horoscopes, Yuan advised an old woman to pay particular attention to her lungs, liver and blood in her forties, and also discussed problems in the lungs and liver of a boy.7 These cases perhaps also provide a glimpse of the patients’ views of medicine and astrology.

Ideas integrating medicine and astrology are clearly still alive today. One does not need to delve too deeply in bookstores in Taiwan to find texts on this topic. Some astrologers aim at establishing a general theory of a link between medicine and astrology and have collected practical cases supporting this position. Utilizing these cases, generalist writers have also drawn on kinds of correlative theory in order to explain why a particular person has been stricken by a certain kind of disease, and then try to convince their readers that such diseases could be predicted by the horoscope.8

Here I would like to present two interesting modern examples that refer to the questions I address in this paper. One is by Zhong Yiming 鍾義明 who uses

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4 Beiji qianjin yaofang 備急千金要方, p. 1.
5 For example, see Jiewei yuansou 解圍元薮, p. 575.
6 Yugangzhai bizhu 鬱岡齋筆麈, juan 2, pp. 53a, 54a, 55b.
7 Mingli tanyuan 命理探原, pp. 377, 390, 400, 381, 389.
8 For example, Zhong Yiming (1993), Bai Hanzhong (1997).
the categorization of Fire to explain a case of stroke (zhongfeng中風).9 His reasoning is that in modern medicine stroke is recognized as vascular trouble in the brain, while in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) Fire would be related to vascular problems. However, as its name suggests, TCM attributes this disease to Wind, accordingly tying it to the category of Wood. So Zhong’s categorization is related to modern Western, rather than traditional Chinese medical thinking, though he bases his discussions mainly on traditional Chinese medicine.

Another example is that of Li Guangpu 李光浦, who uses an evil star categorized to be Earth to explain why he suffered from large intestine problems during his youth, which he generalizes as a gastro-intestinal disease.10 Again the linkage of gastro- and intestinal disease is a modern classification of disease. In the classification of traditional Chinese medicine the category of Earth corresponds to diseases of spleen and stomach, and the correct classification of a disease in the large intestine would thus be Metal.

Rather than faulting the logic of their diagnoses, I would prefer to draw a lesson from these two examples. They demonstrate, I believe, a basic problem with disease classification when the diviner has more than one system in mind. Disease classification is a fundamental issue linking medicine to astrology, because it maps the parallelism of the human and astral bodies part by part, and accordingly crystallizes the correspondence between the macro- and micro-cosmos. Classification being a cultural issue, the conflict between classifications shown in these two examples demonstrates the jarringly different medical and therefore cultural systems, one from traditional China and the other from the contemporary West.

The modern epoch is not the first time the people of China have experienced such complex cross-cultural encounters. In past millennia the Chinese have absorbed influences from other civilizations, especially from India and Central Asia. In this paper, I will discuss ideas of disease prediction from the book Guolao xingzong 果老星宗 (Zhang Guo’s Astral Body, 1593). This work provides material for an excellent discussion of cross-cultural influence because, as historians of science have pointed out, it contains Indian elements as well as the sediments of several hundred years of Chinese input.11 It thus permits the consideration of disease classification as a result of cultural amalgamation. Furthermore, there are several predictive astrological cases in the book’s appendix that allow for a discussion of the relation between theory and practice. Through such a discussion, I would like to examine the question of to which heaven the Chinese body was expected to respond by practitioners when Western astrology was used to predict the illnesses of Chinese people. In so doing the paper will explore how Chinese astrologers dealt with the incongruities and tensions inherent in these different cultural systems.

