Sex in the Yellow Emperor's Basic Questions

Jessieca Leo

Praise for Sex in the Yellow Emperor's Basic Questions

This book is fascinating, deep, essential reading for anyone interested in sex as the hidden force ruling bodily and spiritual health. Adepts of Daoist sexology, Oriental and Western doctors, sex therapists, psychologists, energy workers, as well as scholars, archeologists, poets, and historians of Chinese culture or simply curious lay readers—all will feel they have been erotically and psycho-sexually sated.

Human culture here is a vast jigsaw puzzle, with sex as the key piece linking cosmology, empirical and magical medicine, the popular culture of love, its diseases and its euphoric desires, Confucian family dynamics, bi-sexual emperors, eunuchs, longevity qigong, and Daoist philosophy.

I have been reading works in this field for thirty years and was amazed at how much new Jessieca Leo had to teach me. Who would guess that Confucius was sired during an orgiastic Spring Fertility Rite? Her penetrating research deftly illuminates and vivifies the often inscrutable Yellow Emperor and Mawangdui manuscripts of 2200 years ago. This is a book you will literally take to bed.

—Michael Winn, Healing Tao USA

Jessieca Leo examines a part of the Chinese classical medical tradition that has until now received little attention. The author's broad scholarship and familiarity with the tradition and the text allow her to explore social and historical themes while examining philological and medical issues. This book deserves a place on the shelves of all scholars of the ancient Chinese medical traditions. It is also essential reading for modern scholars and practitioners who are part of the neoclassical revitalization of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

—Stephen Jackowicz, Adelphi University

In her work about sex and longevity in the *Huangdi neijing*, Jessieca Leo presents an excellent and detailed study of the earliest systematic thought about the physical, physiological, psychological, and environmental aspects of sexuality and how they are related to longevity.

This comprehensive volume is a superb introduction to the medical theory of sexuality, beginning with the different terms used in speaking about sexual interaction, the anatomy and energetics, up to reproductive physiology and pathology. Based on her own new translation of the relevant passages in the *Suwen*, the author offers a new and deeper understanding of the earliest fundamentals of sexuality not only in terms of Chinese Medicine, but also how sexual cultivation and health care are practiced within bedchamber arts and longevity techniques. I highly recommend it to everyone interested in the sexual culture of China.

—Dominique Hertzer, University of Munich

Jessieca Leo has opened our eyes to a fascinating aspect of early Chinese thought that Westerners seldom have access to. Using Chinese medicine as the background, she traces the developing understanding of sexuality, and the part it plays in life and society, while the analysis always returns to the balancing nature of Chinese philosophy. Much is surprisingly relevant to today, from the pursuit of pleasure to the warnings of mixing sex and alcohol. Anyone interested in Chinese history and culture will find it hugely enlightening.

—Richard Bannerman, BBC

Jessieca Leo traces sex and sexuality in early China in sources that have long been neglected. Clear language and new translations from the *Yellow Emperor's Basic Questions* guide readers on an interesting track into a basic aspect of Chinese history and culture. The book is an absolute must for anyone interested in traditional China and the history and culture of human sexuality.

—Rodo Pfister, University of Basel

Jessieca Leo's *Sex in the Yellow Emperor's Basic Questions* is a truly remarkable achievement. Leo successfully combines philological precision with fresh analyses, questioning the received *communis opinio* on sexuality, medicine, and sexual culture in early China. It is easy to read and a pleasure to digest. Highly recommended.

—Burkhard Scherer, Christ Church University

Sex

in the

Yellow Emperor's

Basic Questions

Sex, Longevity, and Medicine in Early China

Jessieca Leo

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For Thomas

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Foreword

Unlike many studies of Chinese sexual culture that have tended to focus on Chinese erotic literature, Jessieca Leo's work examines medical texts to find information on human sexual culture. Her study opens completely new vistas: her approach not only allows readers to become more familiar with the question of how sexuality is understood from the point of view of traditional Chinese anthropology, it also leads to a discussion of sexuality in the wider perspective of human health and life.

The text at the basis of this study is the *Suwen* (Basic Questions) which belongs to a body of texts dedicated to the Yellow Emperor—the mythical progenitor of ancient Chinese civilization. Issues of the origin and transmission of this body of texts are complicated: the books include the accumulation, amendment, and reshaping of scripts, together with annotations by various medical schools covering well over 500 years. Despite these variations in form and content, the *Suwen* became the canonical text for medical reasoning and shaped medical tradition.

Rather than focusing on diagnostics and therapy of distinct diseases, Jessieca Leo discusses questions regarding the effective functioning of the human body and possible disturbances. Her presentation provides insights on how human action and behavior are conceptualized in early Chinese thinking. The *Suwen*, she convincingly shows, exposes the deep concern of the ancient Chinese for prolificacy and fertility in the service of securing a greater number of offspring to continue the ancestral line. Rich in content, the work presents an impressive array of ancient China's knowledge about the inner functions of the human body.

Although core layers of the *Suwen* may go back to the 1st century BCE, its content shows a rather elaborate conceptual framework defined by the interaction of yin and yang as well as the flow and movement of energetic constellations *(qi)* along fixed circulatory systems or vessels (*mai*). This shows a tradition of medical thinking that focuses on preserving a great and deep body of knowledge about the human body.

However, striking as it is, this detailed framework of medical thinking is not detached from a more basic outlook on nature and human society. Chinese medical language, although highly specialized and rather technical, is not separate from a broader understanding of nature and

society. Instead, medical thinking of human functions parallels beliefs and observations of cosmological actions, natural phenomena, and human organization.

As the author shows, from their linguistic expression, parallel concepts belonging to different levels of discourse can be described as a kind of metaphorical extension of meaning. For instance, physical circulatory systems are called *mai*, thus matching landscape formations of river valleys and mountain ranges; physical parts and functions are said to belong to yin or yang, which denote a great range of natural phenomena. On a deeper conceptual level, however, the correspondence of the human body to the forms and structures of nature rests in the strictly functional view of human and natural actions by stressing the interplay of complementary powers. Thereby, the text shows the strong natural tendency to balance powers and maintain regularity and resilience.

Earlier, non-medical literature provides some evidence that human sexuality and reproduction were understood in terms of cosmic action. From this we can trace the ideological background of the *Suwen*. As Stephen Owen points out in his "Reproduction in the *Shijing* (Classic of Poetry)" (HJAS 2001), ancestral hymns conceptualize human fertility and reproduction alongside the cultivation of land, growth, and production of seeds and food supplies. Regularity of the seasons and the cycle of sowing and harvesting match the continuity of the ancestral line through succeeding generations. Early Chinese rulers were held in esteem regarding their knowledge of how to participate in the natural cycles of nature, bringing fecundity to the fields, and protecting their fruits from harm. Rituals and sacrifices were conceived as a means to secure the progeny of the clan and the resources of the people.

That is to say, reproduction does not only require a profound knowledge of the operations of heaven and earth but also an expertise in helpful methods. The well-known definition, according to the Chinese tradition, of the human being as part of nature means that, by means of intelligence, humanity is capable of co-operating with the productive cycle of heaven and earth.

Consequently, sexuality and the knowledge of the methods of reproduction should be seen in their life-sustaining function. In early Chinese anthropological thinking, ethical norms and regulations of social behavior are expressed in the strict separation of sexes during social intercourse. The tradition of separation of sexes is not conceived as a move

away from sexuality, rather as means to control and guide human sexual behavior in certain ways believed to be consistent with the dualistic scheme of nature.

The belief, moreover, that the individual's body is inherited from, and given by, the ancestors, as Jessieca Leo emphasizes, is crucial for the understanding of some traditional ideas of sexuality. For instance, preservation of the body and its physical functions shows respect for the parents. Ample offspring manifest the clan's strength and its good fortune: it is a tribute to this donation. Passages in the *Suwen*, speaking of fecundation and gestation, demonstrate the belief in the ancestral bestowing of the faculties of fecundation and conception on individuals. As a social consequence of this belief, the Chinese make sure of the partners' family descent before marriage. In addition, their belief in the inheritance of sexual capacity from the ancestors contributes to the understanding of the equation of sexual potency and child bearing capacity with human life preserving forces. Preservation of the body thus also means taking care of the functional abilities of the genitals, using exercises, dietetics, and abstinence from any excessive and unrestrained behavior.

Jessieca Leo presents a meticulous study of the language of sex in the *Suwen*. She identifies different layers of sexual language, finding some that matches earlier medical texts and health care manuscripts used in the later medical tradition. However, since sexuality is not a well defined issue in the early Chinese medical texts, her work functions hermeneutically as a key to understanding and interpreting concepts that brings various propositions on bodily functions together.

Sexual language in the *Suwen* comes in many linguistic forms. Jessieca Leo presents expressions of a common language denoting reproduction or human genital instruments, as well as common expressions like *ru* or *nei*, "entering" or "going inward," used in the special sense describing phases or types of sexual intercourse. Expressions of a more refined metaphorical language like "jade stalk," denoting the penis, stand side by side with an established vocabulary in medicinal discourse like "vessels," as part of a more systematic medical terminology.

Finally, the technical language of non-medical discourses describing complex interactions of various entities, actions or qualities, for example, in the realms of social government or cosmic operation, becomes sexualized by transposing it into the context of the reproductive organs. The organization of the medical material in this book along various aspects of

human sexuality shows a great and fascinating picture of early Chinese sexual thought which is seldom treated elsewhere. Comments on the cultural background as well as on the Chinese medical and health care tradition enrich the presentation and exhibit their points of difference and continuity. Annotations relating to modern bio-medical knowledge help the understanding of the matter and build a bridge over time and cultures.

—Dennis Schilling, Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich

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Preface

Why sex and sexuality in the *Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問 (The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic: Basic Questions)? When I first read the beginning of the text, I was fascinated by just how much knowledge the early Chinese had of sex and sexuality in the realm of reproductive physiology and health care principles. The *Suwen* is the oldest Chinese medical textbook, compiled between the 1st centuries BCE and CE, but it includes materials from as early as the 4th century BCE. Already over 2000 years ago the Chinese were working with such complicated and abstract physical, physiological, psychological, and environmental concepts within well-defined and systematized medical theories.

In this study, I show that the *Suwen* represents a stage in the development of medical theories where they became empirical, i.e., physicians diagnosed and treated diseases by using appropriate techniques and healing processes they observed and recorded. I achieve this by tracing how Mawangdui teachings of *yangsheng* 養生, the arts of nourishing life or longevity techniques, influenced the development of vessel theories in the *Suwen*. Sexual cultivation or the bedchamber arts formed an important branch of *yangsheng* teachings; they were a bridge for the cross-over from spirit-based magical medicine into well-defined and systematized theories.

The medical texts from Mawangdui indicate that sex was an integral part of health, longevity, and medicine. To set the study in a diachronic dimension, I compare the *Suwen* with the Mawangdui corpus and various materials from pre-Han and Han literature; and I also present the latest archaeological findings of erotic objects from the Han period. They all reveal sexual culture in different historical, intellectual, and social contexts. The synchronic dimension of this study, on the other hand, is represented by an evaluation of the materials pertaining to sexuality in other medical works, notably the *Maijing* 脈經 (Classic on Vessels), *Nanjing* 難經 (Classic of Difficult Issues), and especially the *Lingshu* 靈樞 (Spiritual Pivot) because of its historical connection to the *Suwen*.

By looking at how the *Suwen* depicts sex in association with medical theories, I hope to come closer to understanding how the early Chinese

viewed sexuality. It seems appropriate to start with the *Suwen* not only because it is the earliest Chinese medical text but because it is central to Chinese medicine both traditionally and today. Almost every post-*Suwen* medical text quotes something from it and for any student embarking on the study of Chinese Medicine today, they would have heard of the *Suwen* in one form or another from textbooks that make selective references to *Suwen's* theories.

Since this study attempts to show how the *Suwen* portrays sexuality in the realm of medical knowledge with reference to the social and literary context of the Han period, a large part of the book is given over to the semantics of describing the sexual act, sexual anatomy, and the procreation process. The work traces how the notion of sex is expressed in early writings and the semantics of sexuality in the *Suwen*. It deals with health care pertaining to sex, sexual maladies such as erectile dysfunction, and the consequences of over-indulgence in sex, food, and alcohol. It outlines traditional visions of the reproductive process, including concepts of sexual maturity, conception, fertility, and decline as depicted in the *Suwen*. Finally, it looks at sex and health within *Suwen* medical theories as part of the emerging medical faculty.

Chapter 1 has three parts that present an overview of the research and study of sexual culture in ancient and early China. First, I review the current state of research on Chinese sexual culture. Next I show the various categories of early literature that reveal sexual culture in different historical, intellectual and social contexts. They include historical documents, medical texts, court literature, and sexual manuals. In the last part, I present archaeological finds of erotic objects from the Han that divulge more information on sexual culture.

After this, Chapter 2 sets out to present the history of *Suwen* studies and the methodology used in this study. It also presents the textual history of the *Suwen*, its compilation process, and the ways in which Wang Bing created his copy, the main edition of the text.

Chapters 3 and 4 explore the connection between the *Suwen* and the various longevity techniques in sex, health, and medicine. It looks at how Wang Bing connects *yangsheng* doctrines to medical theories and how he uses them to bridge spirit-based magical medicine with systematized and empirical medicine. This part of the work examine whether sexual cultivation as a branch of *yangsheng* has anything in common with Daoist culture. It compares the development of proto-medical theories as

seen in Mawangdui medical texts to those that are systematized in the *Suwen*. The discussions of the different pathological factors and different health professionals show how the *Suwen* formulates, develops, and systematizes medical theories. Chapter 4 in particular examines the roles of diagnostics mentioned in the *Suwen* and how they contributed to the healing methods that demonstrate the development of medical thoughts.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine the language used in speaking about sexuality. They focus on how sex is conducted and how sexual intercourse is described. Chapter 5 begins by discussing how pre-*Suwen* texts and the *Suwen* express desire. This is followed by how ancient and early writers-scholars communicate the sexual act to its readers using imagery, euphemism or direct references. It examines the sexual act at its various stages using materials mostly culled from the Mawangdui manuals. Chapter 6, in close conjunction with this, conveys the different terminologies used to describe sexual interaction in the *Suwen*. It shows that not only sexual vocabulary was codified but it has changed by the time that the *Suwen* was compiled.

After establishing the role of the sexual act in the *Suwen* medical theories, Chapter 7 explores sexual energetics such as the binary power of yin and yang. I discuss the roles that essence (*jing*), *qi*, the kidneys, and the three extraordinary vessels (Conception, Governing, and Penetrating) play in medical theories relating to sex and sexuality. Their functions in the dynamics of sexual physiology in TCM today are basically still the same as those propagated in the *Suwen*.

In Chapters 8 and 9, I deal with sexual and reproductive anatomy, the physiology of producing progeny, as well as with obstetrics and gynecology and their relation to the medical theories of the *Suwen*. The chapters also look at historical concepts such as the "ancestral tendon" and "heavenly stock." Both concepts are fundamental to sex and sexuality in the *Suwen* but do not appear in other medical texts or literature.

Chapter 10 discusses the effects of overindulgences and intoxication. The first part shows how sexual Dao is integrated into medical theories and how adhering to its rules can prevent diseases and achieve longevity. The classic troll of health—the foolish act of "having sex while intoxicated" is the proverbial malaise of the upper classes and it is discussed in the next two sections. The combination of sex and alcohol was and is still the scourge of health and longevity.

Chapter 11 presents the effects of sex on health. It is concerned with sexual excesses caused by lust and how human follies produce overindulgence of sexual activity, which ultimately affects health. The next section studies sexual dysfunction in the form of erectile dysfunction and other problems affecting the sexual act and sexual health. This chapter ends with a short discussion on the use of aphrodisiac in the Mawangdui texts and *Suwen*. Sexual health has clearly become part of the medical equation of the *Suwen's* medical theories.

Overall, the book shows that the Mawangdui medical texts represent a transitional phase in which medical theories were unfolding, while the *Suwen* presents medical theories that are already well-developed and systematized. I hope to show students and scholars a view of sexuality within the boundaries of these systematized medical theories that relates to the causes and etiology of diseases as advocated in the *Suwen*, thus giving sex a role in medical theories as formulated in the Han. However, given that *Suwen* studies have such a long history, I do not pretend to pass this off as an exhaustive work. Rather, I hope it is the opening salvo for more fireworks to follow.

—Jessieca Leo, January 2011

Chapter One

Studying Sex in Chinese Culture

The great desires of human beings are drink, food, and sex.
— Liji

Webster's Dictionary defines sex as: 1) one of the two divisions, especially in human beings, designated as male or female; 2) the sphere of interpersonal behavior, especially between male and female, most directly associated with, leading up to, substituting for, or resulting from genital union. It defines "sexuality" as the quality or state of being sexual: a) the condition of having sex; b) the condition of having reproductive functions dictated by the union of male and female; c) the expression of the sex instinct in sexual activities; and, d) the condition, potential, or state of readiness, of the organism with regard to sexual activity (1993, 2081). Due to the differences in defining sex and sexuality, I have chosen to use the two as a single entity in this study.

The problem with this and other modern definitions of sex is that they are often hetero-normative or bio-medically oriented, making them incomplete, prejudiced, and limiting. Medical and hetero-normative binary construction of gender is a complex affair. As Suzanne Kessler notes, not only is sex assignment uncertain but the empirical foundations on which the medical orthodoxies of binary sex and gender are built on, are weak (1998, 12-13). Both she and Alice Dreger (2000) point out that female or male is neither natural or fundamental but rather constructed and normative. Gender markers such as genitals, gonads, or chromosomes are insufficient to make the distinction in some people. Humans are biologically more complex in terms of sexual variants such as intersexuals or hermaphrodites—all things that challenge the simplistic male-female binary.

Webster's definitions tend to reduce the sexual act to a clinical physical connection between a male and a female, and sexuality to a state or

condition in which the sexual act takes place. In such a definition, the human experience, such as desire and pleasure, as well as the sexual act as the cause of diseases or euphoric states are disconnected from their social and anthropological contexts. Emotions, control, responsibility, nature, and lifestyle are left out of the equation.

The ancient Chinese saw sex first as a means of survival and later on as part of the Confucian duty of producing male progeny to perpetuate the ancestral line. Still, they used it for pleasure as well as for enhancing health, creating specific techniques of sexual cultivation advocated in the arts of nourishing life known as *yangsheng* 養生. The *Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問 (The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic: Basic Questions),[1] the main focus of this study, depicts sex as an all-encompassing concept including not only genderization of the sexes, but also the sum total of the physiological, psychological, and anatomical functions of the human being. It explains sex as a series of structures, functions, activities, and attitudes characterized by a natural and fundamental difference between female and male, which accompanies people throughout life from conception to death (Evans 1997, 34).

The ancient Chinese saw women as cosmologically equal and complementary to men.[2] They explored sexual intercourse as contact between heterosexual partners, and to them sexual cultivation stipulates that yin (female) and yang (male) components complete the union. As such, sexual encounters in early manuals and the *Suwen* represent a hetero-normative perspective embracing the Dao of yin-yang.

Previous Research

The late 19th century saw the emergence of a heightened Chinese interest in the study of sex and sexuality as an academic and scientific subject within a wider social and cultural context. This was led by Kang Youwei

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[1] The *Suwen* edition used here is by Lin Yi 林億, Gao Baoheng 高保衡, and Sun Qi 孫奇, found in *Sibu beiyao* 四部備要 (Shanghai: Shanghai zhonghua shuju, 1936). For the *Huangdi neijing taisu* 黃帝內經太素 by Yang Shangshan 楊上善 (8th c.), I use: Beijing: Scientific and Technical Documents Publishing House, 2000.

[2] For a detailed discussion of women's role in Chinese culture as depicted in literature from pre-Qin to Han, see Wang RR 2003, 1-194.

康有爲 (1858-1927) and Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865-1898) in their seminal works titled *Datong shu* 大同書 (Book of Great Unity) and *Renxue* 仁學 (Studies in Humanity). Although these works are political, the ideas they propagate inspired a reform movement in which love, sex, and women played important roles. The most noteworthy work of that era that contributed to the resurgence of interest in Chinese bedchamber arts is Ye Dehui's 葉德輝 (1864-1927) *Shuangmei ying'an congshu* 雙梅影闇叢書 (Collection of the Shadow of the Twin Plum), published in 1903.

Using Chapter 28 of the *Ishinpō* 醫心方 (Essential Medical Methods)—a text compiled in 10th-century Japan on the basis of Chinese documents (see Hsia et al. 1986) — and other texts on sexual cultivation, Ye Dehui reconstructed sexual cultivation texts such as the *Sunü jing* 素女經 (Book of the Plain Woman), *Xuannü jing* 玄女經 (Book of the Mystery Woman), *Yufang mijue* 玉房秘訣 (Secrets of the Jade Chamber), and the *Dongxuanzi* 洞玄子 ([Way of] Master Dongxuan). In his preface, he laments that, while the West has a thorough knowledge of sex and sexual hygiene and possesses so many books on the subject that even an ignorant fellow can become an expert, its scientists have no idea that the descendants of China's holy emperors already developed bedchamber arts 4,000 years ago.

Interest in the bedchamber arts in other areas of study further enhanced the understanding of Chinese sexual culture by providing new perspectives. For example, new ways of interpreting the classics, such as the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Poetry) and *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of Chu) by Chinese and Western scholars, added to the rising interest in sex.[3]

The *Shijing*, the oldest collection of 305 Chinese poems and songs, dated to the 6th century BCE, became the focal point of many studies. In 1927, Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899-1946) in his *Shijing de xing yugan* 詩經的性欲觀 (The Notion of Sexuality in the *Shijing*) showed that eroticism existed in more than forty poems by examining the various tropes as carriers of sexual content using "a set of five figures of speech, or devices that conveyed sexual intercourse" (Middendorf 2004, 214-15).

Van Gulik has translated no less than twelve poems, which he considered to have sexual connotations (# 189, 21, 158, 22, 95, 93, 99, 81, 58,

[3] For revival of interest in the *Shijing*, see also Middendorf 2007; 2004; Goldin 2002, 4-47; Harbsmeier 1995, 323-46; Riegel 1997; Bischoff 1985, 4; Van Gulik 1961, 16-25.

102, 76, and 264). Bischoff states that members of the Orchid Tower (*Lanting* 蘭亭) held all-male orgies, during which they interpreted poems from the *Shijing* "legitimately and illegitimately." By "illegitimately" he means erotically and sexually (1985, 29-30). They practiced a form of "phallic worship": men, old and young, met to "harmonize *qi*." This was still *en vogue* in the mid-4th century CE, as the "Songs of the Orchid Tower" of the year 353 indicate (Bischoff 1985, 4).

Corresponding to the sexual revolution of the 1960s-80s in the West, a wave of popular Chinese *ars erotica* appeared in the Western market that emphasized the stereotypes of oriental sexualism. In depicting the Chinese as quaint, pleasure-seeking folks with unusual sexual habits and in favor of curious practices, they reinforced Van Gulik's view that sex in China was "natural and unproblematic" (Schipper 1993, 146). Nothing could be further from the truth: Chinese sexual culture is a complex phenomenon intimately linked to philosophy, medicine, health care, religion, eugenics, and family life.

Many popular works on Chinese sex had attention-grabbing "teaser" titles and were published mostly for their commercial value as "exotic orientalism." They show pictures of copulating couples in unusual positions and sometimes with circus-like antics. Most of these paintings were from the Ming and Qing periods, which meant that they represented only a small part of the history of Chinese sexual culture. Some of these publications are interesting but overall they are not helpful for research because they have little bibliography and do not discuss historical context. As a result, these attempts at tackling this many-faceted topic produced books that wet the appetite but they also perpetuated the stereotype erotic image of Chinese sex culture. The only exception is Van Gulik's seminal work, *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, written before the Mawangdui manuscripts were found and now subject to certain controversies (see Furth 1994; Li L. 1992).

Before the Mawangdui manuscripts were discovered in 1973, only a handful of Chinese, Japanese, and European scholars were interested in Chinese sexual culture. Leaders in the field include Westerners such as Henri Maspero (1882-1945), Joseph Needham (1900-1995), Robert van Gulik (1910-1967), and Herbert Franke (1914-). Their focus was on sexual classics mostly from the Sui and Tang dynasties onward.

It was not until the 1990s that a flourish of scholarly works appeared, both in China and the West.[4] They improved the field and gave the study of sex more scope. Also, it seems that the term *fangzhong shu* 房中術 (bedchamber arts) acquired new currency among the Chinese—judging by the number of books offering "bedchamber secrets" on the market in the 1990s. However, even in the 21st century and despite the revival of interest in Chinese sexual culture, both academic and popular, a headline in the *New York Times* sums up the overall situation for those who embark on this journey: "Long After Kinsey, Only the Brave Study Sex" (Carey 2004).

The Mawangdui Manuscripts

The single most important event that revived interest and gave academic kudos and respectability to the study of sex and sexuality in China was the discovery, in 1973, of three sexual manuals in the Mawangdui tomb complex near Changsha, Hunan. The complex contains three tombs. The first housed the Marchioness of Dai who died at about fifty years of age. The second, as shown in three seals (two bronze and one jade), belonged to Li Cang 利蒼, Marquis of Dai and chancellor of the kingdom of Changsha, who died in 186 BCE. The third was occupied by one of Li Cang's sons, who died at age thirty. A burial tablet indicates that it was closed in 168 BCE.

The manuscripts, stored in a rectangular lacquer box with a roof-shaped lid found in the latter, consist of thirty items containing forty-five separate texts (篇 *pian*). Seven items or fourteen texts are medical in nature; about half of them deal with nourishing life, and among these three present the bedchamber arts.[5] They are the *Shiwen* 十問 (Ten Questions), *He yinyang* 合陰陽 (Uniting Yin and Yang), and *Tianxia zhidao tan* 天下至道談 (Discourse of the Supreme Dao Under Heaven; hereafter abbreviated

[4] Works by Western scholars include: Hinsch 1990; Kapac 1992; Liu 1993; Dikötter 1995; Tsai 1996; Liu et al. 1997; Evans 1997; Goldin 2002; Farquhar 2002; Stone 2003; Ding 2002; Jeffrys 2006; and Middendorf 2007.

[5] For an excavation report, see Hunansheng bowuguan 1974. For a documentation of the finds, see Mawangdui xiaozu 1980; 1985.

Tianxia). They raised great academic interest, leading to new publications and thus bringing the study of sex into mainstream academia.

Essential studies include Ma Jixing's 馬繼興 *Mawangdui gu yishu kaoshi* 馬王堆古醫書考釋 (Textual Research and Annotation of Ancient Medical Books from Mawangdui, 1992) and Donald Harper's *Early Chinese Medical Literature* (1998). Ma was the first to provide a full transcription and interpretation of all fourteen medical texts, while Harper translated them into English with comprehensive commentary. The *He yinyang* and *Tianxia* have further been translated and discussed by Douglas Wile (1992) and Rodo Pfister (2003). Another important work is Rodo Pfister's forthcoming *Sexuelle Körpertechniken im alten China* (2011). Its three volumes offer new translations and transcriptions of the sexual manuals together with full philological annotation and extensive interpretation of ancient physiology.

