REVIEW


The first two of these four books are only the most important of many reference works that have appeared since my survey in the last issue. Although they were only recently published, for many years preliminary nei-pu editions have been among the most prized tools of medical historians fortunate enough to find copies.

A preliminary version of the union catalogue, smaller in scope than this one, was published in 1961 under the title Chung-i t'u-shu lien-bo mu-lu. The new revised version lists every copy of every edition of 12,124 titles of sources for the history of Chinese medicine published before 1949 (mostly before 1911) and held in 113 collections in China as of 1980. Professor Yü Ying-ao once estimated for me that, when alternate titles are considered, this corresponds to somewhat over eight thousand distinct books. This is as complete a listing of the extant literature as we can hope for. The main omission, due to the character of the book, is medical MSS and fragments found at Tun-huang, Ma-wang-tui, and elsewhere, but those sources are covered by other recent publications discussed below. Some alternate titles are listed under the best-known one, but are given separately if the editors consider them distinct recensions. Some variations in title are not included. For instance, some versions of Ta sheng pien 達生編, which will be mentioned again below, are entitled Ta sheng pien 篇 (for instance, the

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one that begins *Shou shih pien* (壽世編) of 1785), but this variation is not mentioned.

The books are arranged chronologically under broad topics. Each is assigned a date, and the author’s name (*ming*) and best-known alternate name are given. Although exhaustive research on these points is not feasible for a project of this magnitude, the names and dates generally represent the best current knowledge. Of course contentious questions have not been resolved. Thus *Huang ti nei ching* is dated “Warring States,” a traditional estimate with which many scholars in China and elsewhere will disagree. Recent scholarship on excavated texts supports an origin in the second, or more probably the first, century B.C. In this issue Yamada Keiji argues that part of the corpus was first written down after A.D. 16 (p. 49). It is even more remarkable to find the *Nan ching* ascribed to the Warring States; other scholars would date it as late as the second century A.D. On the other hand, the editors do not hazard a date for the *Shen-nung pen-ts’ao*. The ten prem modern reconstructions of the lost text are listed separately, each under its own date, from 1616 to 1854. That treatment is inconsistent with the handling of the other early classics; the various extant versions of the *Huang ti nei ching* are after all reconstructions. We are less certain about how the present *Su wen*, *Ling shu*, *T’ai su*, and others are related to the Han text than about the fidelity of the *Shen-nung pen-ts’ao* editions, which are based on copious early quotations. When the date of a given book is frankly unknown, the editors usually date it provisionally in parentheses, but the bases of such datings are not specified. The editors provide stroke-order and pinyin indexes to titles and authors.

This is clearly the most authoritative general reference work for bibliographic information on classical medical books. The listings of editions also make it easy to gauge the popularity of various works. One sees immediately, for instance, that the all-time best-seller on women’s disorders is not the celebrated *Nā-k’o 女科* attributed to Fu Shan傅山 (dated provisionally 1690 but not printed until 1827), with a mere 67 editions, but *Ta sheng pien*, a little-studied pseudonymous work that, as Charlotte Furth has pointed out, was intended mainly for women and argues for natural childbirth. Beginning with first publication in 1715, 133 separate editions survive—oddly enough, none more recent than 1939. Another thirty-odd were printed in combination with other books, not counting those in *ts‘ung shu*.

Ma Jixing’s textbook of studies in classical medical texts was first published in 1982 under the title *Chung-i wen-hsien-hsueh chi-ch’u*. It does not resemble the usual book about medical books, which describes them one by one and systematically explores their authorship and dates. Professor Ma provides instead a systematic and comprehensive treatise on every aspect of medical philology. Its solid and detailed scholarship puts
Western writing on Chinese medical classics to shame. Only Okanishi Tameto and Miyasita Saburô in this century have contributed comparably erudite studies, but theirs are in more traditional forms.

The book begins with a systematic study of the classification of medical writings in bibliographies of every sort. It then surveys the types of medical writings, including those in non-medical books. The largest section explains the writing, punctuation, annotation, design, format, copying, and printing of early medical books. Much space is devoted to tracing the filiations of a given text, and the relations between texts. Professor Ma’s years spent in close examination and comparison have revealed in many instances how one book was manufactured from one or more others, and how supposed distinct books vary in little but title and prefaces. A final section explains every aspect of how to do critical scholarship, ranging from evaluating various types of evidence through the uses of index cards to the dangers of copying without personal verification (plentifully exemplified by references to recent publications). No scholar, no matter how experienced, can fail to benefit from study of this book. It is a boon for students preparing to begin research in this daunting field.

One might consider the Dunhuang anthology an extended case study in the critical scholarship that Prof. Ma outlines in the 1988 book. It is a short, carefully arranged introduction to the study of medical documents found at Dunhuang. Much of its content, for instance its discussion of the dispersion of the MSS, their special characteristics, their value, and their scholarly use, can be read profitably by anyone wanting an overview of the Dunhuang legacy, medical or not. The book provides a broad and judicious selection of excerpts and fragments from a variety of sources in Chinese as well as from the Stein and Pelliot collections. In addition to obvious medical sources, it includes writings on the immortality technique of grain avoidance, some drug formulas found in Buddhist and Taoist texts, and a most interesting collocation of historical data about medical practice and practitioners from a wide range of Tun-huang MSS. Each text is accompanied by variorium notes, explanations (for instance, medical reasons for the inclusion of each ingredient in a formula), and a meticulous account of the source and in exactly what form the editors used it.

This book has considerable merit not only because it gives a first overview of Dunhuang medical materials, but also because of its informative scholarly notes on them. More or less definitive texts of the Mawangdui medical writings have been available for some time in the fourth volume of Ma-wang-tui Han mu po shu 馬王堆漢墓簡書 (Beijing, 1985), but a synoptic aid to their study is more than welcome. Professor Chou begins with fifteen edited texts on curing and self-cultivation, and provides summaries, notes that explain terms and discuss textual problems, modern paraphrases, and evaluations from the viewpoint of medical history. Fortu-
nately, considering the many non-standard forms of characters in the Mawangdui documents, this book does not use simplified characters. It is a good place to start for scholars more interested in medical history than textual scholarship.

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These remarkable reference tools are the fruit of a project in which roughly 250 researchers screened an enormous literature, including the Ming and Ch'ing Veritable Records and over 8200 gazetteers. It was completed in 1977, but publication was delayed for more than a decade.

The first volume provides several times as many records of astronomical observations—sunspots, auroras, meteorites, eclipses, occultations of planets by the moon, novas and supernovas, comets, and so on—as were heretofore available. For each it provides a dated record, with chüan and page reference. For a given record, roughly speaking, it cites the source published earliest, and for early phenomena gives the Standard History priority over late gazetteers. It was designed primarily for scientists, who want the records to be sorted by the corresponding modern phenomena. The compilers have handled this problem sensitively, but many problems settled according to formula will have to be resolved individually.

The book compiled by Wang Li-hsing and his colleagues draws on the same sources. It reproduces short biographies (the longest just over a page) of nearly 2500 pre-1911 astronomers arranged by dynasty. A large part of its space is devoted to accounts from the Standard Histories, which were already easily accessible through indexes to the latter. Still it is handy to have data on so many figures in one volume. For the first time one can undertake prosopographic studies without access to a major library, although sooner or later it is necessary to look again at these excerpts in their original contexts. There is a stroke-order index. Later volumes will cover books, institutions, calendar reforms, astrology, terminology, etc.

N. Sivin