11 Cf., e.g., He Bingyu (1993).
Guolao xingzong: the Book

As Richard Smith points out, Chinese fate-calculating techniques show a variety of forms. Traditional Chinese classifications would categorize these techniques under astrology and fate-calculation (xingming bu 星命部). Here Chinese astrology and the Four Pillars (sizhu 四柱, also well-known as bazi 八字) tradition form the mainstream of Chinese fate-calculation. However, unlike the Four Pillars, which uses the abstract concept of stems and branches (ganzi 干支) as its foundation, Chinese astrology’s main elements are the Twelve Zodiacs, the twenty-eight stars (of the lunar lodges), and the stars of the so-called Seven Luminaries and Four Surpluses (qizheng siyu 七政四餘). The latter consist of the major seven luminaries - the Sun, the Moon, and the five planets Jupiter, Venus, Mars, Saturn, and Mercury - plus the four imaginary astral bodies considered to be produced by their surplus qi (yuqi 餘氣): Rahu (Luohou 羅孚), Ketu (Jidu 計都), comet (bo 孛), and Purple qi (ziqi 紫氣). But while the term qizheng can be found in the Confucian classic Shangshu 尚書 (Books of Documents) of late antiquity, astronomical historians have shown that the tradition of the Twelve Zodiacs and siyu was introduced into China by Buddhist monks and Indian astronomers during the medieval period.

It is not surprising, then, that historians of science have long noticed the Western influence on the Guolao xingzong. Joseph Needham, for instance, included one of its horoscopes into his huge work Science and Civilisation in China and commented on its Hellenistic elements. More specifically, Yabuti Kiyoshi 藪內清 pointed out that the form of the horoscope of the Guolao xingzong coincided with the late Tang poet Du Mu’s 杜牧 (803-852) description of his own horoscope predicted by an Inner Asian astrologer. Placing the issue in a larger context of East-West cultural communication, Yano Michio 矢野道雄 quotes a horoscope in his history of the transmission of astrology from India to Japan by Buddhist monks. Taking a more critical stance about the idea that Japan had faithfully preserved the tradition passed down from ancient times, Ho Peng Yoke 何丙郁 attributed the Guolao astrology to the Western tradition and argued for the possibility of a transformation of astrology by local culture. Moreover, he encouraged scholars to undertake research on its influence upon today’s

13 For instance, the Gujin tushu jicheng 采用 this classification which comprises all the learning discussed in this paper. Cf. also Chen Yongzheng (1994), p. 66.
prevailing astrology *Ziwei doushu* (紫微斗数, *Astrology of the Purple Forbidden Enclosure*). 18

Scholars in traditional China were also aware of the Western influence on Chinese astrology. Evidence can be found in the “Monograph of Bibliography” (“Yiwenzhi” 藝文志) in the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (*The New History of the Tang [Dynasty]*). The compilers point out that the astrology is translated from the canon *Duliyusijing* 都利聿斯經 (*Tetrabiblos*) which was transmitted from Inner Asia to China during the Zhenyuan 貞元 reign-period (785-804). 19 In spite of their erudition, traditional scholars did not reveal whether the astrology of their time faithfully followed their Western rootstock. The fact, however, that these texts had been transmitted from abroad opened the door for disagreements in interpretation.

One reason that I have chosen the *Guolao xingzong* for discussion is that at least some information about its origin is available. The version I use is from the *Yishu dian* 藝術典 (Books of Arts and Crafts) section of the *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 (*Encyclopaedia Collected from Sources Old and New; 1735*), with the title *Zhang Guo xingzong* 張果星宗 (*Zhang Guo’s Astral Body*). 20 I have discovered that it is largely based on another version with a preface written in 1593 by Han Zhuo 韓擢 of Nanjing 南京, with only slight differences in the division of scrolls (*juan*). According to Han, the compiler of this version was his contemporary Lu Wei 陸位, a practitioner and writer on astrology in Southeast China. This preface reveals that there were several rival astrological schools survived together in the Southeast China then. 21 Apart from *Guolao xingzong*, Lu compiled several other treatises on astrology that can be found listed in the “Monograph of Bibliography” (“Yiwenzhi” 藝文志) in the *Mingshi* 明史 (*History of the Ming [Dynasty]*). 22 Lu Wei’s collections and commentaries have made a key contribution to the study of astrology, because it was due to his work that the only complete astrological record of pre-modern China, the *Zhengshi xing’an* 鄭氏星案 (*Mr. Zheng’s Astrological Cases*), 23 has survived.