Altogether, the manuscripts show that sex and health in early China were closely related to the development of medical theory. Vice versa, research on the history of Chinese medicine, an expanding field of study, continues to make significant contributions to the understanding of sexuality. Key Western contributors include Joseph Needham, Nathan Sivin, Manfred Porkert, and Paul Unschuld. More recent works, such as *Innovation in Chinese Medicine*, edited by Elisabeth Hsu (2001a), show the scope and diversity of research undertaken today.

Exploring sex and sexuality within systematized and well-developed medical theories of the Han, I follow the ancient tradition of Chinese scholars and physicians who looked back to ancient knowledge for inspiration and guidance. This is especially true for medical students and practitioners of Chinese medicine, then and now. As Marta Hanson says: "The Chinese have considered the *Huangdi neijing. . .* to be the founding canon of Chinese medicine passed down from the Yellow Emperor since unrecorded antiquity" (2001, 264). Similarly, Elisabeth Hsu states that "scholars and doctors looked back to a Golden Age in the past… Even today, practitioners intent on modernizing Chinese medicine declare allegiance to the canonical tradition that links them in a direct line to the legendary figure of the Yellow Emperor" (2001a, 1). I am, therefore, "looking back to the past for knowledge" to show that sex and health played a role in the formulation of medical theories in the Han by studying the *Suwen*, the foremost Chinese medical textbook.

Sexual Culture in Early China

Since the *Suwen* is predominately a Han text, it is important to establish how sex is represented in the periods before and during its compilation. Three categories of texts are relevant here. The first includes proto-medical and medical texts, such as those in the Mawangdui corpus as well as materials related to the *Suwen*. They are probably the works of officers and/or scholars who worked at the courts of kings and emperors in different parts of China and strove to present their own brand of medical knowledge. The Mawangdui texts represent a transitional phase in the development of medical theories, while the *Suwen* shows their increased systematization.

The second type of text refers explicitly to sexual cultivation. These are the Mawangdui sexual manuals, classified as texts on nourishing life. Open to a limited readership among the upper classes, they show that the sexual act was a technique to prolong life, prevent illness, and cure ailments. The influence of *yangsheng* literature on the historical development of Western Han Chinese medical theory has been well documented.[6]

The last group of texts, which mention sex in passing, is found among court literature, including ritual texts, such as the *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites); philosophical texts on nature and humanity, e.g., the commentaries of the *Yijing* 易經 (Book of Changes), the great book of ancient divination, and the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang), the second major text of early Daoist thought (dat. ca. 290 BCE); anecdotal literature, e.g., the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Commentary of Zuo) and the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Mister Lü's Spring and Fall [Annals]); poetry and songs, such as the *Shijing*, which depicts different local traditions; court poetry; the *Chuci*, which consists of songs that express subjective thinking mixed with religious thought; mythology as found in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (Classic of the Mountains and Seas); ideological writings that condemn sexual decadence, e.g., the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (Biographies of Exemplary Women); and dynastic history, such as the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian) by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145-90 BCE) and the *Hanshu* 漢書 (History

[6] See Lo 2001, 21; He and Lo 1996; Wile 1992, 19, 23; Harper 1998, 77-90.

of the Han) by Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE). These works are among the most important and influential literary creations of Chinese culture. How they deal with sex provides insight into the dominant attitude and experiences in ancient society.

Evidence that there was a well-developed sex culture in the Han comes from the *Hanshu* bibliography (*Yiwen zhi* 藝文志; 30.1775-81).[7] It lists six categories, ending in "prescription techniques" (*fangji* 方技), which contains 36 books in four classes: 1) medical classics (*yijing* 醫經); 2) classical prescriptions (*jingfang* 經方); 3) bedchamber [arts] (*fangzhong* 房中); and 4) spirit immortals (*shenxian* 神僊). The bedchamber section has eight titles:

1. 容成陰道	Rongcheng's Way of the Yin
2. 務成子陰道	Wuchengzi's Way of the Yin
3. 堯舜陰道	Yao and Shun's Way of the Yin
4. 湯盤庚陰道	Tang and Pangeng's Way of the Yin
5. 天老雜子陰道	Tianlao and Other Master's Way of the Yin
6. 天一陰道	Tianyi's Way of the Yin
7. 黃帝三王养陽方	Prescriptions for Nourishing the Yang by the Yellow Emperor and the Three Kings
8. 三家內房有子方	Prescriptions of the Three Schools for the Inner Chamber for Begetting Progeny

The first six books are about techniques known as "way of the yin" or the "hidden way" (*yindao* 陰道), which is another expression for the bedchamber arts and also mentioned in *Shiwen* #10, when it speaks of a technique as the "way of being intimate [sexually]" (*jieyin zhi dao* 接陰之道). Masters of this "way" included Rongcheng, Wucheng, Yao, Shun, and others. The last two items provide prescriptions (*fang* 方) for the

[7] The *Hanshu* consists of 100 scrolls, divided into four sections: 1) *ji* 紀 (Annals), in 12 (13) scrolls with Emperors' biographies in strict annals form; 2) *biao* 表 (Tables), in 8 (10) scrolls of chronological tables of important people; 3) *zhi* 志 Memoirs/Discourses in 10 (18) scrolls, describing areas of state effort; and *zhuan* 傳 biographies in 70 scrolls, documenting important people. *Zhi* further divide into six categories: 1) classical books and commentaries; 2) philosophical works; 3) poems and poetic essays; 4) military texts; 5) astronomy, calendrics, and divination; and 6) medical formulas and cures. See Hulsewé 1993.

nourishing of male sexual energy and producing male off-spring. The editor adds the following note:

> The bedchamber arts constitute the climax of human nature and reach the supreme Dao. Thus the sage kings of antiquity regulated external pleasure and restrained inner passion by having rules for this purpose [sexual intercourse]. It is said: "The ancients used their [sexual] pleasure to regulate the hundred affairs." When pleasure is regulated, there will be harmony, peace and longevity. Those who are bewildered do not reflect. Hence, they will fall ill and harm their lives. (*Hanshu* 30. 1781)

This note indicates not only that the Han Chinese had a tradition of sexual cultivation which could be traced back to "old records," but that it was treasured and believed to have been sanctioned by the sage kings. It advocates that anyone practicing the teachings in these books properly can attain long life (*shou* 壽). Failure to follow the rules, on the other hand, will lead to disease and an early death (*yao* 夭). Therefore, the practice of the bedchamber arts was encouraged and considered as a supreme Dao (*zhidao* 至道) that ought to be acquired like moral excellence or virtue (*de* 德). It also connects to the Confucian idea that taking care of one's body and living long are filial qualities to pursue.

Another source with a clear reference to sexual life in Han China is the poem called "Tongsheng ge" 同聲歌 (Matching Voice Song) written by Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139) about a bride addressing her new husband on her nuptial night. The bride has just entered the inner quarters and is anticipating their first sexual encounter with excitement and trepidation, as if "about to touch boiling water." She informs the groom that she has made all the necessary preparations for an exciting, romantic evening by laying out new and clean pillows, bed mats, and coverlets, and filling the burner with rare incense. She locks the double doors, sheds her robes, removes her make-up and hair ornaments, and says:

> [I] roll out the picture scroll beside the pillows,
> The Plain Woman I shall take as my instructress,
> So that we can practice all the variegated postures,
> Those that an ordinary husband has rarely seen,
> Such as taught by Lord Old Yellow to the Yellow Emperor.
> No joy shall equal the delights of this first night,
> This [night] shall never be forgotten, however old we may grow.
> (Van Gulik 1961, 73; also Middendorf 2007, 92-93)

he poem suggests that picture scrolls of sexual positions (see Fig. 1a-b) were part of a bride's trousseau and that she was expected to use them to satisfy her new husband. Ulrike Middendorf sees the use of erotic images, as they still survive from Ming dynasty sources such as the *Su'e pian* 素娥篇 (Su E's Treatise; dat ca. 1640),[8] as part of the "processual (*sic*) nature of sexual intercourse," i.e., psychogenic stimulation, "resulting from erotic imagery or reading and viewing erotica—books, paintings and so forth" (2007, 85). Zhang Heng referred to these picture scrolls in another of his poem entitled "Qipian" 七篇 (Seven Volumes) (Van Gulik 1961, 76-77).

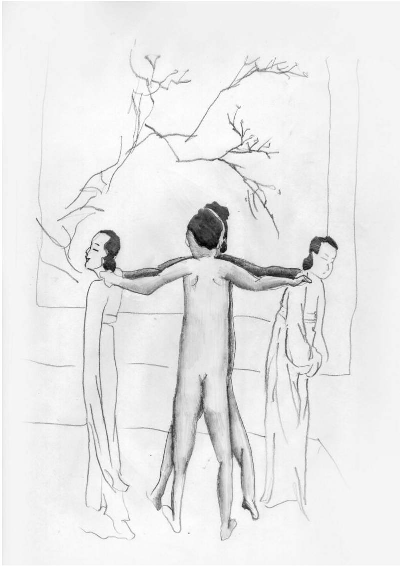

Fig. 1a. "The sun and moon unite their jade disks." *Su'e pian*, no. 19.

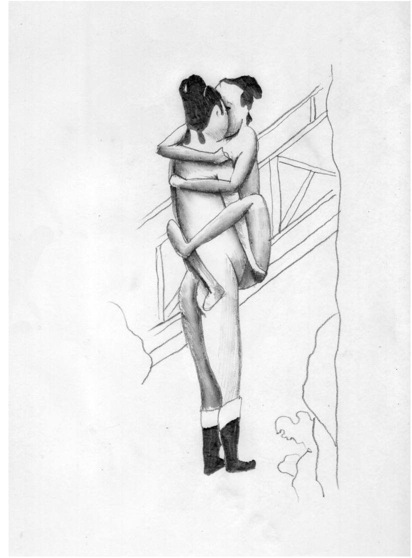

Fig. 1b. "Jade mountain stands alone." *Su'e pian*, no. 35.

Psychogenic stimulation as part of sexual culture has continued throughout the history of China. For example, the *Dale fu* 大樂賦 (Poetic

[8] The *Su'e pian* tells the story of Master Wu, a historical figure of the Tang dynasty, and his beautiful concubine, Su E. The couple engaged in sexual intercourse using different positions, which are illustrated with wood engravings and accompanied by verse. The book has 43 chapters in 4 volumes, with 10,000 characters and 90 illustrations. See Kinsey Institute; Murat 1984.

Essay on Great Happiness) of the Tang says: "They read the *Sunü jing* and look at the erotic pictures on the folding screen. Setting the folding screens around them, they lie down, reclining on the pillows" (Umekawa 2005, 258). Extant erotic picture scrolls and books tend to be from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties, testifying to their continued use.

Poems of both the Han and the Tang name the Plain Woman (Sunü 素女) and Lord Old Yellow (Huanglao 黃老) as sex teachers. Chapter 28 of the *Ishinpō* contains many fragments of texts associated with the former. The *Ishinpō* is similar in style and content to the sexual manuals, considered "textual descendants of the Mawangdui manuscripts" (Wile 1992, 84). There are many other masters of the bedchamber arts in the Western Han, as the fifth book of the bedchamber arts series in the *Yiwen zhi* testifies. The title "Tianlao and Other Masters' Way of the Yin," moreover, is another indication the Heavenly Elder was a prominent figure, not unlike the Lord Old Yellow.

Scholars have interpreted the ancient Chinese tradition of including sexual manuals in a bride's trousseau as a sign that they had an open and unabashed attitude toward sex. Given that Confucian ethics ruled family life and that ancestor worship and procreation were essential, it is likely to be wishful thinking that the Chinese treated sex in a liberal and light-hearted manner. What the emphasis on practice manuals really reveals is that the Chinese were practical about sex education for newlyweds so they could properly perform their duties to family and society by producing many sons to perpetuate the family line. However, this does not mean that pleasure and eroticism were excluded.

Heterosexual encounters were the norm in Han life, but other sexual preferences existed. Bret Hinsch's exploration of homosexuality in ancient China leads him to conclude that it "was at least tolerated, and simply accepted, by the political elite of Zhou China" (1990, 15-32). In the Han it was known as "cut sleeve" (*duanxiu* 斷袖), an expression that goes back to Emperor Ai (r. 6 BCE-1 CE), who supposedly cut off the sleeve of his imperial gown to avoid waking his lover Dongxian 董賢 who was sleeping on it.[9]

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[9] For more on homosexuality in China, see Hinsch 1990; Kapac 1992; Liu 1993, 287-98; Ruan 1997, 57-66; Van Gulik 1961, 28, 48, 62-63, 109.

Bisexuality was practiced by the elite. Historians acknowledge that the first three Han emperors—the founder Gaozu (206-195), Huidi (194-188), and Wendi (179-157)—were bisexual. Apart from regular sexual adventures with numerous consorts and court ladies, they had sexual relations with young men. Altogether the *Shiji* (ch. 125) and the *Hanshu* (ch. 93) record ten openly bisexual emperors (Hinsch 1990, 34-54).

References to the complexity of the social fabric in relation to sexual life in Han court literature are diverse, but the Mawangdui corpus and the "ancient classification of medical literature demonstrate that sex was regarded as a category of physical and spiritual cultivation, and that the categorization affected elite attitudes toward sex (especially the attitudes of elite males, who are deemed the chief beneficiaries of cultivation practices)" (Harper 2005). Together with the *Suwen* and other medical texts, they provide a glimpse of some aspects of the aristocrats' sexual life. However, the absence of specific works discussing sex in the social and intellectual framework of early China makes it difficult to build a complete or coherent picture of its role. Added to this difficulty is that records were compiled by and for the elite,[10] and information is scarce on how ordinary people conduct their sex lives.

Sex and Archaeology

Recent archaeological finds of erotic and sexual objects in Han graves provide valuable information for the study of sexual culture in early China. The most intriguing include one single and two double phalli (*zu* 祖) excavated from the tomb of Prince Liu Sheng 劉勝 (d. 113 BCE). One of the sons of Emperor Jingde (188-141) and his consort Dou Wan 竇綰, he was the ruler of Zhongshan. His tomb was discovered near Mancheng, Hebei, in 1968.

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[10] Harper notes: "Who read these manuscripts and who made use of the recipes, is a complex issue. However, it is fair to assume that these manuscripts were written by the upper echelon of society such as physicians, intellectuals or "men of words" and read by their colleagues, who would disseminate the information to the general populace as a physician would advise his patient" (2005, 93).

The single phallus is made of silver and hollow inside, and the two double phalli are of solid bronze (see Fig. 2). They were found in the middle chamber of the tomb complex and may have been used for ceremonial purposes (Eggebrecht 1994, #95). However, given that Liu Sheng was known to indulge in alcohol and women—he is rumored to have had 120 sons—it should not be surprising to find objects he or his concubines used. But what exactly they were and how they were used remain subject to speculation.

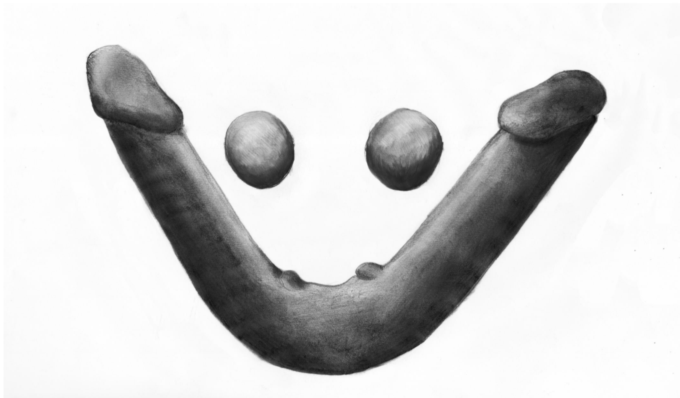

Fig. 2. Prince Liu Sheng's double phalli with oval stones.

Comparing the angle of an erect penis to that of the double phalli, Rodo Pfister speculates that two women could use them to pleasure themselves at the same time (2011, I:2.3-5)[11]. Later illustrations from the Ming show a pair of women using double olisbos, made of wood or ivory with two silk bands attached in the middle (Van Gulik 2004, Pls. IV, XVII; 1961, 163). A. and E. Franzblau show how the single phallus was ingeniously used by a woman to satisfy herself (1977, #39, #36) and note that these devices were much used in the Ming. Yimen has a good description of what an ivory double dildo looked like and how a single dildo was used by two women (1997, 172, 180).

Archaeologists also found two off-white egg-shaped objects made of stone next to the two double phalli. Some researchers believe that they symbolise the testicle. Pfister thinks that women used them for sexual

[11] The numbers refer to volume, section, and sub-section.

cultivation or to pleasure themselves (2011, I:2.3.2-5F 2).[12] Most scholars, however, believe that Liu Sheng and his women used these articles in their lifetimes.

Archaeological excavations in Shaanxi reveal other intriguing sexual aids: contraptions made of bone and iron that look like miniature cradles for penises [13] (see Fig. 3a).

Fig. 3a. Penis cradles.

In addition, various bronze dildos were excavated at the site (see Fig. 3b). They are hollow and crafted in fine detail. It is hard to say whether they were to be used by men or women, alone or in combination. Some Chinese scholars speculate that they were medical instruments used in treating frigidity or as sexual aids for intercourse in place of the male member. Most believe that the owner of the tomb (male or female?) utilized these sexual aids in his or her lifetime. Others hypothesize that the contraptions were used by a woman to pleasure herself, by a healthy man for sexual stimulation, by a man with sexual dysfunction for support, or by a eunuch or other castrate to satisfy his desires (Song 2004, 2:19).

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[12] On sexual aids employed by women for self pleasuring, see Van Gulik 1961, 163-36. On lesbianism, see Hinsch 1990, 173-77.

[13] Tomb M54 is one of over 90 tombs found in the northern part of Xi'an, in the suburb of Zhengwang Village, excavated in 2002. According to the excavation team, the tomb dates from the early Western Han. See Song 2004, 2:15-19.

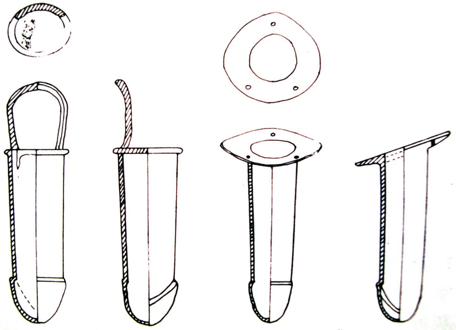

Fig. 3b. Bronze dildos.

Chen Hai speculates that women used the penis cradle for stimulation of the G-spot and adds that it can also be combined with the dildo (2004, 3:62-67) (see Fig. 3c). Although there are no written outlines or descriptions of their use, given the precision and ingenuity with which they were designed, they must have played an important role in their owner's life.

Fig. 3c. The combined use of cradle and dildo.

Just as interesting and intriguing are the beautifully carved phalli protruding horizontally from heads of humans, deer, monkeys, ducks, cows, pigs, and eagle's claws found in relics of the Dian 滇 culture, which flourished in southwest China during the Western Han (175-109 BCE). The state of Dian is first documented from the Bronze Age, when it was located in present-day Yunnan around the Dian Lake in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River. Lasting from about 1,000 BCE to the early

Han, it saw its prime during the Spring and Autumn period (770-479 BCE). Though Dian has been considered as a fringe culture of Chinese civilization, it was strongly influenced by the Shu and Chu cultures (Mawangdui and Zhangjiashan). With its animistic religion, it has left a wealth of ceremonial articles behind—most erotic objects being from Lijiashan and Yangpudou (Yang 2002).

Grave M113 contains various animal or human heads with phalli protruding from their backs or necks. The creators of these erotic objects painted the phalli in brownish red and the non-phallic parts in black lacquer with brownish-red resin to fill in details such as hairs and feathers. Other items in this trove include: a small shovel with a phallus as handle plus testicles on either side as it (see Fig. 4).

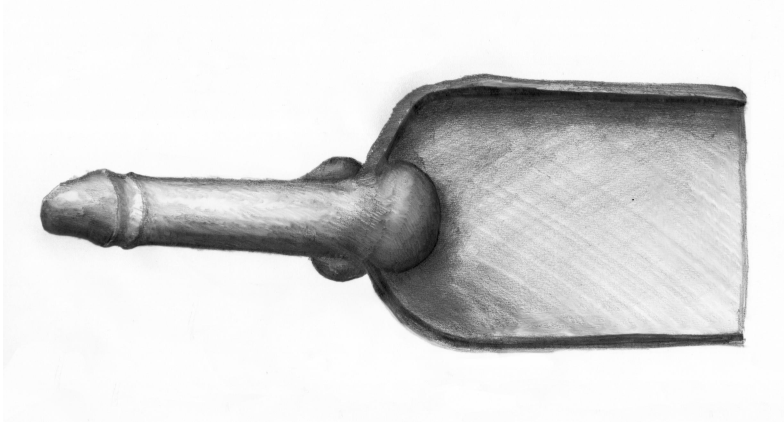

Fig. 4. Short shovel with phallic handle.

Even years after their discovery, little has been written about these objects. However, judging from their artistry, their association with domestic animals, and their ubiquitous depiction of common situations and application in household articles, phallus worship or fertility rites formed an important part of their tradition.[14] Again, being grave goods and without any written context or description, it is difficult to ascertain

[14] For a detailed discussion on phallicism in connection to the earth god in China, see Eberhard 1968, 188-89. See also Karlgren 1930; Waley 1931. On *zu* 祖 as the phallic god of the ancient Chinese, see Hentze 1951, 17-18. For more on the society of the Orchid Tower (Lanting 蘭亭), where men, old and young, meet to practise "harmonising *qi*" rituals, see Bischoff 1985, 4.

their use and purpose or to draw any conclusion on sexual, social, or religious customs.

Other archaeological finds of erotic objects in Han graves include figurines and relief drawings depicting embracing and/or kissing couples. In 1987, archaeologists from Hejiang County in Sichuan excavated the figurine of an embracing couple made of red clay (Xie and Xu 1992, 48). A stone relief depicting a kissing couple was found in Leshan (Lim 1987, 130); another, of a man kissing a woman with his right arm over her shoulder and his right hand on her breast, was unearthed in Pengsheng in 1942 (1987, 131; see Figs. 5a-b).

Fig. 5a. Kissing couple.

Fig. 5b. Intimate couple

In 1972, archaeologists further unearthed stone drawings of an intimate scene in which a man and a woman, kneeling in front of each other, are holding hands and kissing. They decorate one side of a stone coffin in Rongjing County, Sichuan (Lim 1987, 128; see Fig. 5c). Another intimate scene of a man and woman embracing in the presence of two others was found in Fayang County, Sichuan. Relief drawings on coffins often illustrate scenes from the life of the deceased, which could mean that intimacy between couples in public was an accepted social custom (1987, 129; see Fig. 5d).

Fig. 5c. Kissing couple under arches.

Fig. 5d. Intimate couple in social setting

The most sexually explicit objects among recent archaeological finds include two bricks or tiles with illustrations found in an Eastern Han tomb at Xindu, Sichuan.[15] They have been variously called "picture of pleasure under the mulberry tree" (*sangle tu* 桑樂圖), "mating in the wild among the mulberries" (*sangjian yehe* 桑間野合), "picture of mating in the wild" (*yehe tu* 野合圖), and "picture of the Supreme Intermediary"

[15] Working on a Sichuan mountain slope in 1979, builders came across a brick grave from the Eastern Han with more than ten bricks decorated with various themes. See Xie 1992, 48; Kulturstiftung Ruhr 1995, 411-13; Rawson 1996, 202.

(*Gao Mei tu* 高禖圖). Chen Lei argues that the latter name is most appropriate because he believes that the custom had its origin in the rite of connecting a couple through an intermediary, whereas the other names convey only the activity and location but not the tradition or religious background. Mulberry is often associated with the spring season and is mentioned in connection with other fertility rites in the Han (1995).[16]

The first brick shows three naked men with full erections and a woman lying on her back on the ground with her legs spread-eagled under the canopy of a luxuriant [mulberry] tree; the second seems like a continuation of the sexual encounter: two men have satisfied themselves and look as if they are recuperating, while the third is still in the coitus position (see Fig. 6).

It is possible that these two erotic scenes represent remnants of a Spring Festival dating from the Zhou era, in honor of the Supreme Intermediary, when young men and women came together to mate in nature in the ancient fertility rite called "mating in the wild."

[16] See also Bodde 1975, 243-60; Eberhard 1968, 130-32; Chen Y. 1995, 18-20; and Hong 1995, 60-62.

Fig. 6. Gao Mei illustrated bricks.

Confucius (551-479 BCE), amazingly enough, was the product of such an encounter. Sima Qian states that his "father mated with a woman from the Yan tribe in the wild [under the mulberry tree] to bring forth Confucius" (*Shiji* 47). There are no records of him having suffered discrimination because of this conception. Either the custom was common practice and widely sanctioned in ancient China or later editors have extirpated all evidence to his questionable social status.

However, without any concrete evidence that links objects to written sources, it is difficult to know what the archaeological evidence represents. Furthermore, being funerary objects, it is hard to know if the items represent an aspect of life or whether they are meant for the afterlife (Berger 1988, 46-53). Despite all this, the archaeological finds are intriguing and reflect the variety of attitudes toward sex in the Han era.

Since many erotic objects were found in the western part of China, it is possible that this region had a different view of, and attitude toward, sex. The biography of Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179-117 BCE), a young man fond of women, wine, and sword-fighting, strengthens this assumption, when it describes how he defended himself from accusations of being lecherous by saying that he "grew up in the west," implying that

sexual matters were viewed differently there.[17] These diverse archaeological objects show that sex as revealed by archaeology is a relatively unexplored area that awaits further attention.

All these sources, though limited in range, still reveal certain aspects of the Han perception of sex. We are not sure how the sexual customs and attitudes fit into the social milieu of the time, but it is certain that their understanding does not fit into *Webster's* and other modern definitions. As Kristofer Schipper says: "It is nonsense to think that sexuality in traditional China was practiced freely" (1993, 146). Sex in ancient China belongs to an encompassing sex-health-medicine complex that is part and parcel of Chinese thinking. There is no better book to study this interconnectedness than the "Yellow Emperor's Basic Questions."

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[17] See Harbsmaier's translation of the *Meirenfu* 美人賦 (Poetic Essay on Beautiful Women), preserved in the Song collection *Guwen yuan* 古文苑 (1995, 365-57). See also Van Gulik 1961, 67-69.

Chapter Two

The Yellow Emperor's Text

> *Once the disease has manifested itself, it is too late to seek a physician. It is like starting to dig a well when one is thirsty or starting to forge weapons after war has broken out.*
>
> *—Suwen*

The correlation of sex, health, longevity, and medicine is well exemplified in the *Suwen* not only because it is one of the earliest Chinese medical texts but because of what it represents in Chinese medicine. Almost every medical work cites it in some way or another, and traditional "physicians have regularly presented later innovations as supplements to these founding canons [*Suwen* and *Lingshu*]" (Hanson 2001, 263). Citing the *Suwen* is an established tradition of medical writers, beginning with Zhang Ji's 張機 (150-219 CE) *Shanghan lun* 傷寒論 (Discourse on Cold Disorders) and Sun Simiao's 孫思邈 (681-782) *Qianjin yaofang* 千金要方 (Essential Recipes Worth A Thousand Pieces of Gold, 7th c.), continuing to the present day.

