

## Book Reviews

**Vivienne Lo and Christopher Cullen** (eds), *Medieval Chinese medicine: the Dunhuang medical manuscripts*, Needham Research Institute series, London and New York, RoutledgeCurzon, 2005, pp. xxv, 450, illus., £90.00, \$115.00 (0-415-34295-3).

In the past three decades, historians have shown the early history of Chinese medicine to have been far more complex than imagined by previous generations of scholars. The discovery in the 1970s and 1980s of numerous medical manuscripts at Han dynasty archaeological sites such as Mawangdui has led to the re-evaluation of virtually everything we thought we knew about medical knowledge in the late centuries BCE. Research on the Dunhuang manuscripts should have a similar impact on the study of medieval Chinese medicine. The articles collected here emphasize a diversity of theories and practices, and completely overturn the misconception that the medical system as presented in canonical texts like the *Huangdi neijing* dominated healing in this period.

Originally discovered in 1900 in a sealed room in a Buddhist cave in the Silk Road oasis town, thousands of Dunhuang's manuscripts were sold to the European explorers Sir Aurel Stein and Dr Paul Pelliot and found their way into French and English libraries. In his introduction to the volume, Christopher Cullen points out that, while scholars have long recognized these texts as important sources for the study of Buddhism, linguistics, and social history, historians of medicine have generally overlooked them, despite their accessibility and geographical proximity.

The work of many of the contributors to this volume is already well known. Several authors recently participated in a French publication on Dunhuang manuscripts (Marc Kalinowski (ed.), *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale*, Paris, 2003), which may be considered a companion volume to the present title. However, Lo and Cullen also include numerous scholars from China and Japan whose work is only rarely made available in western languages. One of the strengths of this volume thus lies in its ability to introduce the English-speaking world to

these foreign scholars and their important research.

A summary of the contents reveals the diverse character of this volume, and of Dunhuang medicine itself. Part 1 includes articles by Paul Unschuld, Zheng Jinsheng, Wang Shumin, Zhao Ping'an, and Xie Guihua, who discuss the importance of manuscripts as sources in the study of Chinese medical history and present overviews of major collections to provide context for the Dunhuang texts. In Part 2, chapters by Marc Kalinowski, Donald Harper, Liu Lexian, and Catherine Despeux present evidence that iatromantic and divinatory arts were important at Dunhuang as well as in medieval Chinese society generally. In Part 3, dedicated to the culture of *yangsheng* (nourishing life) as an important influence on medical knowledge, Vivienne Lo, Sumiyo Umekawa, and Sakade Yoshinobu review sometimes surprising texts on moxibustion, love magic, and Daoist self-cultivation techniques. Part 4, a section on pharmacology, includes chapters by Wang Shumin, Mayanagi Makoto, Chen Hsiu-fen, and Anthony R Butler and John Moffett, who discuss pharmacological manuscripts and the issues they raise in the historiography of Chinese drugs. A valuable appendix presents an annotated bibliography of the Dunhuang medical texts in the collections.

If the reviewer must find fault with this groundbreaking work, then it would only be to point out that many essays tend toward highly specialized analysis of individual manuscripts. For this reason, it will not as readily appeal to non-specialists as the French volume mentioned above, which presents a more thematic treatment of topics like hemerology, talismans, and topomancy. On the other hand, this book is among the few in English to tackle this eclectic period in Chinese history, and the only one to deal with Dunhuang medicine. For this reason alone, it is an invaluable contribution to the field.

Taken as a whole, these authors, whether focused on the minute details of particular philological problems or comprehensive surveys of manuscript caches, have provided in-depth snapshots of the diverse medical culture of medieval China. The contributors have

illuminated medical ideas and practices that co-existed with, challenged, and informed the more familiar classical tradition, but that are not readily apparent within the canonical texts themselves. In so doing, they have added greatly to our understanding of the complexity of medicine at Dunhuang, and of Chinese history more generally.

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**Manuela Tecusan**, *The fragments of the Methodists: Methodism outside Soranus. Volume one: Text and translation*, Leiden, Brill, 2004, pp. ix, 813, €149.00, \$197.00 (hardback 90-04-12451-9).

With this book, Manuela Tecusan provides the first edition ever (with English translation) of the fragments of the so-called Methodists. A commentary and indices should follow soon in a second volume. The Methodists were the third main medical sect or “school of thought” to emerge in the Roman era. The sect rapidly became successful in Rome, for it had charismatic leaders and, apparently, proved efficient. Nevertheless, the Methodists also received sharp criticism from more traditional doctors (the Empiricists and the Rationalists), whose claims to knowledge and efficiency were suddenly challenged by people who dropped Hippocrates and the Ancients into the dustbin of history and were believed to practise medicine after only six months’ training. Because our main source about the Methodists is Galen, who was a fierce enemy of their sect, our understanding of the Methodist doctrine is somewhat twisted. Since Galen’s view of the Methodists prevailed in early modern Europe, for many centuries they, and above all Thessalos of Tralles, have been considered sophists or dangerous quacks. Nevertheless, a few attempts were made to reconsider the Methodists’ views as early as the seventeenth century by Prospero Alpini (*De medicina methodica*, Venice, 1611), as Jackie Pigeaud’s pioneering work has shown (*Pinel. Aux portes de la psychiatrie*, Paris, 2003). For the Methodists’ conception of medicine was anything but foolish: reading recent scholarship

on the subject, it even seems that Methodism was an amazing theoretical revolution in medical history.<sup>1</sup>

Manuela Tecusan’s collection gives crucial elements for an understanding of the reasons for that success. Of course, one would need the second volume to use this precious material properly and reliably to evaluate Tecusan’s work, but the original texts and the English translation provide key insights into Methodist theories—one should insist on the fact that there were, in reality, several kinds of Methodism during the Roman period, an evolution of their concepts, and divergences from one doctor to another. This is why any attempt to reconstruct ancient Methodism through the fragments is extremely problematic, as Tecusan convincingly states in her introduction.

However, Tecusan has not checked the Greek manuscripts of the Galenic works, which have not been critically edited. The text is therefore provisional in some cases. Since many mistakes have already been detected by others, and editorial choices discussed in other reviews, I prefer here to emphasise some good conjectures that she has made in the case of an important source: Pseudo-Galen’s *Introductio sive medicus* (fr. 282–285). In fragment 3 of the *Medicus* for example, Tecusan justifiably reads συγγεγυμνασμένων instead of συγγεγυμνασμένον (this is confirmed by the manuscripts—and had also been rightly conjectured by Isnardi in a paper of 1961). However, taking fragment 2, for which Tecusan offers no less than five conjectures: in all cases, the manuscripts provide either an equivalent, or a better text than that offered by Tecusan and make her conjectures (clever as they may be) not as helpful as they appear at first sight. One fears that the same occurs in the case of the numerous fragments from the treatise *On the method of healing*, also taken directly from Kühn. This shows how crucial it is now to provide new editions of Galen and of the numerous pseudo-Galenic texts before editing fragments of ancient doctors based on Galenic material. Indeed, only a better understanding of each of those texts will help to examine accurately the passages dealing with Methodism. One may wonder about the