The inclusion of the works of earlier generations suggests that the contents of the book were written in different periods by different authors. We know that this version of the *Gelao xingzong* was compiled in 1593, but many parts of the book cannot be dated. Apart from instructions on how to set up a horoscope, the

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20 The quotations I use for this paper is from Zhang Guo xingzong 張果星宗, in Gujin tushu jicheng 古今圖書集成, Yishudian 藝術典, juan 567-585, chap. 468, p. 11a, chap 469, p. 37a (Total Page 5939-6113).
21 Guolao xingzong 果老星宗 (1999), pp. 3-4.
compilation includes many independent texts categorized as canon (jing 经),
treatise (lun 论), ode (fu 赋), song (ge 歌), secret formula (jue 訣), or astrological
case (xing’an 星 案), to give a few examples. Some of them have an author
attributed to them or can be roughly dated. Taiyin lun 太 隱 論 (Treatise on the
Moon) is such a case. It is attributed to a Zhejiang astrologer Zhou Ruoshui 周
若 水. It mentions the Chenhao 宸 濠 Rebellion of 1519, and thus the treatise’s
final version must have been written after that event. Sometimes a text reveals
the input of the work of different generations. For example, Lu Wei himself
comments on a work called Tan ming aolun 諧 命 奧 論 (Mysterious Treatise on
Fate), which is attributed to the fourteenth-century astrologer Zheng Xicheng 鄭
希 誠. Zheng appears both as an astrological practitioner and theorist, and if we
can believe the attribution, he himself commented on an even earlier work. Therefore, the book itself reflects a long process of evolution of Western astrology after it had entered China. It is, of course, somewhat removed from the
Tetrabiblos, which dates from around 800 AD, and new Chinese elements were
added piecemeal. They might have replaced some of the original texts or elimi-
nated them, but not necessarily all of them. In the following section, I will dis-

cuss some of the conflicts that developed between these new and old ideas in the
context of disease prediction.

Methods of Disease Prediction in Guolao xingzong

Several sections of the Guolao xingzong mention diseases. There are three basic
categories of disease prediction. Firstly, there is disease prediction that involves
an unlucky horoscope layout known as geju (格 局). In the fifth juan of the
book, a section dedicated to the discussion of different horoscope layouts,
twenty-two specific layouts called the “Layouts of Disease (jige 疾 格) are
listed. We are told that if a person’s horoscope contains these layouts, he will
be doomed to be crippled by, or infected with, a serious disease during his life.
Secondly, prophecies regarding certain periods of misfortune predict disasters,
including disease. These occasions are important in disease prediction, though
they have little bearing on the explanation of disease and therefore do not reflect
any corresponding relationships between a physical body and the heavens.
Thirdly, there is the prediction of specific diseases. This is the area where I will
focus most of my attention by analyzing the cross-cultural significance of these

24 Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 577, chap. 468, pp. 58b-59a (TP 6033-6034).
25 Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 575, chap. 468, pp. 50a-53a (TP 6017-6023).
26 The idea of layout is shared by most of the Chinese fate-calculating techniques. In
this juan, other layouts refer to such characterisations as gui 貴 (noble), jian 賤 (riTraf),
pin 貧 (poverty), and so on.
27 Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 571, chap. 468, p. 30a (TP 5977).
predictions. Two sections of text mention signs in the astral body that cor-
respond with disease in the human body; one discusses general principles, and the
other is a collective body of secret formulae. For the former, the key texts are the
short treatise Lun ji’e 論 疾 厥 (On disease) in juan 8,28 and Ji’e zhu lun 疾 厥
主 論 (Treatise on disease indicators) in juan 10.29 In addition, there are further
brief discussions scattered among short odes or treatises elaborating on the the-
ory of disease prediction, while secret formulae can be found in individual texts.