Doctors and authors of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) still consider the *Suwen* as the historical root of their craft.[1] In fact, theory and methods of TCM are quite different. Modern practitioners are not usually familiar with the text, and almost all students are trained with textbooks that cite the *Suwen* only in support of the modern allopathically acceptable version of Chinese medicine.

Despite that, interest in the *Suwen* has generated many scholarly projects (Sivin 1993, 196-215). Studies such as Keiji Yamada's "The For-

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[1] See Hsu (1999, 168-78) for the use of the classics in China today. Wang Hongtu (1999, 2) and Akahori (1989, 19) note that it still serves as a textbook in some schools of China and Japan.

mation of the *Huang-ti nei-ching*" (1974) and David Keegan's dissertation on its structure and compilation (1988) have paved the way for critical, philological research. Most ambitious to date is the *Suwen* Project, initiated in 1990 by Paul Unschuld at the Institute for the History of Medicine at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich.[2] He says:

> Reading the *Suwen* not only increases our understanding of the roots of Chinese medicine as an integral aspect of Chinese civilization. It provides a much needed starting-point for serious and well-informed discussions on differences and parallel between European and Chinese approaches to essential threats such as illness and the risk of early death. (2003, x)

Since the start of the project, scholars have collected and indexed over 3,000 articles from Chinese periodicals as well as over 600 monographs by Chinese and Japanese authors (Tessenow 2002, 649). In the initial stages of my research I benefited most from the concordance to the text (Ren 1986) and the extensive research summary (Wang et al. 1997). The latter, in particular, documents the tremendous interest and scope of *Suwen* studies undertaken over the centuries. They show that health, sickness, and the risk of early death are closely connected to sexual encounters in the Chinese mind. However, scholars have not paid much attention to the connections between sex, health, longevity, and medicine in the *Suwen* despite their growing interest in the Mawangdui manuals and the history of medicine.

Sex being a fundamental need means that understanding it is important for comprehending human behavior, which in turn leads to the study and development of medical theories. The lack of interest in exploring this connection may be due to the scholarly perception of the *Suwen* as a medical book dealing only with medical affairs. As this study will reveal, however, medical theories are influenced by doctrines on nourishing life, of which sexual cultivation is a branch. The fact that there is no exact word for "sex" in early Chinese may also be a contributing factor. The text alludes to sex through its function in relation to

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[2] Two books have since appeared: Unschuld 2003; Tessenow and Unschuld 2008. Two further volumes are in preparation: an annotated English translation of the complete text, and technical aids such as concordances, glossary, and annotated bibliography.

medical theories or social norms, such as lifestyle. It sprinkles the notion of sex and sexuality over 37 of its 79 chapters.

However, despite these obstacles, it is still important to undertake this study because the *Suwen* represents the shift from proto-medical thinking, such as found in the Mawangdui medical corpus, to well-defined and systematized medical theories on which Classical Chinese Medicine (CCM) and TCM base their foundations.[3] As Yoshinobu Sakade notes, "To solve any problem relating to Chinese traditional medicine, a thorough knowledge of the medical classics of the Yellow Emperor, the *Suwen* and the *Lingshu*, is absolutely indispensable" (1989, 20). Similarly Gwei-Djen Lu emphasizes that "no real understanding [of Chinese medicine] can be attained without the basis of the *Huang-ti nei-ching*" (1980, 9). Hence, it seems appropriate to start with the *Suwen* in order to study sex and health in early medical theories.

This is easier said than done. As Nathan Sivin notes, "no published translation of any substantial part of the *Huangdi neijing* meets current standards for the establishment of a critical text, philological accuracy and a faithful depiction of concepts" (1993, 207). This was still the situation in 2002 when I started my research. There were only four complete and various partial translations in English. In addition, none of these translations are based on philological studies, so that they have only limited value for textual, historical, and philological analysis.

How, then, can we find sex in the text if there is no word for it? There are many terms to look at. For example, "having sex" is expressed either euphemistically, e.g., "entering the bedchamber" (*rufang* 入房), symbolically, e.g., "penetrate" or "inner" (*nei* 內), or metaphorically, e.g., "hidden twists" (*yinqu* 隱曲). Since the *Suwen* is not a sexual manual,

[3] It is important to differentiate CCM from TCM. TCM today, with its nomenclature based on Western bio-medicine, is a development of CCM, a new phenomenon of the late fifties. Hsu defines TCM as "revised Chinese medicine that has been promoted by the government of PRC" (1999, 168-223). For more discussion of how TCM was created, see Fruehauf 1999; Farquhar 1994; Sivin 1987, 16-23; Unschuld 1985, 229-62. CCM, on the other hand, can be traced back thousands of years to inscriptions in oracle bones (14th -11th c. B.C.E.). Some of these are still part of the medical vocabulary in the scholarly tradition. See Unschuld 1985 for the history of how Chinese medical thought developed since the Shang; see Hsu 1999 on how the practice is transmitted today.

terms relating to sex are scattered throughout the book and subsumed within medical theories relating to the causes and etiology of diseases.

Also, passages related to sexuality are usually hidden in other contexts. To find them, I started by identifying obvious terms that reflect reproductive physiology. They include entering the bedchamber (*rufang*), urological system (*shen* 腎, kidney), *jing* 精 usually translated "essence," Conception Vessel (任脈 *renmai*), Penetrating Vessel (衝脈 *chongmai*), Governing Vessel (督脈 *dumai*), testicles (*luan* 卵), scrotum (*nang* 囊), breasts (*ru* 乳), uterus (*bao* 胞), fetus (*tai* 胎), menstruation (*yueshi* 月事), fertility or pregnancy (*youzi* 有子), and other, similar terms.

After identifying these terms, I used Ren Yingqiu's concordance to find passages that contained them.[4] In addition, I familiarized myself with theories and terminologies of CCM and TCM associated with obstetrics, gynecology, reproductive physiology, sexual dysfunction, sexual anatomy, and other relevant components. I also studied early Daoist texts that mention sexual cultivation. The passages selected in this study, then, are the result of these cross-references. Since the sexual manuals found at Mawangdui share the closest *zeitgeist* with the *Suwen*, I used them for comparison.

Accurate and faithful translation from one language to another is always difficult, but even more so with a time lapse of over 2,000 years. In his book *Who Translates?* Douglas Robinson sets up a series of post-rationalist perspectives to explain this experience: every translator, he says, has a different experience; many recognize that their work is sometimes governed by forces beyond rational control (2001). As for my own translations, I use the three different categories recommended by Constantin Milsky: 1) transliteration, 2) literal and symbolic translation, and 3) explanatory translation (1989, 79-80). Sometimes the translation may seem stilted or grammatically illogical, but that is because I aim for philological accuracy and forgo elegance in style. The interpretation and elaboration of medical theories, I leave to the medical scholars.

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[4] I use this to refer to the text. For example, 1.3.1 refers to *Suwen* ch. 1, Section 3, Paragraph 1. *Lingshu* passages follow the same numbering system.

Early History

The *Suwen* is a complex text, and scholarship regarding its creation continues to this day. The bibliographic section of the *Hanshu* lists seven titles under the heading "Prescription Techniques" in the section on "Medical Classics." They are:

1. *Huangdi neijing*	黃帝內經	Huangdi's Inner Classic, 18 scrolls
2. *Huangdi waijing*	黃帝外經	Huangdi' Outer Classic, 37 scrolls
3. *Bian Que neijing*	扁鵲內經	Bian Que's Inner Classic, 9 scrolls
4. *Bian Que waijing*	扁鵲外經	Bian Que's Outer Classic, 12 scrolls
5. *Bai shi neijing*	白氏內經	Master Bai's Inner Classic, 38 scrolls
6. *Bai shi waijing*	白氏外經	Master Bai's Outer Classic, 36 scrolls
7. *Pang pian*	旁篇	Appended chapters, 25 scrolls

Most of these are lost today, but they all refer to major medical or mythological figures as their key protagonists.

Who, then, is Huangdi 黃帝, the Yellow Emperor? How did he come to pay such a big role in the *Neijing*? A mythical culture hero, Sima Qian names him as the original ancestor of the Chinese people and he is still worshiped as such at his alleged birthplace in Henan today. The *Hanshu* mentions him in works listed under the categories of Daoism, yin-yang, five phases, military arts, calendar, astrology, medicine, sexual cultivation, immortality, and many more, making him a well-known and popular figure at the time (Peerenboom 1993, 3).

It seems natural and logical to dedicate a medical text to such an august figure. The other reason could be political. Medical manuscripts excavated from Mawangdui and Mianyang testify to the fact that different kinds of medical knowledge were disseminated across geographical and cultural regions (Harper 1998, 30-36). Elisabeth Hsu concludes that "from the beginning the medical authority of the elite did not present itself as a homogenous unity" (2001a, 17). This is supported by the *Shiji*, which notes that the Western Han physician Chunyu Yi 淳于意, a native of the state of Qi, had rivals both "internal and external" (105.2)— implying not only that they were from different schools but also from different regions. Pre-*Suwen* medical knowledge appears to have come from different lineages and localities; the *Suwen* confirms that different tech-

niques of curing diseases originated from different parts of China (12.1).[5] It is possible that in order to please all the factions and lineages, the most neutral and best solution was to link the medical classic with the Yellow Emperor.

The question whether the *Huangdi neijing* mentioned in the *Hanshu* is the same or related to the text extant today is still under discussion. The surviving text has had the same collective title for both *Suwen* and *Lingshu* only since the Northern Song (960-1179); it is often abbreviated "*Neijing*." According to Nathan Sivin, the title *Huangdi neijing* usually comes before *Suwen* (Basic Questions), *Lingshu* (Spiritual Pivot), *Taisu* 太素 (Great Simplicity), and *Mingtang* 明堂 (Hall of Light). He adds:

> Critical scholarship over many centuries has established that none of the four is a pristine Han text, and that none is a fabrication. The issue is rather the violence done in each case by editors aiming to restore the text. All except the *Suwen* are Tang or Song reconstructions from recensions and fragments of Han origin. Although the *Suwen* was not lost, it shows signs of more substantial revision by its Tang and Song editors than the other books. (1993, 196)

The earliest listing of a text entitled *Suwen* appears in the preface of Zhang Ji's *Shanghan lun* (ca. 200). As Marta Hanson notes, "Chinese physicians have traditionally considered the *Neijing* to be the foundation of medical theory and the *Shanghan lun* to be the basis for clinical practice" (2001, 263). Zhang Ji confesses that in compiling the *Shanghan lun*,

> I have diligently sought the guidance of the ancients; comprehensively collected a great number of recipes, widely collected the various remedies, and consulted the *Suwen*, *Jiujuan* 九卷 (Nine Scrolls), *Bashiyi nan* 八十 一 難 (Eighty-one Difficult Issues, i.e., *Nanjing*), and *Yinyang dalun* 陰陽大論 (The Great Treatise on Yin Yang), etc. (Mitchell al et. 1999, 29)

It is tempting to read *Suwen jiujuan* as "The *Suwen* in Nine Scrolls" but, as Yu Zihan argues, the phrase should be read as indicating two different texts, "the *Jiujuan* being a predecessor of, or identical to, the *Lingshu*" (Unschuld 2003, 6).

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[5] Eberhard notes that ancient Chinese society emerged from influences of a number of local cultures and environmental systems, which brought distinguishable traits into eventual common Sinic stock (1968, 1-31).

Not long after, Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215-282 CE) wrote the preface to his *Jiayi jing* 甲乙經 (Classics of A and B), noting that the bibliographic section of the *Hanshu* lists a *Huangdi neijing* in 18 scrolls (*juan*). He adds that in his time, they had a *Zhenjing* 針經 (Needle Classic) in 9 scrolls and a *Suwen* in 9 scrolls. Together these made up 18 scrolls which may have constituted what was listed earlier as *Neijing*. He mentions the *Zhenjing* in his preface, but only uses the *Jiuquan* in his work. Given the similarity of content of the *Jiayi jing* and the *Lingshu*, it is possible that the *Jiujuan*, *Zhenjing*, and *Lingshu* all go back to the same original text.

No edition of the *Lingshu* has survived prior to the 12th century, and all current versions are based on Shi Song's edition of 1155. The earliest extant edition appeared under the Yuan Dynasty (1339-40) from a publishing house called Gulin shutang 古林書堂 (Sivin 1993, 206). A copy of this edition is preserved at the National Library in Beijing (Zhongguo 1991, 1, #4).

What, then, happened to the *Huangdi waijing*, the Outer Classic, after it was listed in the *Hanshu* bibliography? David Keegan discounts Fang Yizhi's 方以智 and Ilza Veith's interpretation that *nei* means "inside the body, hence internal, as in internal medicine," and that the *Waijing* discusses external heteropathies (1988, 9-10). Joseph Needham thinks *nei* means corporeal and *wai* means incorporeal (1959, 271-72). I think that the *Neijing* was probably the work of scholar-physicians meant for members of the elite associated with the court, whereas the *Waijing* was a handbook for those who treated the masses: itinerant doctors known as skill masters (*fangshi* 方士) described in the dynastic histories (DeWoskin 1983, 42) and common doctors (*zhongyi* 眾醫) mentioned by Chunyu Yi in the *Shiji*. Both these groups were supposedly inferior in their practice (Hsu 2001a, 5).

Fangshi had skills in the techniques of medicine, divination, astrology, calendar calculation, magic, exorcism, sexual cultivation, and so on. They also had talents of storytelling and political persuasion (DeWoskin 1983, 23-24). First documented in the 3rd century BCE, they were often from outlying areas and pursued practices distinctly different from court orthodoxy. Medical skill masters, in comparison to elite physicians, were assigned a lower social status because of their exorcistic and mediumistic practices performed among the common people.

This difference is obvious in the *Suwen*, where the Yellow Emperor learns that the skill masters could not differentiate the inner organs and

viscera or bowels (*zangfu* 臟腑) (11.1). It implies that they did not have the same medical knowledge as the scholar-physicians. Their inferior status is further emphasized when the Yellow Emperor says that he originally bestowed "words from the classics" or techniques on them, but when they put them to use they were not completely successful (74.5.1)—again implying that they were less able than the physicians. The Yellow Emperor brings the inferior status up once more when he comments that the *fangshi* had not reached the standard in skill to treat cold-induced diseases and did not understand medical theories (74.5.4).

It is obvious from these passages that the *Suwen* physicians looked down upon the skill masters and considered them "outsiders" (*wai*) as opposed to being the "elite" of the inner circle (*nei*). One possible scenario is that the *Waijing* was compiled while the *fangshi* had some influence at court, for example, during the reign of Emperor Wu (140-86 BCE) (DeWoskin 1983, 4). However, after his death they lost their influence and the inner group, who dominated the office responsible for the compilation of records, began their systematic ousting. In the process, medical men of skills were marginalized by elite physicians and the *Waijing* was gradually incorporated into the *Neijing* or done away with entirely. Hermann Tessenow points out that the inner tradition has survived because "it was considered more central [and] important." Short of a new discovery of a manuscript that contains the *Waijing*, the question of its origin, content, and fate will continue to invite hypotheses. The compilation of the *Suwen* is comparatively easier to trace.

Compilation and Title

The *Suwen* is written in the form of a catechism—a textual commentary in question and answer format. Of the 79 chapters or discourses (*lun* 論) in the received version, 68 are structured as dialogue between the Yellow Emperor and his three ministers who serve as interlocutors: Qi Bo in 60 dialogues, Lei Gong 雷公 in 7, and Gui Yuqu 鬼臾區 in 1 (Unschuld 2003, 8). The *Lingshu* and *Taisu* are written in the same format.

Tessenow has conducted a thorough analysis of the style and content of the *Suwen* components by comparing it with the *Taisu* in terms of rhyme structure, dialogue patterns, and commentaries. He has also identified insertions by editors and compilers. He notes that many passages

are rhymed, probably because they came from oral transmission—a feature not always easy to recognise since the pronunciation of characters has changed (2002, 649). The *Lingshu* confirms that oral transmission was part of the medical tradition (28.1), and David Keegan concludes that the *Suwen* is made up of many historical layers, which he identifies as "compilations of compilations" (1988, 64).

It is possible that snatches of medical treatises, which have escaped the literary bonfire ordered by the First Emperor of the Qin in 213 BCE, became part of his systematization and standardization campaign. The process permeated every facet of early society: not only axle width, legal codes, weights, and measures were standardized, but script and literature, too. Therefore, the compilation of the *Suwen* could have started off with this "unification spirit."

Another possible impetus to compilation was the edict of Han Emperor Cheng (r. 32-7 BCE). In 26, he "organized a group of medical officials headed by the court physician Li Zhuguo 李柱國 to collate and revise the imperial collection of medical books preserved at the national library (Ma KW 1989, 7). The compilation of the *Suwen* may well be the fruit of this first government-sponsored collation and revision of medical works. The formation and compilation of the *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*) of Confucius) (Makeham 1996) and *Zhoubi suanjing* 周髀算經 (Mathematical Classic of the Zhou Gnomon) came about through the same procedure (Cullen 1996, 148-56).

Among the three dialogue partners of the Yellow Emperor, Gui Youyi appears only in chapter 66. Being a possible addition by the Tang editor Wang Bing 王冰 (fl. 762), this may represent a later layer. Similarly Lei Gong only appears from chapter 76 onward and may thus indicate another layer. The *Lingshu* has three further figures: Bo Gao 伯高, Shao Yu 少俞, and Shao Shi 少師. This suggests that there were several subgroups which developed various doctrines yet were subsumed under the Yellow Emperor lineage, which remained dominant. Keiji Yamada believes that Shao Shi as the teacher of the Yellow Emperor signifies the earliest layer. Bo Gao, in 10 discourses, tends to be associated more with anatomy, whereas Qi Bo is generally linked with questions of the universe and the techniques of acupuncture (1979, 87-88).

Each faction must have accumulated the results of their observations and investigations of vessel theory and clinical practice over a long time and summarized their findings in various manuscripts. They were

eventually brought together into one compilation, which represented diverse and contrasting opinions on existing medical theories. In the end, the Yellow Emperor School triumphed and came to dominate the *Suwen*. The text could thus have started as a proto-compilation in the 3rd century BCE under a different name, to be then compiled and recompiled under the title *Suwen*.

In sum, it is difficult to say how the *Suwen* was structured before Wang Bing rewrote, re-edited, reorganised, and expanded it in the Tang. Wang Bing created his *Suwen* in a socially and politically unstable milieu caused by the rebellions of An Lushan 安祿山 and Shi Siming 史思明 between 755 and 763. It is as if he needed to emphasize that one has to take one's life into one's own hand and be responsible for one's health. Thus, he consciously moved those chapters pertaining to nourishing life, living in harmony with nature, and preventing diseases to the front of the book, engendering a mindset appropriate to his time. Doing so, he showed that medical theories had their origin in doctrines on nourishing life.

The dating of the early *Suwen* is aided greatly by the Mawangdui manuscripts which provide evidence that Chinese classical medicine was still at the stage of forming pathological and physiological theories around 168 BCE. Both the *Zubi shiyi mai jiujing* 足臂十一脈灸經 (Cauterization Classic of the Eleven Vessels of Foot and Forearm) and the *Yinyang shiyi mai jiujing, jiaben* 陰陽十一脈灸經甲本 (Cauterization Classic of the Eleven Yin and Yang Vessels, Version A) mention only eleven vessels whereas the *Suwen* deals with twelve. In the *Wushi'er bingfang* 五十二病方 (Fifty Two Recipes) there is no mention of the five-phases doctrine and the yin-yang theory is only implied in its rudimentary form in the expressions *pin* 牝 (male) and *mu* 牡 (female). There is little mention of the organ system. But the most telling is that no acupuncture or moxa points appear anywhere in the text.

In contrast, the various points in the *Suwen* are clearly named and allocated and the various vessel theories are systematized. Chapters 10, 11, and 13 of the *Lingshu* give a full description of the vessel system. No doubt *Suwen* medical thinking is of another level than that propagated in the Mawangdui manuscripts and that advocated by the Mianyang physicians, whose system is documented in a bronze figurine with nine vessels unearthed in Sichuan.

Scholars such as Donald Harper (1998), Vivienne Lo (2001), and Li Ling (1993) agree that the medical theories as documented in the Mawangdui manuscripts were still in the making, which indicates that the *Suwen* was compiled after Mawangdui. Most scholars concur that, judging from the style of writing and the language used, the compilation of the text could not have taken place before 100 BCE, although ideas and concepts are older—possibly dating back to the Warring States.[6] Arguments that support this assumption include the fact that no versions of the text are mentioned in the *Shiji* of 104 BCE, not even in the biographies of "famous physicians" (ch. 105).

The earliest mention of the *Huangdi neijing* is in the *Qilue* 七略 (Seven Summaries) catalogue of the Han court library, supposedly compiled by Liu Xin 劉歆 (46 BCE-23 CE), who arrived at court in Chang'an in 26 BCE. Ban Gu (32-92 CE), too, lists it in the *Hanshu*, presumably on the basis of the *Qilue*, in the subcategory "medical classics." Provided that these materials have survived in the present *Suwen*, it was first compiled around the beginning of the Common Era.

There is still no consensus with regard to the meaning of the term *suwen* which has been translated variously—the word *su* going back to the idea of plain silk and thus meaning "simple" or "plain" (Wile 1992, 227n2). Modern scholars such as Kristofer Schipper (1993, 100-01), Giovanni Maciocia (1994, 685), and Yang Shou-zeng (1997, 372) have translated it as "Simple Questions." Nathan Sivin bases his reading on the first commentator, Quan Yuanqi 全元起 (6th c.), who glosses *su* as *ben* 本, i.e., "basic" (1997, 454) and translates it as "Basic Questions." He is followed by Unschuld (2003, 18-21), Hanson (2001, 262), Despeux (1989, 128), Hsu (1999, 8), and Furth (1999, 20n2). Other variations include "Candid Questions" (Porkert 1974, 359) "Questions about Living Matters" (Lu 1980, 1), and "Plain Questions."

Since there is no agreement as to the meaning of the term, the content of the book might provide some hint. Nathan Sivin sums it up as:

> A view of the relation between the cosmos, the immediate environment, and the human body and emotions, of the relation between living habits and health, of body contents, of vital and pathological processes, of signs and

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[6] See Keegan 1988, 18; Yamada 1979, 67-89; Unschuld 1985, 67-100; Sivin 1994. 199; and Lu 1980, 89-90.

> symptoms, and of how diagnoses and therapeutic decisions are formed by evaluating the patient in all these contexts. (1993, 198)

Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallée puts it differently:

> The *Suwen* deals with physiology (particularly the study of the viscera and the pathways of *qi*), etiology (through the description of pathological mechanisms), diagnosis (by pulse examination and other methods of investigation), and treatment (by acupuncture, moxibustion, phytotherapy, massage, and exhortation to a spiritual life). (1989, 67)

The subtitle of the first volume of the *Suwen* Project describes it in terms of "Nature, Knowledge, Imagery," indicating just how diverse the content is. In a 2004 lecture, moreover, Hermann Tessenow graded *Suwen* subject matters in terms of textual content: 1) diagnostics and prognosis; 2) therapy by needling; 3) pathology; and 4) hygiene and health care.

All these content descriptions and summaries are correct and relevant. Since it is a medical book, it is not surprising that the bulk of the text is on diagnosis, prognosis, therapy, and pathology. However, the importance of elements on nourishing life should not be overlooked. Lifestyle, people's relationship with nature, preventive medicine, and sexual behavior are all topics that run like a thread through the text.

In other words, the book is a multifaceted document with established medical theories, such as the yin-yang and five phases doctrines, at its base, relying on an objectified view of the world with no traces of personal search for higher-level truth or understanding of immortality like Daoist texts (Kohn 1992; Engelhardt 1998). Though the sum total of the text pertaining to longevity and sexual methods is small in comparison to its more medical parts, it is yet an important source on sex in early China.

The *Suwen* being the result of "the grouping and regrouping of a number of shorter documents, some independent of each other and others designed to explicate or attack earlier texts" (Keegan 1988, 252-54), has a long tradition and transmission history. It is possible that part of its knowledge existed before writing was established and was transmitted orally as indicated in the *Lingshu*, where Qi Bo says: "This is what teachers of the past passed on to me through oral instruction" (28.1). The extant *Suwen*, therefore, could have begun as snatches of oral history or

pieces of text written by numerous unknown authors who came from various medical traditions and different localities and who wrote at different times.

The *Suwen* differs from other Han medical books because it is not only about medical theories but interweaves medicine with concepts of philosophy, physiology, lifestyle, and more. Others are more technical textbooks, containing recipes and instructions. The questions in the *Suwen* may be basic but they are certainly not easy. The multifaceted content and laconic style of the work makes it impossible to understand its meaning without reading its various commentaries, of which Wang Bing's is the most important.

The Wang Bing Edition

The oldest extant *Suwen* was reconstructed by Wang Bing (fl. 762) and edited by Gao Baoheng 高保衡 et al. (11th c.). Wang Bing admits in his preface that he "collated and revised the text by rearranging the order, rewriting the sentences, and adding new chapters." Until an earlier copy is unearthed, scholars assume that he added the *Qi dalun* 七大論 (Seven Comprehensive Discourses) on the theory of the five phases and six *qi* (chs. 66-71, 74), about a third of the text. Gao Baoheng further suggests in a comment to Wang Bing's preface that these discourses are the same as the "Comprehensive Discourses on Yin and Yang" which Zhang Ji lists together with the *Suwen*, *Jiujuan*, and *Nanjing* 難經 (Classic of Difficult Issues) in the preface of his *Shanghan lun*.

Wang Bing's labor resulted in 24 scrolls with 81 chapters, of which chapters 72 and 73 are missing—apparently already lacking in his master-copy, the edition by Quan Yuanqi (see Duan 2001). His version formed the basis of all subsequent editions. Even if one takes out the chapters assumed to have been added by Wang Bing, it is still a text that has been "molested" by many scholars or/and physicians from different medical lineages and localities over more than 600 years. The received edition thus contains many different explanations for the same phenomenon, contradictory theories, erroneous arrangements, different annotations, as well as passages that merge text and commentary.

Hermann Tessenow points out examples of contradictory theories as found in chapters 16.4 and 64.4 (2002, 656). Ma Kanwen notes many

mistakes caused by omissions, erroneous arrangements, copying errors, wrong annotations, and misunderstandings (1989, 11-16).[7] These difficulties are further compounded by the fact that Wang Bing made quite a few mistakes in his commentary. Gao Baoheng and his co-editors point out mistakes not only in Wang Bing's rearrangement of the chapters of Quan Yuanqi's edition, but also demonstrate many misunderstandings. The second half of the text probably arose from the later *Suwen* compilation (i.e., between Han and Tang) (Tessenow 2002, 648). Thus, the extant *Suwen* text is now understood as a record of the process of discussion and dispute, by which classical medical doctrines are formed (Keegan 1988, 252-54).

Little is known about Wang Bing's life except from the *Tangren wuzhi* 唐人物質 (Record of Tang Personalities), which mentions that he was an official with the rank of Minister Coachman (*taipu ling* 太僕令). The Western Han had a post called Minister of Husbandry (*taipu* 太僕), who was responsible for the maintenance of the imperial stables, horses, carriages, and coach houses, as well as for the supply of horses to the armed forces.[8] This sounds like an unlikely post for a "man of letters." Catherine Despeux suggests that the title may be a corrupt form of Divination Director (*taibu ling* 太卜令) (2001, 43)—a bit more likely given that Wang Bing professes in his preface that he admired the Dao and was partial to longevity practices in his youth. It also lends weight to the assumption that he added the seven chapters which deal with the doctrine of the five phases and six *qi* used in explaining the relationship that ancient Chinese observed between climate and a broad range of natural phenomena, including health and illness.

Wang Bing began to edit the *Suwen* in 751, using Quan Yuanqi's *Suwen xunjie* 素問訓解 (Instructions and Explanation of the *Suwen*) from about 503 as his master copy. It is not clear how many chapters this version had. Nathan Sivin notes that scroll 7 had been lost, so that this version contained only 8 scrolls and 68 chapters (1993, 202). Paul Unschuld, on the other hand, maintains that Wang Bing restructured Quan Yuanqi's edition of 69 "discourses" in 9 scrolls into a volume of 79 chap-

[7] He sees problems in chapters 2.3, 5.3, 3.3.4, 3.2.2, and 43.5 (1989, 7-18).

[8] See Wang 1949, 150–151; 153–154; de Crespigny 2007, 1223; Bielenstein 1980, 34–35.

ters in 24 scrolls (2003, 46). However, the recent reconstruction by Duan Yishan, has 70 chapters in 8 scrolls with scroll 7 missing (2001, 1).

Wang Bing finished compiling, editing, and writing his *Suwen* in 762. His monumental work includes over 500 passages of commentary and citations of 536 passages from 38 texts (Unschuld 2003, 40-41). David Keegan notes that, according to the textual tradition, Wang Bing's version "was not simply a compilation, but the last in a progressive series of compilations" (1988, 254). He further emphasizes that none of the *Huangdi neijing* compilations we have today are identical to texts known under this title in the Han. Hermann Tessenow similarly concludes from his analysis of the text's structure, contents, and historical layers that compilers used the dialogues as a device to link originally separate texts together (2002, 647-52). Akira Akahori adds:

> In the end, when there are more than 2000 years between the compilation of the text and the present, there will always be a certain amount of distortion due to lack of information regarding the social background that affected the formation of the concepts. (1989, 19)

This may be true during the early compilation of the *Suwen* but when Wang Bing made his copy, he was well aware that ideas and practices of nourishing life made an important contribution to the development of medical theories. He thus made sure that these topics were factored dominantly into the well-developed and systematized medical theories as found in his compilation of the *Suwen*.

Chapter Three

The Longevity Connection

> *There is no mystery to the Dao of sex. All that is required is to take time, feel comfortable, and place great emphasis on harmony.*
>
> —*Ishinpō*

The Chinese language has a special term for "dying young" (*yao* 夭) as opposed to possessing "longevity" (*shou* 壽). The character *shou* in Zhou bronze inscriptions is "by far the most popular term in prayers for blessings" (Yü 1964, 87). But it is not dying young *per se* that the Chinese dread—it is the fear of dying before fulfilling one's natural life-expectancy or heaven-given years (*tiannian* 天年). These years represent the time allocated by nature that people, animals, and plants are to stay on earth. Thus, the *Zhuangzi* mentions the life expectancy of trees (ch. 4). Similarly, chapter 54 of the *Lingshu* is entitled "The Heaven-given Years": it talks about how one's body constitution develops, how to stay healthy, and what to do in order to live out one's years.

The aspiration to remain healthy and attain long life provided opportunities for the discovery and development of the arts of nourishing life. They include various techniques such as healing exercises (*daoyin* 導引), breathing exercises, massages, dietetics, and the bedchamber arts (sexual cultivation).[1]

The earliest mention of the term *yangsheng* for "nourishing life" appears in the heading of *Zhuangzi* 3: "Yangsheng zhu" 養生主 (The Importance of Nourishing Life). *Zhuangzi* 15 has the following:

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[1] For a survey, see Engelhardt 2000. For collections of articles on various methods, see Sakade 1988; Kohn 1989; 2006. On healing exercises, see Kohn 2008; on dietetics, see Eskildsen 1998; Kohn 2010a.

> To huff and puff, exhale and inhale, blow out the old and draw in the new, do the "bear-hang" and the "bird-stretch," interested only in long life—such are the flavors of the practitioners of healing exercises, the nurturers of the body, Pengzu's ripe-old-agers. (Graham 1981, 265)

It appears that Zhuangzi was mocking those who just practiced longevity techniques but neglected other aspects, such as self-cultivation or inner perfection. A parable in *Zhuangzi* 19 illustrates his point. It tells the story of two men practicing self-cultivation. One cultivates his "inside," but he is eaten by a tiger from the outside; the other cultivates his "outside," but succumbs to a fever from the inside. Both of them forgot to combine the two—they neglected to "whip the lagging sheep" as a skillful shepherd would (Hertzer 2009). Similarly, Liezi sees the quest for immortality "not merely as futile but even immoral" (Creel 1956, 151).

Though healing exercises, breath control, massages, and dietetics are all part of nourishing life, this study deals especially with the bedchamber arts in conjunction with health and medicine. It is important to note the difference between "nourishing life" and "perfecting individual life" (*quansheng* 全生) as mentioned in the *Lüshi chunqiu*. The latter is a form of hedonism and favors indulgence, whereas the former is about living long in moderation (Yü 1964, 82-83; Stein 1999, 10, 24).

In this context, the *Suwen* focuses on "nourishing the body" (*yangshen* 養身; 25.3). The Yellow Emperor wants to know how to differentiate deficiency (*xu* 虛) and excess (*shi* 實). In response, Qi Bo lists five things a physician should do before applying acupuncture: 1) cultivate his spirit (*zhishen* 治神); 2) nourish his body (*yangshen*); 3) understand toxic drugs (*duyao* 毒藥); 4) learn how to use a stone blade (*bianshi* 砭石); and 5) know how to examine the blood and *qi* of the organs (*fuzang xueqi* 腑臟血氣). There is a clear difference here between taking care of the physical body (somatic) and nourishing life (psychosomatic).

The *Suwen* also specifies the importance of achieving longevity. Qi Bo explains how the people of high antiquity did so:

> The people of high antiquity knew the Dao: they [followed] the method of yin-yang, they [practiced] harmonizing the art of numbers, they observed temperance in their food and drink, they rose and lived with regularity, and they did not recklessly overstrain themselves [inclusive of sexual activity]. Hence, they were able to maintain and preserve their body and spirit, and

> they could live out their heaven-given years, reaching over a hundred years before departing. (1.1)

Longevity can only be reached when one stays in good physical health, and the *Suwen* indicates that the main objective of longevity methods is to bring balance to the organism. The body is a microcosm of the greater universe, and the aim is to strive for the status of a balanced person (*pingren* 平人), who is healthy both physically and psychologically.[2] The *Suwen* describes balance in terms of yin and yang:

> When yin is in excess, yang will be ill; when yang is in excess, yin will be sick. An excess of yang brings about [pathological] heat; an excess of yin brings about [pathological] cold. Extreme cold turns into [pathological] heat, and extreme heat turns into [pathological] cold. [Pathological] cold harms the body and [pathological] heat harms the *qi*. (5.2.4)

It also adds that "a balanced person is someone who is not sick. A physician uses the pulse of a healthy person as a criterion to measure that of a sick person" (18.1). The whole chapter focuses on techniques to examine the pulse to determine whether a person is healthy or sick.

Wang Bing's preface supports his conscious effort to connect longevity ideas and medical theories. He professes that he admires the Dao and was partial to nourishing life in his youth; he also pushes this conviction through his commentary of the first few chapters. Moving Quan Yuanqi's chapters 61-62, 25-26, and 63 to the beginning of the book is a clear indication of his belief that nourishing life is the foundation on which medical theories are built. It is quite possible that he did this on inspiration from the *Taisu*, which describes ways of long life and the need to match the patterns of nature in its first scroll.

In any case, Wang Bing notes in his preface that he wanted the *Suwen* to be used as the source of the supreme Dao to nourish life, eliminate distress, keep proper *qi* complete, guide vital energy through the body, raise awareness of how to live a long life, and recover from ailments. He ends with the hope that the *Suwen* will help to prevent the emperor and his subordinates from dying before they live out their allot-

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[2] The English word "health" has no direct match in early China. A healthy person is a *pingren*—normal, harmonious and balanced. The modern word for "health" (*jiankang* 健康) was first coined in Japan (Sivin 1987, 95n1).

ted lifespan and to give both barbarians and Chinese the opportunity to prolong theirs.

Another connection is with Daoist practice in the Tang, notably forms of meditation such as inner observation (*neiguan* 內觀) and sitting in oblivion (*zuowang* 坐忘; see Kohn 2010b) as well as with internal alchemy (*neidan* 內丹), which first developed at the time. The system involves esoteric doctrines and practices to transcend individual states of being in favor of oneness with the Dao (see Robinet 1989, 303-07; see Kohn and Wang 2009), making use also of longevity techniques and vessel theory. It underwent three main phases of development: 1) an embryonic phase before the Tang, 2) early *neidan* in the Tang, and 3) a mature stage from the late Tang onward (Skar and Pregadio 2000, 465). Based on this, Wang Bing flourished in the "early *neidan*" phase, which may have influenced his decision to place greater emphasis on longevity doctrines.

Throughout the *Suwen*, techniques connecting sex, health, medicine, and longevity are prevalent. The text forms strands that allow long-life concepts to cross over into systematized medical theories. A closer look at the first five chapters (hereafter the "Yangsheng Chapters") shows just how Wang Bing used these doctrines.

Chapters on Nourishing Life

The compound *yangsheng* "nourishing life" appears several times in the *Suwen*. First, in chapter 2, the term does not indicate longevity practices but denotes the way in which spring-*qi* affects the nourishment of the germinating process. The corresponding phrases in the same passage confirm this by mentioning the ways in which summer-*qi* affects the nourishment of the growing process; fall-*qi* affects the nourishment of the harvesting process; and winter-*qi* affects the nourishment of the storing process. Therefore, "nourishing life" in this passage only deals with a lesser part of the concept. In chapter 8, the term deals with longevity. The passage advocates that anyone who follows all the rules correctly will live long. On the other hand, anyone who violates the teachings will generate health calamities. In addition the "Yangsheng Chapters" summarize the main theories that help a person achieve longevity.

Chapter 1, "On Heavenly Integrity in High Antiquity" (*Shanggu tianzhen lun* 上古天真論), starts with a discussion on how people in high antiquity stayed healthy and lived long, followed by a presentation of human physiology. It discusses human reproductive and aging processes, and concludes by presenting four ideal personalities that can be achieved by following nurturing life techniques. The emphasis is on living a correct lifestyle, such as not treating alcohol like a normal beverage, and not being reckless in daily life—which also means not having sex when intoxicated. It strongly emphasizes health care and moderation for attaining longevity. There is no mention of immortality or complex medical theories.

Chapter 2, "The Great Discourse on Harmonizing Spirit in the Four [Seasonal] *Qi*" (*Siqi diaoshen dalun* 四氣調神大論), deals with the preservation of health in accordance with the four seasons. It champions the fact that all those who live according to the law of yin and yang, adapting their lives to seasonal change, will achieve longevity. It emphasizes that prevention of diseases is paramount to health and long life by offering the oft-quoted advice: "Once disease has manifested itself, it is too late to seek a physician. It is like starting to dig a well when one is thirsty or starting to forge weapons after war has broken out (2.3).

Chapter 3, "On Vitalizing *Qi* to Connect with Heaven" (*Shengqi tongtian lun* 生氣通天論), portrays the importance of nourishing life by connecting with nature. It shows how the yin-yang doctrine operates within the microcosm of the human body and how macrocosmic elements such as climate change can affect health. It introduces the five flavors and connects them with a corresponding inner organ. Long life rules here focus on food and harmonizing the five flavors: eating the right way by not indulging in any one flavor excessively, living sensibly by keeping alcohol intake moderate and refraining from over-exertion during sexual intercourse. The chapter ends by stating that those who follow these principles carefully and obey the laws of nature will extend their lives and live out their heaven-given years. Throughout, it discusses the yin-yang doctrine in connection with health care but also places great emphasis on living in harmony with nature and leading a proper life. There are, as yet, no medical theories.

Chapter 4, "On Perfect Words from the Golden Cabinet" (*Jin'gui zhenyan lun* 金匱真言論), is the first to discuss seasonal changes and climate factors that can affect health. It introduces the notion that the body

is divided into yin and yang sections (e.g., the back of the body is yang and the front is yin). It widens the correlation of the five organs with aspects of nature and within the body to include seasons, directions, colors, sense organs, limbs, body fluids, smells, flavors, domestic animals, grains, planets, musical tones, divination numbers, and forms of disorder. It presents natural philosophy, such as the yin-yang theory and the correlations between microcosm and macrocosm, bringing them into the etiology of disease. However, medical theories proper have yet to be formulated. The relationship between health care and nature is a major theme, yet ideas of internal medicine begin to emerge.

Chapter 5, "The Great Discourse on the Manifestation of Yin and Yang" (*Yinyang yingxiang dalun* 陰陽應象大論), is the first chapter of Book Two; it speaks from a different level of medical understanding. It applies the yin-yang doctrine to classify natural phenomena and explain human physiology, pathology, and diagnosis. It introduces the five excessive emotions of joy, anger, sadness, worry, and fear as a cause of disease (5.2.5)—the first mention of psychosomatic factors. It also widens the correlations of the previous chapter by adding climatic conditions and human sounds (calling, laughing, singing, crying, sighing) which connect to the five bodily actions (grasping, grieving, spitting, coughing, shivering) (5.3). Beyond presenting psychosomatic symptoms and systematizing the micro-macrocosmic relationship on a more complex level, it also names vessels and acumoxa points in conjunction with natural philosophy and the etiology of disease.

The five phases, as it describes them, work in productive (*sheng* 生) and control (*ke* 克) cycles, which are still applied today in TCM. The productive cycle represents a process in which the phases support and maintain each other so that the body can stay balanced. The diagram below summarizes both, giving the material symbol of the phase plus the organs and viscera (see Fig. 7).

The productive cycle creates an integrated system of mutual support, sustenance, and maintenance. For example, the kidney organ both supports and is controlled in the following way:

> The north produces cold; cold produces water; water produces saltiness; saltiness nourishes the kidney; kidney produces bone and marrow; bone and marrow nourish the liver. The kidney also governs the ears. (5.3)

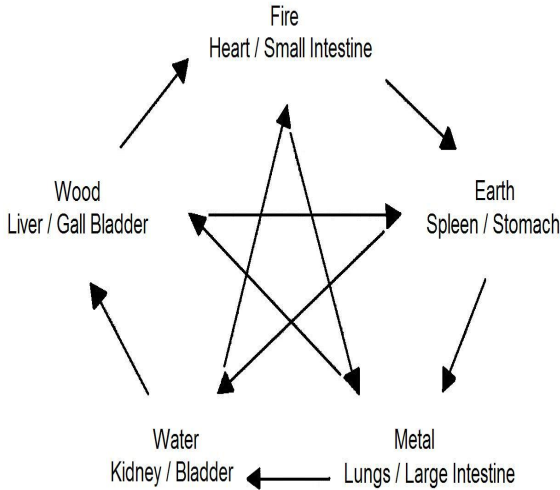

Fig. 7. The cycles of the five phases.

The control cycle describes the way how different aspects may keep each other in check. For example:

> [Emotion] in the heart becomes fear; fear injures the kidney; worry overcomes fear. Cold injures the blood; dryness overcomes cold. Saltiness injures the blood; sweetness overcomes saltiness. (5.3)

When pathogenic fear injures the kidney organ, it is thus possible to alleviate the condition by generating a positive sense of the virtue associated with this or related organ. Similarly, when excessive cold injures the blood, dryness can be used to overcome it. Also, when excessive saltiness injures the blood, sweetness may remedy it. The control cycle thus shows the relation in which the phases in the natural world as well as in the body keep each other in check as part of the natural process of bringing equilibrium to the body. Following these patterns, one can become a fully balanced person—healthy both physically and psychologically.

The two cycles have their root in theories of nourishing life. For example, many recipes and medicinal formulas in the Mawangdui manuscripts serve to restore balance in the person. They also bring together natural philosophy and budding medical theories, providing the groundwork for later systematizations. The Mawangdui manuals, moreover, reveal that sexual cultivation as a branch of longevity techniques

plays a role in the emerging medical faculty. Most of all the "Yangsheng Chapters" show that practices of nourishing life formed an important aspect of health in early China and that their pursuit contributed greatly to the development of medical theories.

Daoistic Practices and Sexual Cultivation

The concept of Dao and the doctrine of yin-yang ruled the Chinese world in the Han, including the bedchamber. They were fashionable concepts used to describe the cosmic and metaphysical world. Hetero-normative sex being a binary action requiring a member of the opposite sex, it often appears as one aspect of the dominant philosophical, metaphysical, and poetic expression of the *zeitgeist*.

The bedchamber arts are sometimes associated with Daoism because of their relationship with these concepts. Is there a basis for such an association? The various categories of texts in the Mawangdui corpus indicate that all three—bedchamber arts, long life methods, and "Daoistic"—i.e., Daoist-style but not yet fully organized—activities flourished side by side. How much, then, did they influence each other?

Before we can answer these questions, it is important to look at what Dao means in and before the Han. Herlee Creel has discussed the classic debate on the meaning of Daoism in the Warring States period; he speaks of Daoism not as a school but as "a whole congeries of doctrines" (1956, 139). A. C. Graham similarly notes that Dao has both cosmological and moral dimensions (1989, 105), while Donald Harper adds that Dao is part of the hygienic teachings (1998, 113). Livia Kohn sees Daoism as multifaceted and insists that the "veneration of the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* alone does not make a Daoist" (2001, 41). Henri Maspero adds that the *Daode jing*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Liezi* represent only a branch of the Dao School (in Creel 1956, 144). In other words, what members of the various Dao-oriented groups at the time did or thought is an expression of different Daoistic traditions. As such, it is appropriate to speak of "a sense of Daoistic endeavors" to give these practices a broader scope and allowing for their all-embracing naturalistic tendencies.

Nathan Sivin finds the word "Daoist" perplexing and points out that dividing it into "philosophical" and "religious" branches fails to match historical reality and does not improve our understanding (1995,

303-30). As Holmes Welch puts it, Daoist philosophy and practices were embraced by a complex smorgasbord of adherents, who had taken immortality as their goal and could be "alchemists, hygienists, magicians, eclectics, and, in particular, the members of the Daoist church" (in Sivin 1995, 305). Their sense of the Daoistic endeavor is no doubt as varied as their professions or their philosophical and religious beliefs.

When the *Suwen* was compiled, the Daoistic world was in no way the organized religion of later centuries. Henri Maspero notes that in the "4th and 3rd centuries BCE, Daoists were seekers for immortality," a fact which did not change much until the Later Han, when the first structured communities emerged.[3] He cites Sima Qian's portrait of members of the Daoist School (*daojia* 道家) as people who abstained from grain, escaped old age, and transmuted cinnabar to attain immortality through the "three careers" of good works, contemplation, and alchemy (1981, 427-28). Obviously there are some cross-overs between sexual cultivation for nourishing life and the various Daoistic practices in the Han, but their goals were quite different. Practitioners of *yangsheng* strove for longevity while Dao-seekers pursued immortality (Kohn 2001, 49-55).

Scholars often use Pengzu, said to have lived for 800 years beginning in the Xia Dynasty (22nd-17th c. BCE),[4] as evidence that sexual cultivation has Daoist roots. They usually cite the *Sunü jing*, where the protagonist explains to the Yellow Emperor how he can bring health, harmony, and joy into his life and achieve immortality:

> The Plain Woman said: "There is a certain Splendid Maiden [Cainü 采女] who has received the wondrous [knowledge] of the arts of Dao. The king sent her to ask Pengzu about extending the years and gaining longevity."
>
> Pengzu responded: "By valuing essence, cultivating spirit, taking [proper] food and herbal supplements, one can live long. [But] if one does not understand the Dao of sexual intercourse [*jiaojie* 交接], then even taking lots of herbs is of no use.
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> "The mutual fulfilment of man and woman is like the mutual generative [power] of heaven and earth. Because heaven and earth have attained the Dao of union, there is unending limitless. When one loses the Dao of

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[3] On the history and development of the main medieval Daoist schools, see Bokenkamp 1997, 1-10; and Kohn 2001, 82-98.

[4] For a discussion of Pengzu in Daoism and mythology, see Sakade 2007; on his role in nourishing life, see Csikszentmihalyi 2009, 529-32.

> sexual intercourse, one gets gradually closer to early death; if one is able to avoid gradual injury [to life] and learn the art of yin-yang [sexual intercourse], one practices the Dao of not dying." (see Wile 1992, 85; Hsia et al. 1986, 2: 152)[5]

Pengzu is no doubt the paragon of longevity, associated with various techniques and especially with the Dao of sex. The earliest extant sources that mention him include Warring States bamboo manuscript in the Shanghai Museum, the manuscripts *Yinshu* 引書 (Exercise Book) and *Maishu* 脈書 (Vessel Book) from Zhangjiashan (see Kohn 2008; Lo 2010), as well as the *Shiwen* in the Mawangdui corpus—all from the southern state of Chu (Csikszentmihalyi 2009, 529).

In the *Shiwen*, Pengzu teaches that one should perfect one's sexual energy through healing exercises and breathing. In a similar way, the *Yinshu* speaks of perfecting sexual energy and identifies it as the Way of Pengzu. "These references suggest that Pengzu was seen from early on as a practitioner of sexual techniques, which were closely related to healing exercises and breathing and performed in order to examine longevity" (Sakade 2007, 791). This description is in accordance with Pengzu's role as the ancestor of longevity techniques. But that does not make him a Daoist, nor are his techniques specifically Daoist in the sense of the later tradition.

By the Jin dynasty (265-420), however, Pengzu's sexual cultivation techniques had assumed a different role. This is documented in the *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 (Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity) by the scholar and alchemist Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343). As Robert Campany states:

> Pengzu was used as the mouth piece through which Ge Hong could comment—at great length—on these old techniques; and the gist of Ge's comment is not so much to argue the benefits of sexual arts (although he does grant them) as to urge the unnaturalness of chastity as a cultivation discipline. . . . [As such Pengzu] becomes a representative of both power and the relative shortcoming of certain particular categories of practice. (2002, 183)

None of the bedchamber titles in the *Hanshu* mention Pengzu as a master of the "way of the yin." Maybe the Pengzu cult lost favor in the

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[5] The *Sunü jing* may contain texts that are considered to be descended from the Han but this quote is taken from the *Ishinpō*, a Tang text. Similarly, some quotations of the *Pengzu jing* are preserved in Chapter 28 of the *Ishinpō*.

Later Han, indicating also a possible shift in Daoistic thinking toward a position where the individual aims to diminish desires rather than use sexual energy for cultivation (see also Eskildsen 1998). An example of this appears also in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (History of the Later Han). Here Fan Rui 樊瑞, the father of Fan Zhun 樊準 who died in 93 CE "loved the words of Huang-Lao" and devoted himself to the "purification and the diminution of desires" (112562.3a).

Also, while the bedchamber works are listed in a class of their own in the *Hanshu*, they appear in the medical section in the Sui and Tang and only show up under "Daoism" in the Song. In other words, it took over a thousand years for them to formally achieve Daoist status. By then, of course, they had received varied influences from other traditions—Confucianism, Mohism, Buddhism—and had been remade from a mostly health-oriented practice to one associated with religious and spiritual quests.

Though Daoistic traditions and Daoist schools share many health-enhancing techniques with longevity seekers, sexual cultivation for personal transcendence was not an important practice in the Later Han.[6] Early Daoist schools saw sexual cultivation only as a minor aspect of their practice.[7] The vehement criticism of sexual cultivation in the *Xiang'er* Commentary to the *Daode jing* by the third Celestial Master Zhang Lu 張魯 (dat. 215) confirms that they eschewed such practices (Bokenkamp 1997, 44-45) while yet using ritualized intercourse to maintain the harmony of yin and yang in the greater universe.[8]

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[6] For a discussion of the bedchamber arts in relation to Daoism, see Kirkland 2007, 409-11; Strickmann 1974, 1044-45; Schipper 1993, 144-55. For sexual cultivation and sexual rites in Daoism after the Han, see Despeux 2000, 229; Nickerson 2000, 276-77; Maspero 1981, 517-43; Liu 2009.

[7] Robinet states that "the Maoshan exercises are performed in solitude, as the texts often point out, without anyone knowing about them. They are totally internal and individual practices (1993, 48).

[8] The so-called *heqi* 合氣 (harmonization of *qi*) rite, as far as we can tell from brief notes in later sources, consisted of a complex ceremony during which male sexual energy (yellow *qi*) and female sexual energy (red *qi*) joined together in accord with cosmic forces (Schipper 1984, 203). The rite was performed in the quiet chamber (*jingshi* 靜室), in the presence of a master and an instructor. Adepts began with slow formal movements accompanied by meditations to create a sacred space, then established the harmony between their *qi* and the cosmic *qi*

Aside from this, sexual cultivation may have been practiced by married couples, but unmarried practitioners were encouraged to live a simple life and reduce desires. The major difference was that the bedchamber arts were geared to a healthy life on earth, whereas Daoist cultivation focused on the practice as a means to immortality (Wile 1992, 24-28; Maspero 1981, 517-43).

As the various concepts of health, spirit, religion, and medicine moved fluidly between the different groups and fulfilled different social functions, ideas and practices inevitably overlapped. Thus, historical records reveal "a cluster of overlapping ends coming from a common metaphorical or methodological stem" (Csikszentmihalyi 2009, 529). But the bedchamber arts have ultimately no Daoist roots.

Since the conceptual structures of self-cultivation regimens belong to no particular school, Dao-orientated traditions influenced not only the social structure but also the treatment of diseases, especially in later periods (Strickmann 2002, 1-57). Daoist aspirations tend to be linked to immortality but the *Suwen* does not show any such influence. In fact, it is important to note this fundamental difference that there are no medical texts which advocate that people should strive for immortality—rather, they consistently propagate prolonging life and not dying early. For these goals, they recommended techniques that include sexual cultivation.

Medical Theories

Chinese scholars, doctors, students, and practitioners of medicine have always looked back to the past and to ancient knowledge for inspiration and guidance. The *Suwen* is no exception. In the beginning, the Yellow Emperor points out that people in high antiquity lived not only to over a hundred but were still happy and active. He asks: "Why is it that people nowadays live to fifty and are already weak and sickly?" He wants to know if this is due to the change in times (environment) or whether peo-

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through visualizations. The rite culminated in sexual union and was conducted among non-married couples. See Despeux 1990, 29-30; Kohn and Despeux 2003, 12; Raz 2008.

ple have "lost the knowledge from the past," implying that they should look back and learn from the old ways.

Zhang Ji too, in the preface of the *Shanghan lun*, mentions that he sought guidance from the ancients by consulting various classics (Mitchell 1999, 29). After that, almost every medical text mentions using the ancient works as their sources. Even Wang Bing confirms this backward-looking tradition in his preface: he says that he hoped to clarify matters for students by quoting from earlier works and lists thirty-eight texts as his sources.