The major treatise, Lun ji’e, appears to give equal importance to all the three
types of disease predictions mentioned above, but does not provide specific rules
for prediction for each of them. The Ji’e zhu lun, as its name suggests, does
elaborate in much greater detail on the compatibility between astrology and
traditional Chinese medical theory. In the text, Mars and Rahu, Saturn and Ketu,
as well as Mercury and comets are categorized as Fire, Earth and Water Phases,
and are linked with the corresponding diseases of traditional Chinese medical
theory. For example, the appearance of Mars, Planet of Fire, or Rahu relates to
diseases in the visceral system of the heart, while Mercury portends to problems
in the kidneys. At the end of this treatise, the commentator remarks:

The tenor of this treatise is the same as that of the Bashiyi
nanjing 八十 一難 經 (Canon of Eighty-one Difficult
Questions). The luminaries Sun, Moon, Jupiter, Mars, Sat-
urn, Venus, and Mercury coincide with the human body’s
Five Yin Visceral Systems; this is why they can indicate
corresponding diseases.30

In other words, in Guolao astrology, rules pertaining to disease prediction are
based on the theory of Five Phases and are totally compatible with Chinese
medicine. Even Ketu and Rahu, which were originally Indian stars, once given
their Chinese identification lose their Indian characteristics and function in a
Chinese way.

Similar patterns can also be found in the individual texts. The treatise Lun
wuxing xiangke 論 五 星 相 剋 (On the Mutual Conquest of the Five Planets)
faithfully embraces the belief that Guolao astrology and Chinese medicine are
perfectly compatible. The author uses traditional Chinese medical theory only
for explaining principles that predict disease.31 Furthermore, when Lu Wei com-
ments on the Tan ming aolun, he not only manifests a devout belief in the com-
patibility of astrology with traditional medicine, but also elevates this to an illus-
trious advancement in astrological theory, thereby suggesting that the marriage

28 Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 574, chap. 468, p. 49b (TP 6016).
29 Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 576, chap. 468, p. 54b (TP 6026).
30 Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 576, chap. 468, p. 54b (TP 6026).
31 Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 577, chap. 468, p. 58b (TP 6034). The only
remnant of the original idea refers to Saturn’s causing chronic disease.
between astrology and traditional Chinese medicine is a later development. When lauding the purported author Zheng Xicheng for his contribution of connecting Guolao astrology to Chinese medical theory, he remarks:

Isn’t this man, Zheng Xicheng, another great successor to the ancient giants Li Xuzhong 李廸中, Yuan Tiangang 袁天綱, Li Qintang 李琴堂, and Monk Goupan (Goupan seng 戎判僧)? With a profound understanding of astronomy and mastery of the planets, he propounds this great theory: A human being is endowed by one’s parent’s semen and blood to have his life, just like the cosmos is endowed by Yin and Yang to engender people. Accordingly, he aligns the Five Basic Virtues with the Five Planets, and furthermore aligns the Five Planets with the Five Yin Visceral Systems, so as to predict human fortune and disease. Thereby we know astrology to be relevant to human life. It is not a trivial technique.32

Thus within the cosmos, the astral body, human organs, and virtues perfectly accord with one another. The human body corresponds to a Chinese Heaven. There is no mention at all of its Indian characteristics.

How well would this perfect compatibility work in Guolao astrology? Do other components of disease prediction, such as the secret formulae, agree with this rule? To examine these questions I surveyed the book’s secret formulae for disease prediction and classified them into a Five Phase structure on the basis of their principles. This analysis reveals several intriguing features. The most notable aspect is an imbalance in the distribution of the indicated disease names under the Five Phase structure. There are almost four times as many diseases attributed to Fire and Water phases than to Wood and Metal.33 Such an imbalanced distribution seems incongruous with the Four Pillars. In fact, even without having carried out statistical procedures, the compiler of Guolao xingzong also noticed the imbalance. The commentator attributes the imbalance to the benevolent and righteous virtues (ren yi 仁義) of Wood and Metal, which are unlikely to harm people.34 It appears that he missed one key point to this pattern, which is rooted in the original Western astrology, namely in relation to the planets Jupiter and Venus. While generally in Chinese astrology Wood and Metal bring

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32 Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 575, chap. 468, p. 50a (TP 6017).
33 This survey is based on the numbers of lines of the categorized types found in the Guolao xingzong. A more precise ratio is: Water : Fire : Wood : Metal : Earth = 43 : 44 : 10 : 21 : 30. Although the procedure cannot be considered precise, it gives at least an impression of the imbalance. A perhaps more substantial problem is that, in order to simplify the comparison, I attributed the misfortune-producing planets Ketu and Rahu to the Five Phase categories Earth and Fire respectively.
34 Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 579, chap.469, p. 8b (TP 6056).
luck, Mercury and Mars (or Ketu related to Water and Rahu related to Fire) are all evil stars that can cause disasters. This explains why considerably more diseases are attributed to Water and Fire than Wood and Metal in Chinese astrological texts.