Therefore, to trace the development of medical theories, it is important to look back to longevity doctrines and practices. Their primary emphasis is on living in harmony with nature according to the seasons, staying healthy by eating the right foods, preventing disease with various techniques, and living out the heaven-given years. The Mawangdui manuals accordingly are "writings that set out the philosophy and techniques for nurturing life" (Lo 2001, 21). They served as key sources for the *Suwen* physicians, helping them to look back to enhance their medical knowledge.

An early document on nourishing life is the *Yangsheng fang* 養生方 (Prescriptions for Nurturing Life), a silk manuscript specifically on this topic. It consists of seventy-eight recipes for nourishing life, followed by several entries related to sexual cultivation and exercises. Recipes of aphrodisiacs for both men and women as well as cures of sexual dysfunction appear in the first half. Later entries relate to sexual cultivation and include references that match other texts of the same period, such as the *Shiwen*, the *He yinyang*, and the *Tianxia*. The last section has a labeled diagram of female genitalia. All these indicate that "a new kind of medicine in its infancy—a medicine related to correlative cosmology and its theories of yin-yang" (Lo 2002, 20), where sex formed part of the longevity and medical equation.

The difference between longevity doctrines and medical theories is that longevity theory is based on the observation and recording of a phenomenological experience of one's "own" body, which reflects human experience, whereas medical theory describes illnesses and cures of "other" bodies (Lo 2001, 22).[9] *Qi* later became one of the most prominent

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[9] The idea that longevity theory originated from the subjective experience of one's "own" body is not so difficult to fathom, especially for practitioners of the

concepts of medical discourse, referred to as the subjectively felt sensation in the body.[10]

He Zhiguo and Vivienne Lo have argued convincingly that longevity practices had a great influence on many aspects of early Chinese medical theories (1996, 114; also Lo 2001, 29; Harper 1998, 32). Vessel theory began in relationship to longevity practices rather than connected to pathology or the treatment of diseases. By extrapolation, sexual techniques became an important part of longevity practice. This means that sexual cultivation, as advocated by the Mawangdui manuscripts, which already accept that *qi* flows through essential structures in the body (*Wenwu* 1990, 10: 82-86; Harper 1998, 77-90), contributed to the development of early medical theories. Donald Harper states: "Indeed, the Mawangdui and Zhangjiashan medical manuscripts indicate that vessel theory may have developed first in connection with hygienic theories, and was then applied to pathology" (1998, 68).

Medical theories in the Han were not unified: the Mawangdui texts speak of eleven vessels, while the lacquered figurine from Mianyang has nine—both different from the later standard twelve (He and Lo 1996, 123). Vivienne Lo compares the anatomical terminology in the *He yinyang* and *Tianxia* and points out just how much the naming of the acumoxa points in the *Suwen* owes to early sexual cultivation literature (2001,

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various "modern" techniques, such as taiji quan or qigong. When these exercises are performed correctly, adepts become sensitive to *qi* and are able to feel their pathways from time to time. Similarly, when a needle is correctly inserted into an acumoxa point, one usually feels a tingling sensation, numbness, or a slight electrical current through the body. See Hsu 1999, 58-87. Another example is the history of the reconstruction of auricular acupuncture. This technique fell into disuse for centuries in China until the Frenchman Paul Nogier stumbled across it in the 1950s and revived it. He was able to 'reconstruct' the map of the acumoxa points in the ear by trial and error (2008). The ear (*er* 耳) is mentioned in the *Suwen* as the hearing organ (4.3). *Erbi* 耳閉 (blocked ears) in 3.2.2 and *erguo* 耳郭 (auricle) appear in 59.1.4; *ermu* 耳目 (ears and eyes) is found in 3.3.1, and in connection with etiology such as *erlong* 耳聾 (deafness) (10.4.1) and *erming* 耳鸣 (ringing in the ears) (28.4). The ears are related to the kidney (4.3; 5.3), but there is no trace of the ear ever being used in the *Suwen* for treating diseases.

[10] For the formation of *qi* theory, see Harper 1998, 7-8; Sivin 1997, 237-42; Porkert 1974, 166-76; Unschuld 1985, 67-73. *Qi* and *jing* are the most important aspect of sexual cultivation but *qi* is mostly subsumed in all processes. For a discussion on *qi* in sexual cultivation, see Lo 2001, 41-46.

33-46; see also Ellis, Wiseman and Boss 1989). Douglas Wile adds that the "medical corpus" of the Mawangdui manuscripts "has given us a first glimpse into principles of Chinese sexual practices" (1992, 19). He confirms the development from longevity doctrines to vessel theories when he noticed that sexual practices share many terminologies with medicine, though not necessarily borrowed but often seems "to spring from a common matrix" (1992, 23).

The close connection between longevity techniques and the *Suwen* remained intact well into the 17th century. The *Kokon yōjōroku* 古今养生錄 (Record of Ancient and Current Longevity [Techniques]) by the Japanese physician Takeda Tsūan 竹田通庵 (dat. 1692) reveals that a set of twenty-four illustrations on healing exercises was said to have been "first appended to the *Huangdi neijing suwen* and later included in the medical textbook *Qianjin yaofang* 千金要方 [Essential Recipes Worth Thousand A Pieces of Gold, 7th c.], and from there into the 11th-century Daoist encyclopaedia *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 [Seven Slips from a Cloudy Satchel]" (Sakade 1989, 13). Takeda included a set of fifteen illustrations of the Five Animals Frolic (*wuqinxi* 五禽戲), said to go back to the Later Han physician Hua Tuo 華佗 (d. 208) (Sakade 1989, 1-40).[11] The close association between longevity doctrines and vessel theory thus led to the continued activation of longevity techniques in a medical context.

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[11] Besides being credited with the development of the Five Animal Frolic exercise, Huo Tuo is said to be the first person to perform surgery in China using a medicinal alcohol known as "cannabis boil powder" (*mafeisan* 麻沸散) as an anesthesia. For a translation of Hua Tuo's biography in the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Record of the Three Kingdoms), see DeWoskin 1983, 140-53.

Chapter Four

Pathological Diagnostics

> *The causes of the hundred diseases are dryness and dampness, cold and heat, wind and rain, excessive sexual intercourse, unbridled joy and anger, too much drink and food, and unsuitable living environment.*
>
> —*Lingshu*

The progression from health care regimens to theory-based medicine occurred through the understanding of pathological diagnostics. Before a person can self-administer cures, or health professionals can treat people, they have to understand the cause and effect of disease and cure. The Mawangdui manuscripts already base their theory on the penetrability of the vessels, i.e., the belief that the person is healthy if the vessels have free flow while ailments arise due to obstructions. Thus, the eighth question of the *Shiwen* notes that when blood and *qi* ought to move and yet do not move, this is called the calamity of blockage.

In the *Suwen*, vessel theory is the basis for "a universal model of illness, which explains illness as a dysfunction of the human organism within the system of vessels and internal organs" (Harper 1998, 69). Diseases manifest themselves when there is an imbalance of yin and yang, typically caused by pathological factors. There is no mention of acquiring virtue or discussion of religious concepts.

Pathological Factors

The *Suwen* systematizes and divides pathological factors into three categories: exterior, environmental, and interior—i.e., changes in climate,

lifestyle choices, and emotional tendencies. As regards climate changes, the text states:

> When the eight winds [from the eight directions] turn injurious, they cause channel wind [*jingfeng* 經風] which affects the five organs while pathological wind [*xiefeng* 邪風] causes disease [by invading the channels]. This is called dominance of the four seasons: spring's dominance over summer, late summer's over winter, summer's over fall, and fall's over spring. (4.1)

This statement further supports the theory that changes in climate conditions constitute an exterior pathological factor: "The hundred diseases are caused by wind, cold, summer heat, damp, and dryness" (74.5.1).

Climatic factors not only cause direct health problems but they can also have delayed effects and manifest in subsequent seasons:

> Injuries caused by cold in winter lead to warm [or seasonal febrile] disease. Injuries caused by wind in spring lead to indigestion and diarrhea. Injuries caused by summer heat in summer lead to malaria in fall. Injuries caused by dampness in fall lead to coughs in winter. (5.2.5)

Han medical theorists in general consider wind as a major cause of illness (Unschuld 2003, 183-94; 1982). They see it as a pathogenic agent that enters the body through the skin. *Suwen* physicians caution that the wind factor in sexual intercourse can cause health problems. They note that "when wind takes residence [in the body] and creates lascivious *qi*, causing essence to be lost … hence, when one uses strong force [in sexual intercourse], kidney-*qi* will be injured and the high bone will be spoiled" (3.3.2). "Lascivious *qi*" here means that one is given to excesses. Thus, Chunyu Yi documents a specific case where "frequently drinking alcoholic beverages and being exposed to strong wind *qi*" made a person ill (#24).

This moves pathology into environmental factors. The "Yangsheng Chapters" offer plenty of advice on how to stay healthy and live a correct lifestyle. Chapter 12 shows how different types of environment and lifestyle give rise to different kinds of diseases. As regards specific lifestyle choices, Qi Bo cautions that when one fails to practice moderation in eating and drinking and does not live in a good setting, these factors will become the root of disease. He further says that "overeating will injure stomach and intestines" (43.4) while "drinking and eating without mod-

eration often cause diseases" (40.1.1). Therefore, a physician must question the patient about his eating and drinking habits as well as about his or her living environment in order to make a diagnosis (77.2).

Another passage warns against unsuitable working conditions. Those whose occupations "require them to be soaked in water and those who live in damp surroundings will be subjected to attack by dampness, which causes muscles and flesh to be limp. This leads to blockages and numbness, which in turn develops into flaccidity of flesh" (44.2).

Qi Bo summarizes the pathogenic factors when the Yellow Emperor wants to know the essentials of "where fullness comes from and where emptiness goes to." He explains that yang represents the exterior and yin the interior, and that the cause of injuries to yin and yang is wayward *qi* or injuries. It can affect either one. He adds:

> When a disease of yang is contracted, it is due to wind, rain, cold, or summer heat. When a disease of yin is contracted, it is due to [intemperate] eating and drinking, an [unsuitable] living environment, [excessive] sexual activity, or [extreme] joy and anger. (64.2)

The *Suwen* also stresses that "residence and environment, activities and stillness, as well as courage and timidity of a person cause changes in the pulse" (21.1) and thus cause illness. Two passages in the *Lingshu* link climate, emotions, and environment with sexual behavior as causes of disease. They are:

> Every [disease] is caused by wind, rain, cold, or heat; by yin-yang [sexual union], extreme joy and anger, food and drink, one's living environment, great fright, or overwhelming fear. (28.1)
>
> As regards the cause of the hundred diseases, they are due to dryness and dampness, cold and heat, wind and rain, yin-yang [sexual union], joy and anger, drink and food, as well as by one's living environment. (44.1)

Climate changes, living or working environment, and lifestyle habits thus are factors that affect health. Being exterior, they can be managed with physical solutions, such as taking care to protect oneself from heat or cold and making sure that one's living and working environments are conducive to health. However, the third kind of pathogenic factors, the interior or the emotional or psychological kinds, are harder to deal with.

Chinese medicine generally considers the seven emotions (*qiqing* 七情) as interior pathological factors (Larre 1996; Sivin 1995, 2:1-19). Arthur

Kleinman in this context has coined the term "somatopsychics" to describe that "disease and illness are bound up in psychological-physiological-social interrelationships" (1987, 77-78). The scholar-physicians of the *Suwen* are quite aware of psychosomatic concepts of health. They stress that people are able to live out their heaven-given years only if they maintain a balance in body and spirit (1.1): "if body and spirit have no mutual [connection], this is called death" (34.3).

The earliest interpretation of *zhi* as an emotional or psychological state appears in Du Yu's 杜预 (d. 284) commentary to the *Zuozhuan*. He notes that "rites are performed to control the six emotions [of] love, hate, joy, anger, sadness, and happiness, and to see to it that they are never expressed excessively" (Unschuld 2003, 227-28).

However, the *Suwen* in its medical theory and correlation system uses a set of five emotions: joy (*xi* 喜), anger (*nu* 怒), sadness (*bei* 悲), worry (*you* 憂), and fear (*kong* 恐). It then explains their roles as pathological factors:

> A person has five organs that [can] transform the five *qi* to produce [emotions]: joy, anger, sadness, worry, and fear. Joy and anger injure *qi*; cold and summer heat injure the body. Violent rage injures yin; sudden joy injures yang. Receding *qi* moves up to fill up the vessels and deforms the body; intemperate outburst of joy and anger as well as excessive cold and summer heat weaken the person. (5.2.5)

This passage not only lists the five emotions as pathogenic factors but also links them with climatic changes. It notes that emotional states are not pathological as long as they stay in balance with the overall natural and physical system and are kept in check through the configurations of the five phases. They only harm the person when uncontrolled and excessive. Therefore, violent emotional reactions, including those pertaining to sexual matters, lead to disease: "[Sexual] cravings that are unbridled as well as endless worry and anxiety result in essential *qi* being weakened and destroyed" (14.2). It also says:

> Thinking without end, yearning for what cannot be obtained, an intention that overflows outside, as well as entering the bedchamber excessively—all these [cause] the muscles and tendons to slacken and get weak, so that they become flaccid. Eventually, there will be a white overflow. According to the

> *Xiajing* [下經 Lower Classic], tendon flaccidity is caused by allowing [the penis] inside [the woman]. (44.2)

Women, too, are cautioned to control their emotions, especially during pregnancy in these three passages:

> When there is excessive sorrow, the collateral network vessel of the uterus is severed. When it is severed, yang *qi* will move internally. When that happens, it will cause a downward overflow [of blood] in the heart. (44.2)
>
> If a [pregnant] woman feels wretched and depressed and if cold wind is at its utmost and pushes against opposing forces, the embryo will die. (71.1.2)
>
> The disease called fetal sickness [*taibing* 胎病] is contracted when [the fetus] is still in the mother's womb and the mother has a great fright [*dajing* 大驚]. This causes the *qi* to ascend without descending. It will stick with essence-*qi* and the child will develop "peak illness." (47.1.9)

Although desires in general and sexual urges are not included in the doctrine of the five emotions, they were clearly recognized as pathogenic factors. For example, Chunyu Yi once had a case where a young woman at the court of King Jibei suffered from "loin and back pain." He found that her menses had stopped and diagnosed it as an "inner cold" condition caused by "desiring a man but unable to get one." He prescribed an herbal formula, and her menstruation resumed (*Shiji* 105, #18). As Chen Hsiu-fen says, this may well be the first documented case of sexual frustration in Chinese history (2003, 171-72).

In another case, "an ailment was caused by having sex while in a state of violent anger" (#6). Yet another situation arose when the patient engaged in intercourse after excessive alcohol intake (#1, 7). And in one case the person got sick when he perspired profusely after sex and lay prostrate on the bare ground to cool off (#9). In a few other cases, just plain sexual intimacy (*nei* 內; *jienei* 接內) caused the disease (#3, 10, 23, 25; see Hsu 2001b, 70, 87)

Thus, sexual intercourse, if conducted wrongly or performed in less than congenial circumstances, can be a pathological factor—especially if in conjunction with excess of some kind, which the *Suwen* sees as loss of control. Han medical thinking in general considers excessive desire as a form of pathology; the *Suwen* shows that it contributes to disease. Bedchamber adepts, too, note that it is useless to live a sensible life if one

does not know the rules of sexual intercourse. The message is that life is in peril if one has sexual intercourse without proper understanding. Sexual manuals, longevity classics, and medical textbooks frequently repeat this message. Already the *Tianxia* states: "What causes injury to life is [ignorance of] sex. That is why, when the sages have sexual intercourse, they have rules: they know the Dao of sex."

Health Professionals

In the course of the Han dynasty, medicine transformed "from an archaic craft dominated by magico-religious belief and practice into a theoretically-grounded discipline" (Harper 1998, 43). Including the various levels of practice, the *Suwen* accordingly presents a health care system administered by four kinds of practitioners: 1) scholar-physicians (*yi* 醫), 2) skill masters (*fangshi* 方士), 3) shamans (*wu* 巫), and 4) unskilled practitioners (*cugong* 粗工).

Scholar-physicians served the court and the aristocracy. They practiced their profession using a medical code based on formal theories, which does not necessarily mean that their methods and theories were unified. Their theories and methods formed the foundation of the *Suwen*.

Skill masters were versed in the techniques of medicine, divination, astrology, calendar calculation, fortune-telling, weather magic, exorcism, longevity, healing exercises, breathing, sexual cultivation, and so on, usually combining these with a talent in storytelling and political persuasion (see DeWoskin 1983). Medical skill masters, unlike elite physicians, were often associated with the lower social strata because of their exorcistic and mediumistic practices performed for the common people.

They are described as having different treatment methods and being less qualified than the physicians. The Yellow Emperor highlights this difference: "Some of them regard the brain and marrow as [*zang*-] organs, while and others regard the intestines and stomach [also] as inner organs. Yet others regard all of them as [*fu*-] viscera" (11.1). In the context of using heat to treat cold diseases and vice versa, he further says: "Skill masters are unable to break through that 'ink-line' [reach standard treatment skills] and cannot understand medical doctrine" (74.5.4).

The third group of medical practitioners included the shamans, sometimes known as shaman-physicians (*wuyi* 巫醫), also mentioned in

the *Shiwen* (#4). They used incantations (*zhouyu* 祝語), séances, sorcery, exorcism, numerology, and other occult practices to heal the sick (Harper 1998, 148-72). The *Wushi'er bingfang* has a prescription that calls for the invocation by a shaman woman (*wufu* 巫婦) to search for a child-demon (*zhi* �) presumably causing the illness (#50; Harper 1998, 302n1). The *Suwen*, too, notes that the Yellow Emperor heard of successful treatments in antiquity. At that time people lived a simple outdoor life, exercised to keep away the cold, and stayed in the shade to protect themselves from the heat. They had no greed and did not pursue fame or fortune. "When they were ill, they could be cured by moving essence with the help of spirit invocations" (13.1). Shamans, too, contributed to the development of medical theories in the Han (Creel 1956, 145; Harper 1998, 61n1), and as late as the Ming dynasty, incantations were being used as part of officially sanctioned acupuncture treatments (see Jackowicz 2011). [1]

The *Lingshu* confirms the understanding that the shamans had a certain degree of medical knowledge at their disposal. In one passage, the Yellow Emperor asks whether "demons and sprites" (*guishen* 鬼神) were causing a particular ailment. Qi Bo responds with a well-grounded medical explanation and adds that, due to the subtlety of the ailment's manifestation, it appears as if demons and sprites were the cause. The Yellow Emperor further asks if someone who can invoke the spirits can cure it. Qi Bo replies:

> In the old days shamans could [cure diseases] because they knew of the dominance of the hundred diseases. First, they needed to know whence the diseases arise, [then] they could invoke [the spirits] to cure it. (58.2)

This shows that the shamans also possessed some medical knowledge on the cause and etiology of diseases. Donald Harper has identified fifty-six magical formulas in the Mawangdui medical texts, nine of which call specifically for invocations (1998, 149-59).

The last group of healers operating in the Han includes unskilled practitioners. As their name suggests, they are "rough" (*cu*) and without formal training, i.e., without lineage or mentor—probably self-taught and utilizing unrefined techniques. However, Lei Gong praises their work in the *Suwen*, telling the Yellow Emperor that once he dared not

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[1] Today shaman healers are still active, even under the Communist government as well as in overseas communities. See DeBernardi 2006, 90; Cline 2008.

treat a patient because he was unsure of his diagnosis, but that an unskilled practitioner used blood-letting. After the bleeding stopped, the patient's body relaxed and he was much improved (76.2).

Like other non-scholars, the unskilled practitioners are looked down upon by the physicians. The *Suwen* says:

> When an unskilled practitioner treats a disease, he repeatedly inserts needles into yin and yang, resulting in "disintegration" of the body, convulsion of the four limbs and impending death. When a physician does not understand [the pathological factors] and does not examine the causes and speaks only of impending death, he is called an unskilled physician. (77.2)

> When the disease has already manifested, the unskilled practitioner desires to treat the exterior with fine needles and the interior with liquid concoctions. He adversely uses attack [therapy]. As a result, the disease is not cured and new diseases arise. (13.2)

> Hence, the *Dayao* [大要, Major Essentials] states: The unskilled practitioner smiles to himself as if he knows. Yet [before] he even finishes talking of heat or cold, the sickness has reappeared. He does not [know that] the same [pathological] *qi* can have different forms. He is confused by the symptoms and agitates the channels. (74.4.2)

Although the *Suwen* does not mention diviners as healers—as was prevalent under the Shang and Zhou—its world was still crowded with traditional beliefs and a plethora of all kinds of doctors, healers, and magicians. Though it appears that scholar-physicians tended to dominate the medical world with their theories and new therapies, they were not the only players and still had to deal with both practitioners and patients preferring the old ways:

> Those who are possessed by demons or sprites—one cannot talk to them about utmost virtue. Those who detest needles and stone [blades]—one cannot talk to them about utmost skill [in treatment]. (11.0)

The four kinds of health practitioners thus served alongside each other. The *Suwen* mentions skill masters four times and unskilled practitioners five times. Although it does not explicitly speak about shamans, their practices appear time and again. The *Lingshu* has one reference to them. The Yellow Emperor asks how it was that some diseases could be

cured by incantations; Qi Bo answers that shamans of earlier times knew how to cure the hundred diseases because they understood their cause and effect and thus could cure them with incantations (58.2).

As Donald Harper points out, the development of medical theories is the result of the cross-fertilization between medicine and other branches of natural philosophy as well as various practical traditions that involve skill masters as well as shamans, drug gatherers, unskilled practitioners, midwives, and wet nurses (1988, 44). Medical theories in the *Suwen*, thus, are the product of such cross-fertilizations.

Diagnostics

Innovations in the medical field inevitably create controversies among practitioners and scholars, which lead to changes in diagnostics, therapies, pharmacology, philosophy, and body perceptions. As social background, technological premises, and conventional knowledge undergo their own changes over time, health practitioners have to review their thinking. This also holds true with regard to diagnostic and therapeutic methods in the *Suwen*.

Techniques and therapies used to heal and to alleviate pain are clear responses to physical and psychological suffering. However, before treatment can take place, a health practitioner needs to have a system to organize the collected data and work out strategies and treatment plans. Thus, practitioners developed diagnostic processes to gather information, then formulated hypotheses and theories on what was wrong and what should best be done.

Pre-*Suwen* medicine did not have a systematized system of diagnosis. To practice medicine was synonymous with "to practice recipes" (*weifang* 爲方), a feature clearly represented in the Mawangdui corpus (Harper 1998, 45-54). As the *Wushi'er bingfang* indicates, medical techniques treated mainly external diseases such as wounds, bites, hemorrhoids, burns, scabs, abscesses, and the like—ailments that needed little analysis. The healing process was geared mainly toward alleviating the patient's suffering with whatever means the practitioners saw fit, including mechanical, herbal, and shamanic techniques.

In contrast, the *Suwen* shows a clear leap into formal diagnostics and contains various rules a physician should follow during an examina-

tion. "How does one conduct an examination?" the text asks (20.2). Answers vary: "To treat a disease, one must seek out its root cause" (5.1). The best time to examine a patient is in the "early morning before yin-*qi* begins to move, before yang-*qi* begins to disperse, and before he takes food and drink" (17.1).

The most common diagnostic tool is the patient's facial color or complexion (*se* 色). The Yellow Emperor states that a good physician must check the pulse and study the complexion of a patient in order to diagnose a disease (19.4.1). Similarly Qi Bo says: "[Examining the conditions of] the complexion and the pulse is what are most important for the Highest Masters. These [techniques] have been handed down from the early masters" (13.2).[2] Needless to say, while the practitioner observes the complexion, he will also take note of the physical appearance, i.e., whether the patient has a strong or weak constitution, tends to be fat or thin, and so on. The physician practices the "looking" part of the diagnosis (see Kaptchuk 2000).

The *Suwen* represents a stage in diagnostics where tongue analysis was still in its infancy or, being more of an herbal practice, not yet connected with acupuncture. It speaks about the tongue within the system of correlations, noting that "the opening associated with the heart is the tongue" (5.3). It also incorporates it into therapy, so that the root of the tongue (*sheben* 舌本) plays an important role in acupuncture as well as the origin of vessels (22.3.2; *Lingshu* 21.2). And it does have some rudimentary tongue observation:

> A patient with febrile disease of the lungs experiences first chills, then his body hair stands up [goose-bumps]. Next he has aversion to wind and cold, the tip of his tongue turns yellow, and his body becomes feverish. (32.1)

"Observing the complexion" might be the most common of diagnostic tools but the most important is palpation (*mai* 脈) of the pulse, body and channels. *Mai* is also the general term to denote all vessels, i.e., the primary channels (*jing* 經) and the secondary collaterals (*luo* 絡). *Suwen* physicians use pulse diagnosis to determine its movements and quality within yin-yang parameters. For example: "The pulse can be

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[2] Similar statements also appear in chs. 13, 15, 17, 19, 42, and 44. *Se* as "complexion" is found in 10.1, 16.5, 36.2, 74.2.1, 74.2.5, 81.2, and 10.2.

weak, strong, slippery, choppy, floating, or sunken. This can be distinguished by the fingers" (10.4.2; see also 13.2, 17.1, 77.2, and 5.1).

The third mode of diagnosis of inquiry appears in the textual layer of chapters 75-81, added in the Tang. Chapter 77 gives a detailed analysis on how a physician should proceed with his examination without making the five most common mistakes in diagnosis. It says:

> He has to question the patient [about his life], whether he was possibly noble in the past but is now humble, about his eating and drinking habits, his living environment, if he is experiencing sudden happiness or sudden sadness, if he maybe experiences happiness first and then sadness. . . . In diagnosis, one must know the end and [how it began], and have knowledge of all the extra signs [symptoms]. The use of the pulse [diagnosis] and inquiry should be applied accordingly to both men and women. (77.2)

This textual layer adds inquiry as a diagnostic tool and applies gender differentiation. For example, a physician should be able to determine by palpation whether a pregnant woman is about to give birth. Qi Bo says that a clear sign that a woman is pregnant is when her "body has sickness but no injurious pulse [movement]" (40.1.6). Also: "When the Shaoyin Vessel of the foot in a woman pulsates violently, she is with child" (18.3.6).

The four diagnostic methods used in Chinese medicine of observation, palpation, inquiry, and hearing/smelling also make use of sexual factors. Thus, a physician can see a swollen genital during examination or the patient may inform him that he has pain in the genitalia area or that he cannot have an erection. Similarly, in treating a patient, the physician may ask about his or her sex life or examine the genitals. Any pathogenic odor or discharge from the sexual organs will no doubt be noticed. Pulse movement can indicate sexual or gynecological problems, such as the two cases related to pregnancy.

After the *Suwen* was compiled, many earlier methods began to wane. Qi Bo laments that in his time, when treating a patient, physicians were already neglecting the importance of observing the complexion and pulse diagnosis (13.2). According to the *Suwen*, regardless of origins and lineage, it is only after a physician has learnt how to do a proper diagnosis that he can select the appropriate method of treatment.

Treatment Methods

Suwen physicians have clear and pragmatic views on diseases and never tire of emphasizing the importance of staying healthy. They prefer to catch unhealthy tendencies before they grow into illness, but once a disease has manifested, they have various methods of treatment (5.1). The use of the needle is foremost among them, but they also discuss the pros and cons of other techniques.

Different geographical regions developed their own brands of medicine,[3] so that physicians from various areas used different treatments. Qi Bo mentions six with their respective regions of origin: 1) lancing stones (*bianshi* 砭石) from the east; 2) toxic drugs (*duyao* 毒藥) from the west; 3) cauterization or moxibustion (*jiuruo* 灸焫) from the north; 4) nine-needle therapy (*jiuzhen* 九鍼) using fine needles (*weizhen* 微鍼) from the south; 5) stretching and pulling (*daoyin* 導引) from the central plains; and 6) pressing and lifting (*anqiao* 按蹻) from the central region (12.1).

Lancing stones originated in the east and were used to treat carbuncles and ulcers or boils (*yong* 癰/ *yang* 瘍) (12.1). Most scholars translate *bianshi* as "pointed stone" or "stone needle," but I am more inclined to think of it as a blade-like instrument made of stone used for lancing or scraping. The mere insertion of a pointed stone does not cause profuse bleeding, and the text suggests that patients receiving such treatment were lanced or surgically cut. Ge Hong similarly notes that even Pan Kongshu (ca. 470-380 BCE), a semi-legendary engineer of Lu and patron saint of mechanics, "could not make sharp needles out of shreds and stones. . . The gods and spirits cannot make possible what is really impossible; heaven and earth themselves cannot do what cannot be done…" (Lu 1980, 71). This suggests that the instrument was not as pointed as a needle but more like a stone blade.

There is also another instrument known as the chiseled stone (*chanshi* 鑱石). The *Suwen* says: "They must administer toxic drugs to attack [pathogenics] in the interior, and use a chiseled stone, a needle [acupuncture], and mugwort [moxibustion] to treat the exterior" (4.1). It is possi-

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[3] Even as late as the 19th century, new medical traditions were invented in the south of China. See Hanson 2001, 262-91.

ble that the chiseled stone is another name or variant of the stone blade. Qi Bo mentions it once more, saying that one should "not use a chiseled stone" in the treatment of a pregnant woman to avoid injuring her (47.1).

The next method mentioned is toxic drugs. They appear eleven times in conjunction with treatments. However, hints on "the use of pharmaceuticals appear in 26 of the 79 discourses" (Unschuld 2003, 285). The text recommends toxic drugs for obesity (*zhifei* 脂肥) (12.2). They signify a distinctly medical treatment, used to affect cure for an acute condition—as opposed to dietary therapy which straddles the realm between longevity and medicine (Kohn 2010, 50-68). Plants used to treat diseases usually contain some level of toxicity, while those used for dietary purposes or as supplements are mostly non-toxic (*wudu* 無毒) (see Engelhardt and Hempen 1997).

The only pharmacological therapy related to sex is in the context of curing dryness of blood (*xueku* 血枯) caused by "having lost a large amount of blood when young and engaging in sexual activity while in an intoxicated state, which exhausts the *qi* and injures the liver. This is the reason that menstruation will decline or stop" (40.1.2). The prescription is not only for curing the medical problem but also involves restoring male potency: it contains black cuttlefish bones, madder root, sparrow eggs, and abalone.[4]

Thirdly, cauterization or moxibustion came from the north and are used to treat abdominal problems. Vivienne Lo notes that the *Tianxia* has "the earliest evidence of a tradition of moxibustion associated with preventive and restorative, rather than curative medicine" (2005, 244). By the time the *Suwen* was compiled, moxibustion alone (28.1, 34.2.1, 60.3.2) or moxibustion and needling (*jiuci* 灸刺) (19.2.3, 24.3, etc.) have became important methods for treating all sorts of diseases.

Nine-needle therapy, fourth on the list, is the application of nine kinds of needles to different parts of the body:

> The first kind of needle is to insert into the skin; the second, into the flesh; the third, into the vessels; the fourth, into the tendons; the fifth, to the bones;

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[4] "Sparrow" translates *que* 雀, glossed in the *Shuowen jiezi* as "small bird." The identification as "sparrow" goes back to Li Shizhen's (1518-1593) *Bencao gangmu* (Li 1994, 2571-75). "Abalone" translates *baoyu* 鮑魚, which Unschuld renders "carp" (2003, 297). It really is abalone and also known as *fuyu* 鰒魚 or *shijue ming* 石決明. See Luo 2003, 1217; Read 1977, 524, #222.

> the sixth, to regulate yin and yang [*qi*]; the seventh, to increase essence; the eighth, to expel [pathogenic] wind; and the ninth, to make the nine orifices penetrable. (54.4; see also *Lingshu* 1)

The practice originated in the south and also uses fine needles, especially for cramps and blockages (12.1.4). The *Suwen* states that fine needles are good for curing external illnesses, while decoctions are better for internal diseases (13.2). "If a small obstruction spreads everywhere, it will follow the vessel to come; [in this case] fine needles are best, like in common pricking treatment" (58.2.2). Gwei-Djen Lu suggests these fine needles may have been used for acupuncture in the Zhou dynasty (1980, 69-77), but this is unlikely since needle techniques and acumoxa points are not mentioned in the Mawangdui manuscripts and they probably developed after the 2nd century BCE. When the *Suwen* was compiled, physicians were already using "fine" needles for treatment which were not made of stone.

Nine-needle therapy was already on its way out when the *Suwen* was composed. Qi Bo says that when one knows "the origin of the three parts and nine sub-parts of the pulse, it is unnecessary to retain the use of the nine-needle discourse" (26.3). Since acupuncture is the main therapy in the *Suwen*, it is possible that nine-needle therapy followed a different theoretical model. Hence, it was considered not worth retaining the theory but its tools continued to be used.

Healing exercises, lit. "guiding and stretching," is the next method listed. They originated from the central region and were used to treat flaccidity or recession of muscles as well as damp heat syndromes. The *Suwen* describes them as being used in treating chronic fullness of the lower flank and the tendency toward reverse *qi* flow (47.1.2). Similarly the sixth method, massages or "pressing and lifting," came from the central plains and was used to treat similar conditions (12.2). It should not, however, be used in the winter to avoid getting "nasal stuffiness and bleeding" nor for diseases of the neck and nape in the spring (4.1).

Natural phytotherapy, shamanic practices, incantations, séances, rituals, sorcery, exorcism, numerology, and other occult practices are further but lesser treatment techniques in the *Suwen*. The text often tries to convince those who fear needles and blades to believe in their efficacy, making light of the more supernatural dimension of disease. For exam-

ple: "The Dao [of medicine] has no demons or sprites. Treatment always follows the same principle: it comes alone and departs alone" (25.3).

Another method is blood- and *qi*-letting. Although mentioned only in passing, it may have been quite common (12.1). As Paul Unschuld says, "it is safe to state that blood-letting occupies a highly visible if not prominent position in the *Suwen*. Altogether twelve treatises refer explicitly to the practice of blood-letting" (2003, 268). This may be true but there are other passages that refer not only to purging of blood but also of *qi*. For example, "When there is a surplus of *qi*, purge the passageways of [patient's] channels, without causing injury to the channels, loss of blood, or leakage of *qi*" (62.2.2).

The *Suwen* physicians seemed to have moved away from these methods and concentrated more on needle therapy based on vessel theory. Their treatments moved from the realm of spirits and magic to a more theory-based medical world. However, before vessel theory was completely established, during the transitional phase—and also in later periods—healing exercises and massages were still used parallel to vessel techniques (12.1.5). These methods, moreover, form an essential part of classical longevity techniques and have continued to play a role as supplementary and preventative medical methods to the present day.

Although *Suwen* scholars did not specifically mention sexual practices as a method of treatment, the text makes server references to them, notably discussing the "seven ways of diminishing and eight procedures of increasing [*qi*]" (*qisun bayi* 七損八益) doctrine (5.4.2). This indicates that in all probability, sexual methods were accepted for improving health. Sumiyo Umekawa argues that in later texts such as the *Xuannü jing* and the *Yufang mijue*, sexual positioning was important for women to reach orgasm so that they could generate essence for men to absorb which would strengthen their bodies and improve their health (2005, 9-11). How, then, did the early Chinese conduct sexual encounters?

Chapter Five

Speaking of Sex

Although full of desire, do not act in haste. Kiss, embrace, and employ the art of foreplay.

—He Yinyang

Three words most commonly express sexual and other forms of desire in ancient and early China: *se* 色 (sensuality, pleasure, lust), *yu* 欲 (desire, craving), and *hao* 好 (liking, fondness). All three are connected to sexuality and express different ways of working with the sexual drives.

To begin, *se* is considered one of the oldest characters associated with sex. It appears in various uses. Thus, in the *Mengzi* 孟子 (Mencius) Gaozi says: "[The love of] food and sex is part of human nature" (IVA.1). Similarly Confucius says: "I have not seen [anyone] who loves virtue as much as he is fond of sex (*Lunyu* 9.17); and: "A gentleman has three [things] to guard against. . . In his youth, when his blood and *qi* are not yet stable, he should thus guard against sex" (16.7). The *Zhuangzi* has: "That which assists life is food and that which injures life is sex" (ch. 12).

Se can simply be translated as "sex," but that does not convey its historical, social, and cultural senses. The contexts in which the word is used convey different degrees of sexual connotation. In the *Mengzi*, it is not only sex or lust, but includes the finer details of sexual allurement in femininity, beauty, and women as an object of desire. It is pure sensuality, the quest for sensory pleasure, an instinct or natural impulse like the need for food and drink. In the conversation between Mencius and Gaozi, *se* can just as easily be rendered as "gluttony," "pleasure," "fun," "lust," generally indicating something people go after that lends itself to excess.

Se in the *Lunyu* encompasses all that is represented in the *Mengzi*, but in addition the text uses the term as the opposite of virtue, making it almost derogatory. In the second passage, it represents a cautionary

note—a warning to young people not to give in to the temptations of sex and sensuality. The *Zhuangzi*, finally, uses the word in the sense of lust but contrasts it with food, which gives life while indulgence in various pleasures and sensory gratifications takes it away.

Se as an innate desire in human beings, then, forms part of human nature, yet it has all sorts of negative connotations, especially so when used in association with women. The *Lienü zhuan* affirms this: it treats physical beauty and the expression of femininity in dress and comportment with suspicion and frequently links feminine beauty and allure to immorality and danger to men (O'Hara 1978, 186-214).

In the Mawangdui corpus, *se* appears in the *Shiwen* and *Tianxia*, the former using it in the more innocuous sense of "color." The latter, however, uses it with a sexual connotation and paraphrases the *Zhuangzi*:

> When a person is born, there are two things that need not be learnt. The first is breathing and the second eating. Except for these two, there is nothing that is not the result of learning or habit. Hence, that which assists life is food and that which injures it is *se* [sex]. That is why, when the sages engage in the "unification of man and woman" [sexual intercourse], they follow distinct rules.

In the *Suwen*, *se* appears in four different meanings. The first is "color," e.g., "heaven and mountains are of one color" (71.2.2); "the color of the urine has changed" (74.2.2); and "the urine's color is red" (45.1). Second it forms part of the compound *wuse* (five colors), matching the five phases (5.3). Third, it refers to "complexion," described as an essential diagnostic tool, and last it occurs in the compound *sese* 色色 and means "agitated" (49.5).

Wang Bing's commentary has the word in the sense of "sex," explaining the idea of "desire" (*yu*): "Taking pleasure in sex is called lust; using one's essence lightly is called dissipation; when there is no temperance in sexual pleasure, essence will be exhausted" (1.1). Even today the tendency is to use the word with negative sexual connotations, for example, *selang* 色狼 (sex wolf) is a lecherous man and *seqing* 色情 (sex stimulation) is pornography. In the medical texts, on the other hand, its sense of sex and sensuality gradually diminished, and the word tends to be used for color or complexion as a diagnostic tool.

"Desire" is a different story. The *Liji* uses it with clear sexual connotations: "The great desires of human beings are drinking [alcohol], eating

[good food], and mating [male and female]" (ch. 19). The *Lüshi chunqiu* categorizes it as an emotion and uses it to emphasize moderation: "Heaven gave birth to human beings and allowed them to develop avarice and desires. Desires come as emotions, and emotions can be moderated. The sage cultivates moderation to stop desires; hence he does not overly express his emotions."

The *Suwen* uses the word *yu* for "desire" eighty-seven seven times singly and four times in the compound *shiyu* 嗜欲 or "craving." Here it signifies a powerful emotion that requires a response and includes a wide spectrum of feelings. For the most part, it just means wishing to do something, but on occasion it has sexual connotations. "Desire" is an innate feeling, mostly associated with simple wishes, for example, the wish to know something (*yuzhi* 欲知) (3.2.1). It also appears as part of the etiology of disease, such as the urge to vomit (*yuqu* 欲嘔) (33.1). Other appearances include loss of appetite or "not wanting to eat and drink" (*buyu shiyin* 不欲食飲) (38.2.1), a hankering for cold drinks (*heyu lengyin* 渴欲冷飲) (35.1), and being fond of talking (*yu yanyu* 欲言語) (16.3).

In one passage it clearly means lust: "Using desire [lust] to exhaust one's essence" (*yiyu ke qijing* 以欲竭其精) (1.1). In another, it is craving: "Unbridled craving, endless worry and fear result in essential *qi* being weakened and destroyed" (14.2). Guo Aichun explains that "this means that essential *qi* diminishes." Uncontrolled desire of any kind is bad for health and sexual "desire without limit" will exhaust essence, leading to an overall decline.

Hao is the third term of the group. It can be translated as "liking" or "fondness" and signifies a lesser power than *se* or *yu*, as in being fond of beauty/sex/women (*haose*) in the *Lunyu* passage cited above. The *Suwen* has the term three times, using it to describe symptoms of diseases rather than emotional states or sexual desires. For example, *haoming* 好瞑 means "being fond of sleep" (32.29), *haodaxi* 好大息 means "liking to breathe deeply" (38.1), and *haowo quxi* 好卧屈膝 is "being fond of sleeping with one's knees folded" (45.2).

However, the *Lingshu* mentions the phrase *haoyan* 好顏 (fond of colors) in connection with the characteristics of people who do not live long and die violently because they "are fond of beauty, sex, and women, and tend to be hasty by nature" (64.1.3). Therefore, in this context, the term is like "the love of beauty, sex, and women." The term "love" (*ai* 爱) is used once in the *Suwen* but without sexual connotation: "If that which is loved

is the exterior; this correspondent to summer *qi* and this is the Dao of nourishment and growth" (2.1).

To sum up, the *Suwen* sees sexual desire as a normal emotion provided it is somewhat controlled. Only when excessive, turning into lust or craving, will it harm the body by exhausting essence or ruining *qi*.

Sex-Talk

Sexual desire leads to sexual encounters, which the Chinese describe with a language both poetic and full of vivid imagery. Thus, in the West, when the man lies on top of a woman we speak of the "missionary position" (Rusbridger 1986, 93-99). When a Chinese man lies on top of a woman, it is "silkworms tenderly entwined" (*can chanmian* 蠶纏綿), "swallows' hearts united" (*yan tongxin* 燕同心), or "dragons all curled up" (*long wanzhuan* 龍宛轉). There are at least seven variations to this basic position, as listed in Dongxuanzi's "Thirty Methods [of Intercourse]" (Hsia et al. 1986, 181-83). Other positions, such as those described in the *Su'e pian*, also have poetic names, such as "Couching tiger and curling dragon" and "Reverse piercing of the hibiscus" (see Figs. 8, 9).

Chinese erotic terms conjure up joy, nature, romance, freedom, fun, mystery, excitement, and humor. Tamba no Yasuyori, the Japanese compiler of the medical textbook *Ishinpō*, thought it amusing enough that he commented on the expression "phoenix holding a baby chick" (*feng jangji* 鳳將雞) meaning "a large, fat woman having intercourse with a small man" (Hsia et al. 1986, 181, #16). The *He yinyang* and *Tianxia* list ten basic sexual positions as "roving tiger," "cicada clinging," "measuring worm," "river deer butting," "locust splayed," "gibbon grabbing," "toad," "rabbit bolting," "dragonfly," and "fish gobbling."

Sex expressed as a natural human desire plays an important role in ancient Chinese culture, as is documented variously in pre-Han writings.[1] The erotic content in some of these texts is illustrated by the rich and vivid imagery of copulation, sexual symbolism, and prose depicting carnal desire, sexual yearning, and the joy of sex, plus men and women having amorous encounters.

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[1] See Middendorf 2007, 206-19; Goldin 2002, 1-47; Riegel 1997; Harbsmeier 1995; and Bischoff 1985.

Fig. 8: “Couching tiger and curling dragon. “*Su'e pian*, no. 26.

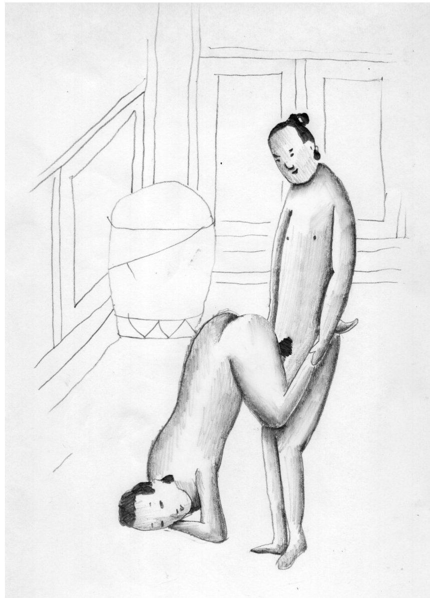

Fig. 9: “Reverse piercing of the hibiscus.” *Su'e pian*, no. 31.

Even the hexagrams in the *Yijing*, showing the creation of the world and the four seasons, connect to reproduction and fertility as manifested in human sexuality. Astronomical and political ideas as well as male and female organs are associated with the first two hexagrams Qian 乾 (heaven) and Kun 坤 (earth) and their "coming together" corresponds to the sexual act (Schilling 2009, 343-44). According to early interpretations, Hexagrams 63, "After Completion" (*jiji* 既濟), and 64, "Before Completion" (*weiji* 未濟), connect to women's monthly cycles (2009, 744, 748).

Van Gulik, too, sees hexagram 63 as a symbol of sexual union, which expresses "the perfect harmony of man and woman completing each other, graphically depicted by the perfect alteration of yin and yang lines. To achieve this harmony was considered the basis of a happy and healthy sex life" (1961, 37-38; also Wilhelm 1950, 244-48, 709-14; Schilling 2009, 743-45). He came to this conclusion because the upper trigram Kan symbolizes water and the lower trigram Li symbolizes fire, which correspond to woman and man. This hexagram is also commonly used to express such a union in internal alchemy. Hexagram 64 similarly plays an important role in later longevity and sexual techniques. Its text instructs men how not to lose semen: the young fox should not get his tail wet when crossing the river.

The Great Appendix of the *Yijing* stresses that intercourse of complementary forces is the foundation of all life and the manifestation of the cosmic forces of yin and yang (Schilling 2009, 209-10, 779-80). The second part of the Commentary states that "when heaven and earth [provide] the generative forces, the myriad things transform and take shape; when male and female blend their *jing*; the myriad things transform and are brought forth." The expression "male and female blend their essence" (*nannü goujing* 男女構精) appears in Wang Bing's commentary (1.3): "That which gives life is called essence; [when the] two essences [of male and female] unite, what results is called spirit" (1.3). He believes that what produces life has its origin in essence and when the essence of a man and a woman intermingle, a new spirit, a new individual, is conceived. "Man and woman" is the expression used for sex in the *Liji*: "Drink, food, and sex are people's greatest desires" (ch. 19) The *Suwen*, on the other hand, uses the term conventionally as "man and woman" or "male and female" (5.3, 77.2).

Sexual vocabulary before the Han was still set mostly in the sphere of philosophical expression, but as bedchamber vocabulary developed, it moved into the more concrete and objective. The bedchamber arts are known by terms used also for sexual intercourse: "inside the bedchamber" (*fangzhong*), a subcategory of sexual texts in the *Hanshu*; "way of the yin" (*yindao*), found in the titles of six books; "arts inside the bedchamber" (*fangzhong shu*) and the "way of being intimate sexually" (*jieyin zhi dao* 接陰之道), used in the *Shiwen* (#3); "the inner chamber" (*neifang* 內房) as in a book title in the *Hanshu*; and "bedchamber affairs" (*fangshi* 房事) (Li and McMahon 1992, 145; Van Gulik 1961, 70). "Inside the bedchamber" is by far the most common.

Some terms appear in variations but, on the whole, the language in the *Suwen* is more "clinical" than that of Mawangdui and earlier texts. In the Han, "inside the bedchamber" has become an accepted part of longevity culture and is of clear importance in health maintenance and medicine. There was no need for further embellishment or explanation in conjunction with sex.[2]

Foreplay

The human sexual act and people's sexual responses have not changed much in the last five thousand years. Ulrike Middendorf summarizes Luria and Rose's four stages in the human sexual response as follows:

> Firstly, excitement (erection of the penis and dilation, lubrication of the vagina); secondly, plateau (continuation of physiological and psychological changes initiated during excitement, adding some new ones); thirdly, orgasm (occurrence of a clear-cut set of contractions in both sexes, with diffused psychological changes) and lastly, resolution (reversal of the physiological and psychological events stimulated by the arousal state). (2007, 85)

In this setting, the aim of foreplay (*xidao* 戲道) is to achieve arousal for both parties before engaging in intromission. According to Midden-

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[2] For a complete glossary of sexual terms and euphemisms based on Bishop's *Songs of the Orchid Tower*, the Mawangdui manuscripts, Gerhard Schmitt's *Sprüche der Wandlungen*, the *Shiji*, and Wen Yiduo's *Shijing de xingyu guanyi*, see Middendorf 2007, 211-24.

dorf, "sexual arousal in the male and female may be either reflexogenic, by direct physical stimulation, or psychogenic stimulation, resulting from erotic imagery or reading and viewing erotica—books, paintings, decorations and so forth" (2007, 85). More specifically, reflexogenic stimulation includes caressing (*caodun* 操頓), kissing (*xiangwen* 相吻), and embracing (*xiangbao* 相抱), all found in the Mawangdui manuals.[3] Psychogenic stimulation is borne out by Zhang Heng's "Tongsheng ge," where the new bride locks the doors of the nuptial bedchamber, then "sheds her robes, removes her make-up and hair ornaments, and rolls out the picture scroll next to the pillows" (Middendorf 2007, 85; Van Gulik 1961, 73, 77).

The *Tianxia* describes erection as a three-stage process. When the penis is stimulated and there is no tumescence, it means that the flesh is not ready; when there is tumescence but no firmness, it means that the muscles are not ready; when it is firm but not hot, it means that the *qi* is not ready. If one engages in intercourse before the flesh is ready, the penis will collapse; before the *qi* is ready, the penis retreats. The *Sunü jing* refers to a similar process in four stages, detailing that the penis must be properly aroused before intromission. The same also appears in the *Ishinpō* (ch. 10; Hsia et al. 1986, 175; see also Wagner 1981, 10).

The *Tianxia* further stipulates that it is imperative for the penis to be properly aroused. The fourth among the "eight procedures of increasing [*qi*]" (*bayi* 八益) is "knowing the right timing." This means that foreplay should be properly conducted before "using the penis" to enter the woman. "Using the penis" when it is not ready or unwilling will impair *qi* and lead to premature aging, disease, and even early death. However, when the penis is ready to perform, the sexual act moves into the second stage: penetration or intromission.

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[3] See Li Ling and McMahon 1992, 167-68. The *He yinyang* also gives a good description on how foreplay is conducted (Ma JX 1992, 977-83).

Intromission

Terms for intromission are complex: they can be specific and rather direct, such as *ru*, "to enter," or *nei*, "to penetrate;" but they can also be metaphorical, using yin and yang to express the union, or euphemistic, such as *yinqu*, "hidden twists."

In the Mawangdui manuals, the most common term for joining by penetration is "uniting yin and yang" (*he yinyang* 合陰陽), which also appears as a title. The contents leave no doubt that the term refers to sexual intercourse. On the other hand, the *Tianxia* uses "uniting man and woman" (*he nannü* 合男女) to express the sexual act. These expressions are both philosophical as well as practical, but they are clear about what they mean.

Neither of these are found in the *Suwen*. It uses "harmonizing *qi*" (*heqi* 合氣), a term that also refers to the cosmological, sexual rites of the early Celestial Masters. Both the *Yangsheng fang* and the *Shiwen* use the term to denote sexual intercourse, the latter also mentioning it without sexual connotation or religious overtones. "Heaven and earth harmonize their *qi*" (*tiandi heqi* 天地合氣), it says, speaking of the union of the atmospheric *qi* of heaven and earth in a rather general cosmological manner (25.2, 25.3, 74.2.1). It also says that "in the human [body], the harmonizing of yin and yang *qi* corresponds to the [six musical] tones" (54.4)—again with no relation to sexual activity.

The *Shiwen* uses the expression "being intimate with yin" (接陰 *jieyin*) to describe sexual intercourse (Harper 1998, 389n1). "Contact with or receiving yin" is an interesting expression because of its agricultural associations. Rodo Pfister compares the sexual act to the agriculture process of grafting, in which living tissue is implanted to achieve an organic union. He sees the analogy of a man taking his "stalk" to graft it into a woman's "slit." The exchange of sap during the biological process is likened to the exchange of *qi* and intermixing of essence in sexual cultivation (2011, I-3.6.1). The connection is not surprising since ancient China was an agrarian society. On the other hand, "body intimacy" (*jiexing* 接形), another common term, clearly denotes sexual intercourse, both in the *He yinyang* and the *Tianxia*.

The *Yangsheng fang* and *Wushi'er bingfang* have another expression: "approaching the inner [chamber]" (*jinnei* 近內). This may be related to the earlier term "approaching the woman's chamber" (*jin nüshi* 近女室), found in the *Zuozhuan* (Zhao 1) in reference to sexual activity. The *Yangsheng fang* in addition has the simple word "engage" or "do" (*wei* 爲) as an idiomatic expression of sexual intercourse (Harper 1998, 342; Li and McMahon 1992, 167).

The *He yinyang* uses "to enter" (*ru* 入) and exhorts male practitioners "to enter the mysterious gate" (*ru xuanmen* 入玄門) and "ride the coital tendon" (*yu jiaojin* 御交筋) to generate *qi*. The text goes on to say that the "coital tendon" is the same as the "coital vessel" within the "mysterious gate" (vagina). Ulrike Middendorf sees *ru* as a euphemism for the "motion during sexual intercourse" (2007, 91). In addition, the *Yinshu* uses the phrase "entering the chamber" (*rugong* 入宮) in this context, which is close to the expression most commonly used in the *Suwen*: "entering the bedchamber" (*rufang*). The *Yinshu* has:

> Fall days: Bathe and wash the hair frequently. As regards food and drink, let hunger or satiation be whatever the body desires. Enter the chamber however often the body finds it beneficial and comfortable—this is the way to greatest benefit.
>
> Winter days: Bathe and wash the hair frequently. The hands should be cold and the feet warm; the face cold and the body warm. Rise from sleep late; while lying down, stretch out straight. Enter the chamber between evening and early midnight [11 p.m.]. More would harm the *qi*. (*Wenwu* 1990/10: 82; Lo 2001, 26; Harper 1998, 110-11)

In the *Shiwen* (#5), Shun uses the term *shi* 使, "to allow", "let," or "send," to denote sexual intercourse when he described the nature of the penis. Another expression is "to allow penetration or to let [the penis] inside [the vagina]" or "to let [oneself] into the inner [chamber]" (*shinei* 使內); it describes a sexual maneuver with the male in total control—also found in the *Suwen* (44.2, 10.2.4).