Also worth noting is the misclassification of diseases in the secret formulae. By this I mean that some diseases have clear phase attributions in traditional Chinese medical theory, but the astrological texts link them to other phases. An example of this would be Wind diseases, which are considered Wood problems in Chinese medicine. Yet, among the formulae in the Guolao xingzong, Mars (Fire)\(^{35}\) and Mercury (Water)\(^{36}\) can all cause such problems. The commentator does not remark on these contradictions contained in the principles and practical formulae.

If one ignores Five Phase classification and looks solely at the diseases indicated by these formulae, it is obvious that some diseases are repeated time and again. The top three diseases are eye problems (mentioned 15 times), haemorrhoids (10), and the huang 黃 disease or jaundice (8). These are all serious diseases that exist among all human societies, but this does not explain why such emphasis is placed on them in the astrological texts. Interestingly, these diseases are not those on which traditional Chinese medical practitioners dwell most; moreover, the greatest scourges for Chinese doctors, such as Cold Damage Disease, are rarely mentioned in the astrological texts. In fact, the treatment of Cold Damage Disease, which has canonical status in scholarly Chinese medicine and for which is reserved a specific section of related diseases in the writings of the Ming Imperial Medical school, is not mentioned even once in the formulae.

It is worth pointing out at least tentatively that these frequently indicated diseases in the astrological texts all played a relatively important role in traditional Indian medicine. According to Fukunaga Katsumi 福永勝美, jaundice constitutes a substantial category in Indian medicine, and haemorrhoids are considered a particularly difficult disease.\(^{37}\) Sutras expressly for healing these diseases exist in the Tantric canon.\(^{38}\)

\(^{35}\) Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishu dian, juan 579, chap. 469, p. 8b (TP 6056). Here the secret formulae indicate that if a person is born during daytime and encounters Mars in the horoscope, he definitely will be doomed by the contraction of Wind-phlegm.

\(^{36}\) Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishu dian, juan 583, chap. 469, p. 27b (6094). The following paraphrase comes from the song entitled “Wind Disease” (fengji 風疾): “Why would one have the wind disease? It is because his sign of fate is occupied by Mercury”.

\(^{37}\) For the importance of these diseases in Buddhist medicine, see Fukunaga Katsumi (1961), pp. 134, 198.

\(^{38}\) Neng jing yiqie yan jibing tuo luoni jing 能 淨 一 切 眼 疾 病 陀 羅 尼 經 (Taishōzō 大 正 藏 1324), pp. 490a-490b; Foshuo liao zhibing jing 佛 說 療 病 經 (Taishōzō 1325), p. 490b-491a; Foshuo zhou mu jing 佛 說 咒 目 經 (Taishōzō 1328), p. 491b.
This probable influence from Indian medicine helps in explaining how disagreements between the classification of certain diseases in traditional Chinese medicine and their references in Guolao xingzong arose. In these cases it is difficult to find links between luminaries and disease names within Chinese theory, while reasonable explanations can be derived from Buddhist medicine. For example, the Xingge guijian zongfu 星格貴賤總賦 (General Rhapsodies on Measuring the Layouts of the Horoscope), which includes some texts about disease prediction, has a section titled Wuzang suoshu 五臟所屬 (The Categorization of the Five Yin Visceral Systems), which tries to establish a theoretical link between astrology and Chinese medicine. The author introduces some disease names under each phase category as examples. For instance, under the Wood category he chooses to mention the disease name fengchang 風腸 (Wind intestine) to represent this category. However, Fengchang by no means constitutes a model for Wind diseases in the Chinese context. When the medical texts indicate such a disease, the phrase changfeng 腸風 is generally used. In the medical manual Zhengzhi yaojue 證治要訣 (Essential Formula of Manifestation Testament) of the fourteenth century it is understood as a kind of haemorrhoids. However, in the Indian medical system, gastro-intestinal disease is classified as Wind disease. An example of such a disease that has been translated into Chinese is po chang feng 破腸風 (broken intestine wind), references to which date back to as early as the second century AD. Changfeng hardly plays a representative role for Chinese Wind diseases, but was of substantial importance in the corresponding Indian system. A possible explanation for changfeng being representative of Wind diseases is a false transplantation of the shared character feng 風; otherwise, it is difficult to explain why it was so designated.