Both the *Tianxia* and the *Yangsheng fang* have the word "use" (*yong* 用) in the sense that the man "uses" his penis to penetrate the woman (*Yangsheng fang*; Harper 1998, 336). Both the *Suwen* (45.1, 70.3) and the *Lingshu* (65.2.1; 13.1.12) employ the term to indicate sexual intercourse as much as another term common in the Mawangdui manuscripts: "go to bed" (*wo* 卧) (also *Suwen* 10.4.2, 23.1.12). Harper translates it as "having

sexual intercourse" in a passage of the *Yangsheng fang*: "When going to bed (*wo*), wipe the male organ and the female organ" (1998, 343n2). The *Shiwen* (#4) also implies that "going to bed" means sexual intercourse (Middendorf 2007, 90).

Another explicit term that appears only in the *Shiwen* and is not found in any other Han text is "penis encounter" (*shiyu* 勢遇). *Shi* is an accepted term for the male organ (Harper 1998, 389n3), and the context leaves no doubt of its sexual intention.

All in all, the Mawangdui manuscripts have a rich vocabulary for sexual intercourse of which only three terms are retained in the *Suwen*. This shows that sexual vocabulary not only changed over time but also that there was a gradual move toward simplification and standardization. The limitation in expression may also be due to the divergent emphasis of the texts, i.e., the move from sexual manuals to medical works.

Climax

The Chinese sexual classics place little emphasis on the importance of what we call orgasm. The Mawangdui manuals describe the conclusion of the sexual act for both man and woman as "reversing" a series of reactions initiated by penetration, but there is no "big bang." Even though the manuals were written for and by men, they took note on how women adjusted to the physiological and psychological changes at the conclusion of the sexual act (Pfister 2011, I:3.5.2-7). An adept of sexual cultivation should always make sure that the woman is aroused properly, feels pleasured, and reaches her "limit" or "conclusion" because that is when she will produce the essence he seeks to absorb (Umekawa 2003, 9).

The *He yinyang* describes the conclusion of the sexual act as the woman reaching her "limit" (*zu* 卒), which is signaled by the following: "The nose sweats, the lips are white, the hands and feet twitch, and the buttocks do not adhere to the bed-mat, but rise up and away." The *Tianxia* describes woman's conclusion as reaching completion and behaving "as if she had died." This description can be compared to the physiological changes during female "orgasm" as noted by Western scientists (Kinsey 1953, 613-23; Masters and Johnson 1966, 128-34; Lloyd 2005; Luria and Rose 1979, 168). However, it is still only a "high point" and not necessarily the goal. The word "limit" appears thirty-one times

in the *Suwen* without sexual connotation in the sense of "complete" or "sudden." The medical textbook thus does not go into details of the sexual act or refer to its culmination.

The finale for the man is harder to ascertain. The *Shiwen*, in its fifth and final exercise, states that the man has to let his gathered essence ascend and absorb great illumination. After reaching this, he should stop so that essence and spirit grow more blissful every day. It does not mention ejaculation or orgasm. However, the sixth of the "eight procedures of increasing [*qi*]" in the *Tianxia* teaches that the man after withdrawing should allow someone to "make the penis erect" again. By arousing and letting it subside again one "amasses *qi*." When it is time to conclude the session, he should observe all the rules on absorbing the woman's *qi*. He must not move his spine when doing so but should press the absorbed *qi* and calm his body to await the benefit. After complete conclusion [and withdrawal], the penis is washed (*sa* 洒). If it becomes aroused again, pacifying and resting it is called "stabilizing the tipping point." Again, there is no explicit reference to orgasm or ejaculation.

The *Yangsheng fang* refers to the conclusion of the sexual act as "end" (*jiyi* 幾已; *yi* 已). Later literature, such as the *Ishinpō*, uses "let go" (*shi* 施) to refer to ejaculation (ch. 28). The *Suwen* mentions that at age sixteen, a boy's kidney-*qi* is abundant, his essential *qi* overflows, and he can discharge (*xie* 瀉) or ejaculate. When he unites yin and yang, he can father children. Thus, there is a clear distinction between sex to enhance health when there must be no ejaculation and to produce off-spring when ejaculation is required.

In the end, it seems, sexual cultivation as presented in the Mawangdui manuscripts has primarily to do with enhancing essence due to the obvious loss of precious body fluid—essence being most tangible in semen. The primary aim of the practice is to absorb the women's *qi*, so that adepts can replace their loss by a process later known as "reverting essence to replenish the brain" (*huanjing bunao* 還精補腦), thereby enhancing health and long life. In addition, as later texts suggest, they receive "joy" and "satisfaction" (*kuai* 快). While the Mawangdui manuscripts are not much concerned with this dimension, the *Suwen* uses this term once in the compound *yukuai* 欲快 in the sense of "sexual pleasure" (5.4.2). In addition, it contains a host of detailed expressions and descriptions of sexual interaction.

Chapter Six

Expressions of Sexual Interaction

> *The Yellow Emperor asked: "How can I tell if a woman is experiencing pleasure?" The Plain Woman replied: "There are five signs, five desires, and ten movements by which you can observe her transformation and understand her reactions.*
>
> *—Sunü jing*

Expressions of sexual interaction in the *Suwen* take a variety of forms and appear in a number of different major categories. Some are quite concrete and speak about entering and penetrating; others are more cosmological and metaphorical, invoking the cosmic forces yin and yang. Yet others talk about basic physical behavior, such as using, doing, and sleeping. In addition, there are some expressions that imply the physical effort and potential energy drain of sexual activity; and a few which are concerned specifically with medical conditions and the possibility of developing symptoms or diseases.

Entering In

The most common, least controversial term to denote sexual intercourse in the *Suwen* is "entering the chamber" (*rufang* 入房), not found in Mawangdui or any other Han text. It occurs five times:

> People today do not [live in accordance with] nature: they drink alcohol like broth, they employ recklessness regularly [in all activities], they enter the chamber in an intoxicated state, they allow their lust to exhaust their essence, and they let their wastefulness dissipate their true [*qi*]. Hence, they barely make it to reach a half hundred [years] and are weak and dissipated. (1.1)

> The disease is called "dryness of the blood." It is contracted at a young age, when one has lost a large amount of blood or has entered the chamber while intoxicated. The *qi* is exhausted and the liver injured. Thus, her monthly flow declines or stays out. (40.1.2)

> Drinking alcoholic beverages and being struck by [injurious] wind, one will suffer from the "leaking wind" [syndrome]. Entering the chamber, sweating, and being struck by [injurious] wind, one will suffer from the "endogenous wind" [syndrome]. (42.1.2)

> When deliberation and thinking are without limit, when one yearns for the unreachable, and when thoughts are excessive and directed outward, entering the chamber excessively will cause the ancestral tendon to slacken and develop flaccidity. Eventually, this will cause [emission] of white outflow. Hence, the *Xiajing* states: tendon flaccidity is caused by allowing [the penis] inside [the woman]. (44.2)

> If one is frequently intoxicated and satiated, then enters the chamber, *qi* will gather inside the spleen and cannot disperse. (45.1)

The commentaries on various passages indicate that entering the chamber denotes sexual intercourse. This is further supported by passages from the *Lingshu*:

> If one is intoxicated and enters the chamber, then perspires and is hit by [injurious] wind, the spleen will be injured… If one enters the chamber excessively, perspires, and then bathes in water, the kidney will be injured. (4.1.1)

> Entering the chamber while intoxicated, perspiring and being hit by wind will injure spleen. Using force to overexertion and then entering the chamber, perspiring and taking a bath [in water], the kidney will be injured. (66.4)

Rufang, it becomes clear, is not gender-specific. It is a clear and simple term, free from any embellishment or mystery - quite fitting for use in a medical book.

The term *neifang* 內房 (inner chamber), on the other hand, appears in a book title listed in the *Hanshu* under "bedchamber arts:" "Prescriptions from the Inner Chamber for Begetting Progeny of the Three Schools" (30.1778). Since all the books in this subcategory deal with the bedcham-

ber arts, here called the "way of yin," it can be concluded that *neifang* has the same meaning as *rufang*.

The word *nei* 內, "inner" or "enter," appears in several combinations with sexual connotations, but by itself rarely appears in the *Suwen*, and in only one passage may hint at sex:

> The west is a region of metal and jade; an area of sand and stones . . . Its people [eat] rich food and grow fat. Hence, injurious [factors] cannot injure their constitution. Their diseases develop from "within." (12.1.2)

Wang Bing comments that "[diseases developing from] "within" means that they come from indulging in excessive joy, rage, sadness, fear, drinking, eating, and sex." In other words, the *Suwen* use of *nei* can be interpreted to include sexual activity. However, the Ming commentator Ma Shi (1998), the Qing physician Zhang Zhicong (2002), and the scholars from the Shandong and Hebei medical schools (1995) comment that *nei* in this context refers to the seven emotions plus the ingestion of food and drink. Gao Shishi equates it to just the five emotions (2001).

A concrete use of *nei* to indicate sexual activity can be found in the *Lingshu*, which has: "Immediately after penetration [sex], there should be no needling [acupuncture]. Immediately after needling, there should be no penetration [sex]" (9.6.2).

A variant of simple *nei* is *shinei* 使內, literally "causing to enter" or "sending in." It appears first in the *Tianxia* in the phrase: *ji shinei buneng dao chanbing* 疾使內不能道產病. Douglas Wile reads this to mean: "When the disease manifests within, it cannot be controlled" (1992, 80). Donald Harper renders it as: "If he has intercourse impulsively, he is unable to affect the passage (of vapor [=*qi*]) and becomes ill," and explains that *shinei* is similar to *jinnei* 近內, "approaching the inner [chamber]," which refers to sexual intercourse in the *Yangsheng fang* (Harper 1998, 429n1, 339n4). Rodo Pfister translates the sentence as: "Who rushes to send [the penis] inside cannot control the *qi* flow and that creates health disorders" (2003, 46). Hermann Tessenow and Paul Unschuld, finally, define *shinei* as "to send inward, i.e., have sexual intercourse" (2007, 383-84)

I would add another dimension. W. Dobson describes *shi* as an auxiliary or causative verb, which stands between the cause and the acting agent. He calls it "ergative" in the sense of "make or cause" and "permissive" in the sense of "allow" or "let" (1973, 671-72). Based on this, I translate *shinei* as "to allow in/inside" or "to let [the penis] inside [the

vagina]" or "to allow or to let [oneself] into the inner [chamber]." This gives a sense of responsibility to the man, who should have control of his actions as sexual cultivation demands. This makes sense in the passage cited above, which notes that "tendon flaccidity is caused by allowing the penis inside" (44.2). Wang Bing comments that "*shinei* refers to the physical exhaustion of yin-power and the exhaustion of one's essential *qi*." This indicates that the term is related to sexual activity and can lead to energetic exhaustion. Zhang Zhicong adds that "*nei* means entering the chamber, i.e., sexual intercourse."

Another passage in the *Suwen* clearly uses *shinei* to mean sex:

> [When] the white vessel arrives, its pulse feels rapid and floating, depleted above and in excess below. If one is frightened, there will be accumulation of *qi* in the chest. When [the pulse] is rapid and depleted, we speak of lung obstruction with alternate cold and hot [spells]. This condition is contracted by allowing [the penis] inside [the vagina] while intoxicated. (10.4.2)

This implies that letting the penis enter while intoxicated is the cause of lung blockage. Another related term is *jienei* 接內, "intimacy with the inside [of the vagina/chamber]," found both in the *Shiwen* and *Lingshu*. The latter has: "Receding *qi* . . residing in the hidden organ [penis], one will dream of contact with the inside [of the vagina]" (43.3). Dreaming of sex here is considered a "bodily pathology" (Chen HF 2003, 152). The entire chapter is on how excessive *qi* induces various kinds of dreams, linking dreams to the movement of *qi* with vessel theory. Thus, when pathogenic *qi* dwells in the genitals, one will dream of sex. The sexual act here is part of the diagnosis, etiology, and pathology of disease.

Nei, therefore, is an expression that needs little imagination when associated with sex. As a noun it conjures up the inner world of the women—spatial, anatomical and emotional—alluding to the inner quarters or the inside of sexual organs, often compared to dark places such as caves or holes. As a verb, it describes the function of the penis as a tool under its owner's control, used as an instrument to penetrate the vagina. Both uses of the word demonstrate intimacy—spatial as well as physical.

When *nei* is used in a compound, such as *shinei* and *jienei*, it is both gender-specific and location-specific, denoting the interior of the female sexual organ or the inner chamber. It gives the power and responsibility to the men in the sense that they can control their actions, i.e., whether to enter into the inner quarters or not. Even after they have gone into the

chamber, they still have the power to decide whether to let their penis enter the vagina. The use of *shinei* implies not only the control of men over health but also over the household. Confucian ethics confer absolute power on men to control their women, which means that they can bestow or withhold sexual favors as they desire. This power, especially of granting sexual favors to numerous wives and concubines, if exercised without the Dao of sex, can easily lead to health problems.

Yin and Yang

Ren Yingqiu's concordance lists 234 entries for "yin-yang" in the *Suwen* and *Lingshu* (1986), while *A Dictionary of the Huangdi Neijing Suwen* provides eight different definitions, three of which have to do with sex: yin-yang denoting the different sexes of man and woman, the bedchamber arts, and the male and female sexual organs (Tessenow and Unschuld 2008). Once in the *Suwen* and twice in the *Lingshu*, the expression explicitly denotes sexual activity. For example, the *Suwen* has:

> Now, injuriousness either manifests in the yin or the yang. When it manifests in the yang, it is contracted through wind, rain, cold, and [summer] heat. When it manifests in the yin, it is contracted through food and drink, yin-yang [sexual intercourse], as well as joy and anger. (62.4)

The *Lingshu* supports this reading:

> All conditions are caused by wind, rain, cold and heat, yin-yang [sexual intercourse], joy and anger, food and drink, living environment, great fright and sudden fear. (28.1)

> Now, that which causes the beginning of the hundred diseases is definitely caused by dryness and wetness, cold and heat, wind and rain, yin and yang [sexual intercourse], joy and anger, food and drink, as well as one's living environment. (44.1)

The *Ishinpō* is another source that uses yin-yang to describe sexual matters: it speaks of "the way of yin-yang," "the affairs of yin-yang," "the exchange of yin-yang," and "the art of yin-yang" (28.633-34).

In all these passages, yin-yang as well as joy and anger refer to two different actions, i.e., the physical as in sexual intercourse and the emo-

tional as in worry and fear. Given that human behavior plays such an important part in the longevity doctrine, the three references to yin-yang can be taken as part of a recurring social motif of an overindulgent life-style dominated by food, drink, luxurious homes, and sexual excess, which ultimately lead to diseases.

A variant of the simple "yin-yang" is "harmonize yin-yang" (*yin-yang he* 陰陽和), which is yet a more explicit way of referring to sexual intercourse. As the *Suwen* says about young men: "At age sixteen, their kidney-*qi* is abundant, their heavenly power arrives, their essential *qi* overflows, and they have their first emissions. Once they harmonize yin-yang, they can have children" (1.3). Guo Aichun comments that "harmo-nize" is the same as "unite" (*he* 合). The scholars from the Shandong and Hebei medical schools state that it is synonymous with "man and woman uniting sexually" (1995). A similar expression also appears in Mawangdui, in the title of the sexual manual *He yinyang*.

However, the *Suwen* also uses the expression without sexual conno-tations, when it talks about "the pulse that matches yin and yang" (17.4) and when it claims that one person's ideas "are not in conformity with the yin and yang [theories]" (67.1).

Use and Sleep

Another common word for having sex is the simple word "use" (*yong* 用). The *Yangsheng fang* employs it to denote intercourse in one of its recipes for increasing women's sexual desire. The *Tianxia* warns against too ag-gressive application: for example, "use violently" (*baoyong* 暴用) and "use forcefully" (*qiangyong* 強用). It refers to potential health hazards from having intercourse when the penis is not ready, such as pustules and a swollen scrotum.[1] The *Suwen* also applies the word in this manner:

> When major yin controls the season, damp *qi* descends and kidney-*qi* ascends accordingly, black arises and water changes, dust covers and becomes clouds and rain. Then the *qi* in the chest possibly is not smooth and there is *yin* flac-cidity [*yinwei* 陰痿]. *Qi* is greatly weakened. Then [the penis] will not rise [*buqi* 不起] and cannot be used. (70.3)

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[1] Harper 1998, 429n3; see also Pfister 2003, 47; Ma JX 1992, 1032-3. Wile has it as "if he is excessive in sex" (1992). See also Li Ling and McMahon 1992.

The scholars of the Shandong and Hebei medical schools comment that when the *qi* in the chest is not flowing smoothly, *yin* flaccidity occurs and yang *qi* will weaken greatly, so that the penis cannot rise and or be used (1995). Guo Aichun explains that *yin* flaccidity causes the *qi* to be weakened and result in sexual dysfunction. The *Lingshu* similarly says:

> When someone has an injury in his penis, the *yin* [penile] *qi* will be severed. Then it will not rise and cannot be used. Still, the man's beard does not fall off—why would that be? (65.2.1)

> Disorder of the vessel tendons: if due to cold, there are cramps in the tendons; if due to heat, the tendons slacken and cannot receive [*qi*]. Then there is *yin* flaccidity and [the penis] cannot be used. (13.1.12)

> When the disease is at the fork of the toe in the leg, there is pain on the inside of the ankle, the inner fibulas, and the penis. The inner thigh will have turning muscles [spasms], and the sexual organ cannot be used. If the injury is internal, then it will not rise. If the injury is [external and] due to cold, it will contract inward. (13.1.6)

Other usages of *buyong*, "cannot be used," in the *Suwen* and *Lingshu* include statements like "the four limbs cannot be used" (*sizhi buyong* 四支不用), indicating paralysis or stiffness. However, in the above contexts *yong* clearly means to use [the penis] for sexual intercourse and not for urination, and *buyong* is used to denote erectile dysfunction.

Another common word to describe sex is "to sleep" (*wo* 臥), which mostly means just that but on occasions, it has a sexual undertone:

> [When the complexion is] black and the pulse reaches its utmost, [the pulse] is rising, firm and big. Then there is accumulation of [injurious]-*qi* in the lower abdomen and the *yin* area [genitals]. This is called kidney syndrome. It comes from taking cold baths before sleeping [having sex]. (10.4.2)

Given the context in which "sleep" is used in this passage, there is a high probability that it can be interpreted as going to bed to have sex. Accumulation of injurious *qi* in the lower abdomen and sexual organs usually is part of the etiology related to problematic sexual intercourse—in this case taking cold baths and having sexual intercourse immediately.

Effort and Exertion

Another dimension of sex in the *Suwen* is the physical exertion it involves which may lead to exhaustion and depletion of essence and *qi*. It has five types of over-exertions or "five taxations" (*wulao* 五勞):

> Protracted looking injures the blood; protracted sleeping injures the *qi*, protracted sitting injures the flesh; protracted standing injures the bones; and protracted walking injures the tendons. (23.1.12)

"Sleeping" here may be just lying down and resting or it may have a sexual implication, indicating that excessive and prolonged sexual activity causes physical fatigue and exertion. The case is made a bit clearer, when the text says: "When one is exhausted, *qi* is dissipated. . . when one is exhausted, one breathes fast and perspires heavily" (39.4). And: "If one is courageous [sexually] and exerts oneself strenuously, then the kidneys will perspire" (61.1.2).

Physical exertion, also through sexual activity which causes heavy perspiration, often leads to depletion of essence and kidney injury. Already the case histories of Chunyu Yi show that sweating is often associated with sexual intercourse. Exertion in the *Suwen*, depending on the context, can therefore, imply overexertion through sexual activity—not unlike the "violent"" and "forceful use" of the penis in the *Tianxia*.

Another symptom associated with this are dreams of sexual intercourse, linked with "depletion and exhaustion" (*xulao* 虛癆) in the *Jin'gui yaolue* 金匱要略 (Essentials of the Golden Cabinet) by Zhang Zhongjing 張仲景 (150-219) (Chen 2003, 156-58).

Another variant is the pursuit of sexual activity with courage and vigor (*yong* 勇). The *Suwen* notes that "if one is courageous [sexually] and exerts oneself strenuously, the kidney will leak" (61.1.2). Wang Bing comments that having sex with courage and being overly exhausted is called "vigorous chamber [activities]" (*lifang* 力房). Guo Aichun agrees that *yong* here refers to sexual activity. Courage and vigor by themselves are not harmful, but when they are used excessively and lead to exertion, whether in or out of the bedchamber, they may cause health issues.

Yet another term of the same ilk is "strong force" (*qiangli* 強力). The *Suwen* says:

> When wind takes residence [in the body] and creates lascivious *qi*, it causes loss of essence. The injurious [*qi*] harms the liver. Thus, when one overeats, it causes tendons and vessels to slacken and intestines to suffer. This in turn leads to piles. Similarly, if one drinks excessively, *qi* will reverse [its course]. As a result, when one has strong-force sex, kidney-*qi* is injured and the high bone spoiled. (3.3.2)

Wang Bing comments that "strong force" here means "to exert oneself vigorously in sexual activity," implying excessive and pathological behavior that causes diseases and harms health.

In the progression of change in the medical field, the words used to express the sexual act moved from being more implicit and metaphorical to being more explicit and clinical. Older expressions such as "uniting yin and yang," "joining man and woman," and "harmonizing *qi*" no longer play a role in the *Suwen*. Instead spatial descriptions, such as "entering the chamber" or "penetrating the vagina" become common. The sexual act is described in terms of physicality and the various movements that accompany it—leaving less to the imagination and detailing more corporal associations and specific observations.

If people, despite all warnings, continue to engage in vigorous sex and exert themselves over a long period of time, they will reach a state of sexual exhaustion. This is called "inner dissipation" (*neiduo* 內奪). The *Suwen* defines it: "When injurious *qi* is abundant there is excess. When essential *qi* is dissipated, there is deficiency" (28.1). Wang Bing comments that "dissipation" means a significant decrease in essential *qi*, to the point even of complete loss (*duoqu* 奪去). He cites the *Jiayi jing* indicating that *duo* can mean "to lust." Zhang Jiebing explains *duo* with the word "lose" (*shi* 失). Generally, it means "exhausted," "empty," or "drained" and serves as the opposite of fullness, abundance, or repletion (*sheng* 盛). It is clearly linked with sexual activity, as in the following passage: "Inner dissipation causes recession which leads to muteness and lameness. These are signs of kidney depletion. When minor yin [*qi* of the foot] cannot arrive, we speak of recession" (49.1). Wang Bing comments:

> Depletion is the state of being wasted. . . Kidney-*qi* is inwardly dissipated and no longer follows [the right course]. This causes the tongue to be mute and the legs to be lame: this is kidney depletion.

Wu Kun[2] comments that "'inner' means sexual exertion while 'dissipate' means to exhaust one's yin." Zhang Jiebin states that "'inner dissipation' is the dispersion of essential *qi*" (*Leijing* 14.11). Guo Aichun adds that "'dissipation' means excessive sexual desires that may develop into serious depletion," which in turn may leads to the loss of voice and weakening of the limbs (*yinpai* 瘖俳). Zhang Jiebin further says that "depletion is caused by inner dissipation of essential *qi*" because the "*qi*, being in depletion, goes up instead of flowing down" (*Leijing* 15.34, 27.33).

The expression 'inner dissipation' can therefore be interpreted as a euphemism for sexual exhaustion, caused by dissipating or dispersing personal essence. Following the same line of argument, 'dissipation' alone is used for 'inner dissipation':

> [Even] a person of strong constitution, if he dissipates his essence in the fall and winter by using [the penis], lower *qi* will ascend and become aggressive. If it cannot return, essential *qi* will overflow and descend. Then injurious *qi* will ascend in its wake. (45.1)

Wang Bing comments that dissipation happens when "many desires exhaust essential *qi*." Zhang Jiebin adds that "by giving in to too much sexual desire one will dissipate essential *qi* of the kidney (*Leijing* 15.34). Along the same lines Yang Shangshan says in his *Taisu*: "A person who is strong and vigorous gives in to desires. When his yang-*qi* is weak in fall and winter and he enters the chamber excessively, he will suffer injury. For this reason, we speak of 'dissipation due to use' [of the penis]."

The commentaries indicate that the word "dissipation" usually contains only an indirect reference to the weakening of essence and *qi* and can also mean "reduce" or "contend" (see 17.3, 27, 74.3.2, 15.3, 46.6, and 71.1). In other words, the term may not necessarily be connected to sex, but, especially when used with "essence" or "inner," sexual activity is often implied.

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[2] Wu Kun's 吳焜 *Huangdi neijing Suwen wuzhu* 黃帝內經素問吳注, published in 1594, has been evaluated by Sivin as "exceptionally clear in its explanations and grounded in the experience of practice" (1993, 204).

Pathologies

Another term for pathologies associated with sexual activity is "hidden twists" (*yinqu* 隱曲). Scholars and practitioners have interpreted the term differently, seeing it as a word for genitalia (male or female), sexual functioning, and excrement. The *Suwen* uses it first with a sexual connotation: "The sickness of the two-yang affects the heart and spleen. Then a man cannot perform the hidden twists; a woman will have no monthly flow" (7.2). Wang Bing explains:

> "Two-yang" indicates the yang-brilliance vessels of the large intestine and stomach; "hidden twists" means affairs that are hidden, concealed, indirect, and twisted. When the large intestine and stomach are diseased, the heart and spleen are affected. When the heart is affected, blood will not flow properly; when the spleen is affected, the flavors are not transformed right. When blood does not flow properly, the women cannot menstruate; when the flavors are not transformed right, the man will have less essence. As a result he cannot perform the acts of the hidden, concealed, indirect, and twisted.

Zhang Jiebin comments:

> The "inability to perform the hidden twists" is a sickness of the way of yang [penis]. The stomach is considered to be the ocean that combines water, grain, *qi*, and blood; it is responsible for the transformation of constructive and protective *qi* as well as for moisturizing the ancestral tendon. . . . Now, when the source of these transformations is diseased, the way of yang [penis] will be weakened externally. For this reason, the man cannot perform sexually. (*Leijing* 30.6)

Thus, Wang Bing insists that the condition is caused directly by a disorder of the heart and spleen, whereas Zhang Jiebin believes that the source of the ailment lies in the stomach vessel.[3] He agrees with Wang Bing when he notes that when a man does not have enough essence, he

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[3] In Chinese Medicine, sexual desire is seen as a function of the stomach in terms of "appetite."

cannot fulfill his sexual function, and if a woman does not have enough, her menstruation will cease or be irregular.