Finally, it is worth reiterating that some correspondences between luminaries and parts of the body are in good agreement with Western astrology, but are not applicable to any Chinese medical theory. An independent text titled Yuhengjing 玉衡經 (Canon of the Celestial Sighting-tube) provides such examples. With the commentary’s help we can match body parts perfectly with the body map of corresponding stars in the Tantrist astrological sutra Qiyao rangzai jue 七曜攘災訣 (Formulae for Avoiding Calamities according to the Seven Luminaries). Here is one example:

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39 Gujin tuahu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 571, chap. 468, p. 32b (TP 5982).
40 Michuan zhengzhi yaojue 稀傳證治要訣, pp. 10577-10578.
44 Qiyao rangzai jue 七曜攘災訣 (Taishōzō 1299), p. 392b, line 29; p. 392c, line 16; and the two illustrations in p. 428b.
When comets and Rahu reside between the branches hai 亥 and zi 子, [North] hemorrhoids will occur.

The commentary reads:

Hai and zi mean the lower part of the body.45

The lodge (xiu 宿) between hai and zi is xu 虚 (Emptiness; Dhansistha). According to the body map of Qiyao rangzai jue, xu corresponds exactly to the region of the buttocks. Hence, the text is more precise than the commentary.

There is another example:

When the top of the nose turns red, that’s because Mars and the comets are guarding the direction of shen 申 (Southwest).

The commentary reads:

Si 巳 and shen mean the two shoulders.46

The commentary’s mention of si is not easily understood, and it is not clear why the commentator should use shoulders to explain the symptom. However, shen is the zodiac of Gemini, which in Western astrology suggests the shoulders.47

The above discussion points to the possibility—rather than categorically proving—that the Guolao xingzong contains some relics of traditional Indian medicine. Preliminary and tentative though this may be, the examples are relevant enough to undermine the claim that Chinese medical theory alone explains how diseases could be predicted according to the Guolao horoscope.

Obviously, the corresponding macrocosmos for the human body in Guolao xingzong is a hybrid Heaven, neither purely Chinese nor foreign. Although Chinese astrologers have made efforts to establish analyses compatible with traditional Chinese medical theory and endeavoured to make this the dominant reference framework of the book, they were apparently unable to completely remove all traces of the older Indian influences. Naturally many original texts were lost or abandoned. Yet, if there was a text that used the qualities of benevolence and righteousness in Five Phase theory to explain the mildness of Jupiter and Venus, it would have been utilized. As no such text existed, the compilers preferred to leave the passages in question as they were rather than deleting them outright. This may say something about the nature of the Chinese character when dealing with different cultures. Compilers dealing with such interpretive issues were

45 Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 573, chap. 468, p. 43a (TP 6003).
46 Ibid.
satisfied to maintain the astrological core concepts in name while at the same time tolerating the contradictions in reality.

**Additional Discussions: The Application of Disease Prediction Theory in Astrological Cases**

Here I will examine briefly theory and/or methods in practical application. In the previous section we have seen that in *Guolao xingzong* the content on disease prediction is somewhat eclectic in its origins, with differences in emphasis and logic. It is interesting to examine the question of how an astrologer faced with such inconsistencies would apply theory or formulae in practice. For this analysis I will examine *Guolao xingzong*’s appendix on astrological cases, the *Zhengshi xing’an* 鄭氏星案, attributed to Zheng Xicheng.

As I pointed out earlier, Zheng Xicheng’s name appears occasionally throughout the book. In fact, he is an actual historical figure. Unlike many diviners who are the subject of occult stories, Zheng has a biography in a local gazetteer. According to this biography, he was an early Ming person from Rui’an 瑞安, Zhejiang, who came into contact with astrology through an accidental encounter with a master when climbing a mountain at the age of eighteen. The hermit handed him a scroll of secret texts. By practicing the teaching of the texts Zheng was able to make amazingly precise predictions. His reputation was so good that many astrologers recorded or collected his *zhanci* (divining words ）。After his death there were seventy-two *zhanci* in circulation among astrologers. One such astrologer, Wang Tingxun 汪庭訓, active in the Yongle 永樂 reign-period (1403-1424), collected many of Zheng’s *zhanci* for reference and, it is said, he thereby became a master himself.48

Wang Tingxun’s biography suggests that Zheng Xicheng existed before the Yongle reign-period. Joseph Needham and Richard Smith both date these horoscopes to the fourteenth century.49 A present-day astrologer, Li Guangpu, analyzed the information in Zheng’s horoscopes, which yielded 15 dateable cases between 1312 and 1376.50 This implies quite a long, though not improbable, lifespan.

When Lu Wei collected Zheng’s divining words in the late sixteenth century, he acquired forty of them and edited them in the *Zhengshi xing’an* 鄭氏星案. In addition, he collected the master’s astrological cases, the *Dushi xing’an* 杜氏星案 (Mr. Du’s Astrological Cases). These cases are presented in beautiful rhymes usually of less than one hundred characters, but as the revealed information only points to one or two important events in a life, it is almost impossible

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to reconstruct a whole horoscope. This is different in the case of the Zhengshi xing’an, which contains complete horoscopes as well as descriptions of between 200 and 500 characters. Hence, my discussions are based on the contents of the Zhengshi xing’an.

Among the 40 cases in Zhengshi xing’an, 23 of them predict the possibilities of disease on 31 occasions. With the exception of 1 ambiguous case, 14 out of these 31 occasions concern a “layout of disease”, which means that the person is doomed to be infected with a serious disease during his lifetime. Another 15 cases are prophesies predicting a certain period of misfortune, during which the person ought to be cautious. Only one case is a clear case of a prediction of a specific disease. Moreover, there is a short list of 22 “layouts of health disorders” which is much more informative for disease prediction than the carefully developed theories and intricate secret formulae.

When analyzing Zheng’s cases one has the impression that he is cautious in identifying specific diseases in his divining words. Even for the single case in which Zheng points to a specific disease, he avoids an assertive tone, as he “cannot say that there won’t be problems of blood, qi, or sicknesses in the lower part of the body.”\textsuperscript{51} That the lower body will be affected is derived from the formulae in Ji’e zhu lun: “Mercury and comets bring about sicknesses in the waist, the renal system, bladder, and lower part.”\textsuperscript{52}

He imparted advice for disease prediction with a similarly prudent attitude. For cases of possible misfortunes of short duration, Zheng usually advised his customers to conduct themselves as gentlemen, refrain from sexual activity, and recuperate their qi and blood, so that they could avoid misfortune.\textsuperscript{53} In other words, in Chinese astrology, at least in this master’s cases, diseases were negotiable and thus avoidable.

Such an attitude is quite different from Western medical astrology. As Nakayama Shigeru 中山茂 has argued, the tenors of medical practice and medical astrology are contradictory in the West, because the latter asserts that the disease is going to happen while the former claims that it is going to be healed.\textsuperscript{54} In China, there seems not to have existed such a contradiction after medical astrology has been introduced there. Zheng Xicheng shows that Chinese astrologers were pragmatic and exhibited a flexible approach, avoiding specific predictions and accordingly eluding corresponding treatments. This attitude is of cultural significance as it helps to explain why Chinese astrology developed in the way described at the end of the last section, as well as why astrology and medicine have never become so tightly linked in China.

\textsuperscript{51} Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 584, chap. 469, p. 33a.
\textsuperscript{52} Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 576, chap. 468, p. 54b.
\textsuperscript{53} Such as case 9 in Gujin tushu jicheng, Yishudian, juan 584, chap. 469, p. 30a; and case 11 in ibid., juan 584, chap. 469, p. 30b-c.
\textsuperscript{54} Nakayama Shigeru (1993), pp. 182-184.
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