Though there is a slight difference in opinion on interpreting the disease mechanism, they all agree that the term "hidden twists" relates to sexual function. In contrast to this, Yang Shangshan in the *Taisu* says "'hidden twists' [means] stool and urine" (ch. 3). Guo Aichun agrees. In the Tang, the term appears in general literature in the sense of sexual organs. This is attested in the biography of An Lushan (703-757) in the *Xin Tangshu* (225. 6420), who is said to have often suffered from genital sores (*yinqu changchuang* 隱曲常瘡). Another passage has:

> The appearance of kidney wind [is marked by] profuse sweating, aversion to wind, a puffy and swelling face, spinal aches that prevent one from standing upright, a soot-colored complexion, and the inability of the hidden twists [to function] smoothly. The key diagnostic signs are above the jaws, which are black. (42.2)

Wang Bing notes that "'hidden twists' refer to a location that is hidden, concealed, indirect, and bent." The kidney is the location that stores essence which, due to sexual intercourse, is attacked by wind. Then essential *qi* diminishes inward and the "affair of the hidden, concealed, indirect, and twisted" does not function smoothly. Zhang Zhicong adds that "the kidney is responsible for storing essence, and when the Shaoyin [kidney] and Yangming [stomach] Vessels gather at the ancestral tendon, [injurious] wind will harm kidney-*qi*. Then the hidden twists will not [function] smoothly."

Ma Shi agrees, but Yang Shangshan again reads "hidden twists" to indicate stool and urine. His explanation is that if both the stomach and the large intestine are diseased, one will not be able to eliminate waste. This is why it is easy to develop diseases relating to excretion. This may be true, but given the context and the other commentaries it is more likely that "hidden twists" refers to the sexual act or organs not functioning properly. The *Suwen* supports this: "If sores develop inside the yin [sex organs], the hidden twists will not [function] smoothly" (74.2.4). Sores inside the sexual organs are called y*inzhong naiyang* 陰中乃瘍. Such sores may affect urination but not necessarily impede defecation. It is therefore more likely that the phrase has a sexual connotation.

The *Suwen* further states:

> When the major yin [*qi*] is at the source, dwells and dominates, the feet become limp, the [body's] lower parts are heavy, and stool and urine [*biansou* 便溲] are irregular. When dampness invades the lower burner, it emerges as sticky overflow and causes swelling in the hidden twists. (74.3.3)

This passage actually differentiates stool and urine from the "hidden twists." Zhang Zhicong comments that the term "'hidden twists' indicates the location of the anterior yin [genitals] of men and women," i.e., genitalia plus pubic region. The following passages note similarly:

> Deficiency in the Jueyin [vessel] causes swelling and pain in the lower abdomen, belly distension, and difficulty in unimpeded urination [*jingsuo buli* 涇溲不利]. In addition, patients like to lie down with bent knees, and their yin [genitals] shrink and swell. (45.2)

> Excess *qi* in the body appears as belly distension as well as difficulty in unimpeded urination. When there is deficiency, the four limbs cannot be used. (62.2.4)

The one exception to the rule is the following *Suwen* passage, where "hidden twists" might actually be excretion: "When the third yin and the third yang beat together, the heart and abdomen become full. If this develops to its limit, one is unable to perform the "hidden twists" and will die within five days" (7.3). All the different commentators agree that the phrase here refers excretion. Which means that the term "hidden twists" really has all these different connotations: male or female pudenda, sexual function and sexual intercourse, elimination and excretory functions of the body. In all cases, it indicates an energetic interaction of the human body with the outside world, a movement of *qi* that is fluid and curvy and not obvious to the naked eye.

Chapter Seven

Sexual Energetics

When male and female blend their essence, a new spirit is born.
—Yijing

As in many ancient cultures, the ancient Chinese used correlative thinking to classify basic paradigms of the human experiences in a world governed by the laws of nature. Thus, Edmund Ryden states that binary terminology is a pervasive feature of early Chinese philosophy and essential to the Chinese language (1997, 13). He refers to an unpublished manuscript by B. J. Mansvelt-Beck which lists some fifty contrasting pairs, including heaven-earth (*tiandi*), above-below (*shangxia* 上下), man-woman (*nannü*), father-mother (*fumu* 父母), hen-rooster (*cixiong* 雌雄), cow-bull (*pinmu* 牝牡), etc. (1997, 13n34).[1]

Over time, binary thought patterns provided the basic notion that the cosmos is a dynamic process which emerges from the continuous interaction of two complementary forces (Hinsch 2002, 144). There was, therefore, a shift from descriptive to causal, correlative cosmologies. The classification schemes in due course became theories that could account for the mechanisms by which things were correlated and how they influenced each other in a cosmos that was assumed to be constant and governed by the laws of nature (Peerenboom 1993, 227; see also Graham 1986).

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[1] For more on dualism in ancient China, see Ryden 1997, 13-39; Graham 1986, 70-91; Peerenboom 1993, 225-29; Hinsch 2002, 145-56; Unschuld 2003, 83-89; Cammann 1987, 101-16. For medical yin-yang theory, see Porkert 1974, 9-43; Sivin 1987, 203-08.

The Yin-Yang System

The most important of these binary concepts is the pair of heaven and earth in three major dimensions: as physical, visible entities (*tiandi*); as archetypal cosmic patterns symbolized in the *Yijing* trigrams Qian and Kun; and as active, dynamic potencies, represented by the forces yin and yang. It is not surprising that the ancient Chinese applied this dualistic system to the sexes.

The *Suwen* uses binary patterns in varying degrees: for the general description of things, philosophical abstractions, and genderization. It has the word *qian* mainly in its literal meaning to indicate "dryness" or "aridity," a parched or dehydrated state (5.2.4). The word *kun* appears only once, in reference to the earth but without the connection to *qian* 66.4). Heaven and earth as concrete entities, on the other hand, appear in just about every *Suwen* chapter, usually in the sense of the greater universe. The pair "hen-rooster" is seen five times: it has the general sense of female-male or femaleness-maleness (4.2, 4.3, 75.1, 77.2, 79.2).

By far the most important binary pair is yin-yang, the foundation of medical theory and traditional Asian cosmology. "One yin, one yang, that is the Dao," says the Great Appendix (*Dazhuan* 大傳) of the *Yijing*. The terms originated from geographical observation, indicating the sunny and shady sides of a hill and written with the character for "hill" next to those for "sun" and "shade." They first appear in the *Shujing* 書經 (Book of History) and the *Zuozhuan*, which both go back to before the 5th century BCE. However, in both texts they may be later interpolations (see Peerenboom 1993).

Neither the *Lunyu* nor the "Zhongyong" 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean) and the "Daxue" 大學 (Great Learning) chapters of the *Liji*—all texts of the Eastern Zhou—have them. As W. Allyn Rickett notes, the *Guanzi* 管子 (Book of Master Guan), a 3rd-century BCE text, "makes no references at all to Yin-Yang dualism" (1955, 155). The *Mozi* 墨子 (Book of Master Mo) mentions the concept only vaguely. As Arthur Waley notes, this shows that even in the late Zhou the yin-yang theory was not widely accepted (1956, 110-12). Both early Daoist texts, the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*, make ample use of yin and yang, but they were edited comparatively late, in the 3rd century BCE.

The *Shiji* credits the thinker Zou Yan 鄒衍 (ca. 350-270 BCE) with the formulation of the yin-yang pattern of energetic change into a comprehensive cosmological theory (ch. 74). R. P. Peerenboom argues that although correlative paradigms of yin-yang and the five phases may have existed long before him, their systematic doctrine was only developed in the late Warring States period and came to full fruition in the Han (1993, 225-27).

"Sex is yin and yang in action; yin and yang are sex writ large" (Wile 1992, 11). This is true, but many scholars also concur with Bernard Karlgren on the interpretation of yin and yang and think of their sexual roles as a later interpolation. He states:

> It is certainly doubtful whether the word "yin" conveys in the beginning a clear sex notion, which may be regarded as a philosophical abstraction of later times; but there is no doubt that the combination of yin and yang signifies the combined action of heaven and earth in the production and transformation of beings, or the creative powers of the two great forces. (1930, 12)

As yin-yang thought became more elaborate, it began to appear in all the different dimensions of Chinese culture. By the end of the Han, it was widely applied to medicine, which at the same time reached a high degree of sophistication (Lu 1980, 1-13). At the same time, yin and yang became ubiquitous symbols for man and woman or maleness and femaleness in medical theories. The yin-yang theory to intellectuals and philosophers may be an abstract principle that permeates the microcosm within the macrocosm, but for lay people it is the basic characteristic of all things as based on the law of nature. At some point it became apparent that in order for human beings to survive and reproduce, the coexistence and interaction of opposite, complementary forces and entities were necessary. As the *Zhuangzi* notes, "If all were hens and none were roosters, how would there be eggs?" (ch. 17)

Yin-yang appears four times in *Suwen* chapter titles (chs. 5, 6, 7, 79) and 166 times over 42 chapters. "Heaven is yang and earth is yin; the sun is yang and the moon is yin," it says (9.2). Yin and yang explain the binary structure of the Dao (5.3); they describe vessels and pulse conditions. As single entities, they have even wider meanings. For example, yang denotes not only the male gender but also the male sexual organ. On the other hand, yin describes not only the female gender and the female generative organs, but indicates all genitals. It also corresponds to

the adjective "sexual" as in the term *yinwei* 陰痿 for a syndrome called "*yin* flaccidity."

The *Suwen* expounds the importance of yin and yang as the principal forces of creation of the universe and humanity:

> Yin and yang form the Dao of heaven and earth, the [principal law of] creation of the myriad things, the change and transformation of father and mother, the root and beginning of birth and death, and the palace of spirit brilliance. To treat diseases, one must seek out the root. Therefore it is important to understand that in the beginning accumulated yang [ascended] to form heaven and accumulated yin [descended] to form earth. Yin is calm, while yang is restless. Yang is birth, while yin is growth. Yang controls killing, while yin controls preservation. Yang transforms *qi*, while yin completes the body. (5.1)

Similarly, Qi Bo uses the "law of yin-yang" and nature to explain how one can achieve longevity:

> People in antiquity knew the Dao. They lived within the law of yin and yang and maintained harmony with the arts of divination. They were moderate in eating and drinking, regular in rising and retiring. They did not use recklessness to tire themselves out. Therefore, they could keep body and spirit together and were able to realize their [allotted] life expectancy of over a hundred years.
>
> People today do not [live in accordance with] nature. They drink alcohol like broth, they employ recklessness in all their activities, they enter the bedchamber in an intoxicated state, they allow their lust to exhaust their essence, they let their wastefulness dissipate their true [*qi*] . . . Hence, when they get to fifty they are already weak and sickly (1.1)

These two examples show that by the time the *Suwen* was compiled the yin-yang doctrine was firmly established in both health care and medical theories. At the same time, the two forces were already genderized—reflecting the most fundamental characteristics of health care in the history of medicine. In traditional Chinese medicine, this genderization is encapsulated in the notion that "blood is yin and *qi* is yang" (5.3).[2]

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[2] Sun Simiao has the same statement in his *Beiji qianjin yaofang* (Emergency Prescriptions Worth A Thousand Pieces of Gold, 2:14) in which he says "man is ruled by essence-[*qi*] and women by blood. For a discussion on gender difference

Already in its first chapter, the *Suwen* thus describes how men and women develop differently—at age fourteen girls begin to have a "monthly flow" of blood and are able to "have children," while boys by age sixteen have overflowing *qi* and begin to ejaculate (1.3).

Sexual physiologies strengthen this difference, according to which man emits semen and woman menses. The genderization further includes a differentiation of the pulse sensation in man and woman as stated in the *Maijing* (9.1) and *Nanjing* (19th Issue). Thus, Sun Simiao states that "the disorders of women are ten times more deep-rooted and harder to cure then those of men."

In the sexual realm, the *Suwen* mentions specific treatment of women for menstrual problems, conception, pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum states. Men, on the other hand, are treated for sexual, mainly erectile, dysfunction and involuntarily seminal emission. Closely related to this genderization are further binary pairs, which culturally come to be associated with men and women respectively: exterior and interior (77.2, 75.1), outside and inside (4.2), above and below (16.5), left and right (15.2), high and low (74.2.1), and excessive and deficient (ch. 28).

In the Han, the yin-yang pair became the defining basis of all binary thinking. New, contrasting terminologies—less abstract and more specific and directional—were added and came to be used in describing the medical body. Yin-yang thinking defined sex and medicine, yet the reverse is also true: the incorporation of sex and gender into medical theories strengthened yin-yang thinking and made it more pervasive.

Essence

The fundamental dynamics of sexual activity in Chinese medical thinking have remained fairly constant. They center on the energetic functions of essence (*jing* 精), kidney-*qi* (*shenqi* 腎氣), and three of the eight extraordinary vessels: Governing, Conception, and Penetrating, which run through the human torso.

Qi might be the life force that propels all things between heaven and earth but *jing* gives life and defines sex. *Jing* has been translated vari-

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in sickness and "gender difference in the Yellow Emperor's body," see Furth 1999, 25-48.

ously as "essence," "vital essence," "semen," "seminal fluid," and "reproductive fluid"—all terms that fall short of what it really embodies. *Jing* indicates a wider concept; it is not just a substance, visible or metaphysical. I define it as a paramount form of energy that is more refined and sublime than *qi*. For the lack of better word, I still call it "essence."

Though not as ubiquitous as *qi*, essence in Chinese thinking is understood as the quintessence of life, the material that enables the creation of life and the universe. On the microcosmic level, it is "the most important concept shared by medical and sexual traditions" (Wile 1992, 20). Nathan Sivin adds:

> *Ching* [*jing*] means on the one hand the male or female reproductive essence [as in semen], the origin of life, and on the other the essence produced by metamorphosis from alimentary nourishment. [It becomes] the material basis of physical growth and development. (1987, 242-43)

Manfred Porkert translates *jing* as "unattached structive energy" or "structive potential" waiting to take form (1974, 176-80). From the point of sex and sexuality, Li Ling and Keith McMahon state:

> Essence refers both to the fluid emission and what is stored in the body, that is, the essential components not yet formed into semen, especially the innate vital energy of the individual. … Essence is used with respect to both women and men and it [also] refers to the fluids of the vagina. (1992, 162)

Rodo Pfister calls *jing* the "life-giving juice par excellence," found not only in man and woman but in all other living things. Based on his reading of the *Lüshi chunqiu* (3.2), he describes it as something that is tangible and always in motion. He interprets it as a "pale, slimy, and lightly viscous excretion of living things." Essence appears also in various body fluids, such as sweat, tears, saliva, snot, urine, and stool, excreted either voluntarily or involuntary (2010, 1-3.1, 1-3.2).

The *Zhuangzi* states that "utmost essence has no form, just as utmost vastness cannot encompass everything" (ch. 17.1), implying that essence, even at its minuteness, is still an important core component in giving life and form to the myriad things.

The "Inward Training" (*Neiye* 內業) chapter of the *Guanzi* starts by saying: "The essence of everything is that which gives life: below, it brings forth the five grains; above, it creates the starry constellations.

When [essence] flows between heaven and earth, it is called demon or sprite. When it is stored in someone's chest, the person is called a sage" (see Roth 1999, 46).

In this instance, the sage on earth is paired with the demons or sprites of the otherworld. In other words, when essence has a physical body to reside in, it creates a celestial connection and a subtle way of being in the world, described as sageliness. When it has no physical body to return to, it roams freely between heaven and earth and becomes a divine entity—more often than not described as a "sprite" and associated with mischief and malevolence (*Lingshu* 58.2). The *Suwen*, too, mentions that it is useless to talk about utmost virtue (*zhide* 至德) to those who are possessed by such a demon or sprite (11.0). It makes it clear that essence has to have a residence, a connection to a material base, so that it can be concentrated and exist as a structured entity. In this context, the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (Book of the Prince of Huainan; dat. 145 BCE) says:

> People of the world should know. . . when desire is banished, it is able to propagate. When it is able to propagate, there will be tranquillity. When it is tranquil, then there will be essence. When there is essence, then it can stand alone. (see Major et al. 2010)

Similarly the Great Appendix to the *Yijing* summarizes the creative matrix and reproductive element of essence: "That which gives life is called essence. When the essences [of male and female] unite, this is called spirit." It also stresses that sexual intercourse is the fundamental way of universal life and the manifestation of the cosmic forces of yin and yang in action. Next, it says: "When heaven and earth [provide] generative forces, the myriad things transform and take shape. When male and female blend their essence, the myriad things transform and come forth" (Sect. 4).

Hellmut Wilhelm explains that "the way of the Creative [yang] brings about the male" and "the way of the Receptive [yin] brings about the female" (1950, 285-86). Seen from these philosophical works, "essence" is the fundamental material and reproductive element that gives life and determines the constitution of all things.

Harnessing Essence

Essence is a precious but limited resource and its evanescence has to be prevented. Rodo Pfister lists various methods to replenish it or at least prevent it from being lost during sexual intercourse (2011, I:3.3). The fact that men and women lose their essence during sexual intercourse is widely acknowledged in Chinese medicine (2011, I:3.5.2; Syed 1999). But men lose essence mostly through ejaculation while women lose it through menstruation.

The *Suwen* uses "essence" to mean both the foundation of life (4.1) and semen as in "reduced amount of semen" (*jingshao* 精少) (1.3). It also associates the term with something called essential fluid (*jingye* 精液), which may include seminal or sexual fluids (71.2.2). In addition, it links it with the quintessence of the cosmos in the form of essential *qi* (1.4), and with sexual energy in general (1.3).

Essence as "the foundation of the body" is the most basic substance that shapes the individual and maintains all vital activities. It directly affects growth, development, sexuality, aging, and death in both men and women (1.3). The *Lingshu* confirms this when it states that "normally [what] develops before birth is called essence" (30.1)—connecting the concept to the idea of primordial matter that existed before creation. It also notes, in a paraphrase of the *Yijing*, that "at the beginning, we speak of essence; when the two essences [of male and female] mix, we speak of spirit" (8.1.2). Essence is thus the quintessential matter that gives life. When the essences of a man and woman intermingle, the result is called spirit—the creation of a new human being.

The *Suwen* states that "essence is transformed into *qi*" (5.2.3)—implying that essence is the fundamental substance required for the creation of an individual with a new spirit-consciousness (Hertzer 2006, 199-201). The *Lingshu* explains: "At the beginning of a person's life, the first [physiological entity] to be completed is essence. When essence is completed then brain and bone marrow will develop" (10.1).

These passages describe essence before the creation of the individual. It can thus be considered as the most primordial and original substance of the universe. That is the macrocosmic view. In the microcosmic world, essence exists in the bodies of the parents; at conception its two

aspects, in the male and female, intermingle to create a new life. The new individual is then endowed with a fixed amount of this precious matter, which determines just how many years heaven is giving him or her in this lifetime.

Essence is everywhere in the body but stored chiefly in the kidney organ (4.3), from where it is distributed to other parts as needed. The *Suwen* cautions that exhausting one's essence has far-reaching consequences, speaking of this life-sapping state as "essence is exhausted" (1.3), "essence has perished" (3.3), "essential *qi* is weakened and destroyed" (19.2), "essential *qi* is exhausted" (45.1), "essential *qi* is dissipated" (28.1), and "essence is dissipated" (21.1).

The diminishing and eventual exhaustion of a person's stock of essence inevitably lead to premature aging and early death. Such diminishing occurs due to overindulgence in sexual activity, excessive eating and drinking, indulgence in too much sexual intercourse, having sexual intercourse while intoxicated, and giving in to all sorts of unbridled cravings and lusts. As the *Suwen* says:

> At the age of sixty-four, a man's heavenly stock is exhausted, his essence diminishes, the storage [capability] of the kidney weakens, and the whole body reaches its limits. At this point, he loses his teeth and hair.
>
> The kidney rules water and receives the essence of the five organs and six viscera for storage. Thus, when the five organs are filled abundantly [with essence] it can emit with ease. But if the five organs are weakened, tendons and bones degenerate and his heavenly stock will come to an end. Then, the hair [on his head] and at his temples turns white, his body grows heavy, he no longer walks upright, and cannot have children any more. (1.3)

According to Qi Bo, a dissolute, immoderate lifestyle invites sickness and shortens life. More than that, having sexual intercourse while intoxicated and letting sexual lust exhaust one's essence can cut life by as much as half. Wang Bing comments: "Taking [excessive] pleasure in sex is called lust; using [one's essence] lightly is called dissipation. When there is no temperance in sexual pleasure, essence will be exhausted." Other passages that blame the exhaustion of essence in connection with sexual activity state:

> If stomach [*qi*] is not harmonious, essential *qi* will be exhausted. When essential *qi* is exhausted, the four limbs will not be nourished. For someone who is

> frequently intoxicated, if he enters the bedchamber while fully satiated with food, *qi* gathers inside the spleen and it cannot be dispersed. (45.1)

> When wind takes up residence [in the body] and creates lascivious *qi*, it causes essence to be lost. The injurious [*qi*] harms the liver so that, when one overeats, tendons and vessels will weaken and the intestines will suffer, which in turn leads to piles. For this reason, if one drinks excessively, *qi* will reverse [its regular course], and when one uses strong force [physically and sexually], kidney-*qi* is harmed and the thigh bone spoiled. (3.3.2)

The Chinese have always cautioned against exposure to wind while engaging in sexual activity. The loss of essence together with overexertion during the act certainly impairs health.

The above three passages relate exhaustion of essence to sex in conjunction with alcohol. The consequence of having sexual intercourse while in an intoxicated state is loss of control over one's desires, which may lead to excessive sexual activity and the loss of essence through ejaculation. Besides, alcohol also opens the pores, which leads to excessive sweating, dulls perception and feelings, and opens orifices that allow essence and vital fluids to flow out.

The function of essence in male reproductive physiology and the aging process involves reaching sexual maturity at age sixteen, when "kidney-*qi* is abundant, the heavenly stock, essential *qi* overflows and is discharged, and when—through uniting yin and yang [sexual intercourse] he can have children" (1.3). The end of the cycle, too, has to do with the presence and power of essence. Thus, around age sixty-four, the man finds his essence diminishing, his kidney capability weakening, and his body reaching its limits. He can no longer produce off-spring (1.3). Essential *qi* here refers to the fundamental substance that shapes an individual while the essence that lessens with age might indicate the quantity of semen, especially since the first part of the passage mentions that it overflows and can be "emitted"—an objective action.

The core teaching of sexual cultivation in both medical and *yangsheng* literature is to prevent the loss of essence, especially in men. The main technique in this context is reverting essence to nourish the brain, explained variously as *coitus conservatus* (non-orgasmic intercourse), *coi-*

tus thesauratus (orgasmic intercourse), or *coitus reservatus* (retention of semen with or without orgasm).[3]

The technique appears first in the Mawangdui text *Shiwen*, which describes an exercise that teaches the man to absorb his partner's *qi* and transform it into essence before circulating it upward. The *Tianxia* explains the method of constricting the anus to avoid outflow of essence, while the *He yinyang* mentions that one should "draw essence and spirit upward" and "send the [essential] *qi* to the generative gate." The *Suwen* does not mention it for two possible reasons: first, as a medical book and not a sexual manual, it would not focus on these practices; second, it may well assume that those who consult it would have prior knowledge of the technique and need no elaboration.

By all accounts, essence is an equally important commodity for the survival of both men and women. It is specifically required for successful procreation in the male, and its exhaustion affects the reproductive ability. However, the *Suwen* does not mention it in its discussion of female reproductive physiology, focusing instead on blood—which may be interpreted as the female form of essence. On the other hand, it states that essence cannot function alone but has to work in tandem with the rest of the body to maximize its role in sexual functions. Thus, the *Lingshu* says: "Blood, *qi*, essence, and spirit give rise to life and regulate the natural characteristics of a person" (47.1).

Essence also operates closely in relation to *qi* and spirit when people work to achieve the transformation to immortality; this psychological perspective has early roots (Hertzer 2006, 209-10). However, essence is described as a physiological element connected to the individual and to spirit, but never in connection with demons or sprites. This is yet another sign that the *Suwen* was moving away from magico-spiritism to a more formal, theoretical medicine.

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[3] For detailed discussions on these terms, see Harper 1998, 136-39; Wile 1992, 58-59; Pfister 2011, I-3.5.1.

Qi

Qi is the most ubiquitous concept in both sexual cultivation and Chinese medicine. It is the universal force that permeates every aspect of Chinese thinking and it plays a fundamental role in longevity doctrines and medical theories. Much has been written about *qi* both in philosophical and medical contexts.

Modern translations of *qi*, besides the ubiquitous "energy," include "finest matter influence" (Unschuld 2003, 149-67), "vapor" (Harper 1998, 112-25), "vital force" (Chan 2002), "flow-event" (Pfister 2011, I:2.3.6), and "pneuma" (Robinson 2004). According to Nathan Sivin, the term has two main senses: "one is physiological function or motive force, and the other is subtle, refined matter which has a nutritive function" (1997, 237-40).[4]

Manfred Porkert lists thirty-two categories of *qi* (1974, 167-73). In addition, A. C. Graham states that *qi* is "adapted to cosmology as the universal fluid, active as Yang and passive as Yin, out of which all things condense and into which they dissolve. . . It is like such words in other cultures as Greek *pneuma*, 'wind,' 'air,' 'breath'. It is the energetic fluid which vitalizes the body, in particular as the breath, and which circulates outside us as the air" (1986, 101). Benjamin Schwartz discusses the etymology of the term (1985, 180) and says:

> *Ch'i* [*qi*] comes to embrace properties which we would call psychic, emotional, spiritual, numinous, and even 'mystic.' It is precisely at this point that Western definitions of 'matter' and the physical which systematically exclude these properties from their definitions do not at all correspond to *ch'i*. . . To the extent that the word 'energy' is used in the West to apply exclusively to a force that relates only entities described in terms of physical mass, it is as misleading as 'matter', I think, as an over-all name for *ch'i*. (1985, 181)

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[4] For the concept as used in qigong, see Hsu 1999, 77-879; in relation to vessels and pulses in the Western Han, see Hsu 2001a, 13-17; for its role in Han-dynasty pulse diagnosis, see Hsu 2001b; on *qi* and immortality, see Kohn 2001, 49.

In contrast, I would like to look at the early Chinese view of *qi*. Modern translations which include ideas and phenomena of "that which fills the body," "that which means life," breathe, wind, air, vapor, steam, life force, pneuma, vital force, and the like may contribute to its understanding, but they do not tell the whole story. The closest approximation is "life force," but according to the ancient Chinese, stones have *qi*, too.

The *Daode jing* describes *qi* as the primal energy responsible for the transformation of Dao to achieve harmony: "The ten thousand things turn their back on yin to embrace yang. Their *qi* intermingle to achieve harmony" (ch. 42). This is echoed by the *Zhuangzi*: "The big mass [nature] exhales its *qi*, and it is called wind" (ch. 2.1). According to the *Lunyu* of Confucius, *qi* is the source of emotional behavior:

> In youth, when blood and *qi* are not yet stable, one should guard against lust. After reaching maturity, when blood and *qi* is firm, one should guard against aggressiveness. Having reached old age, when one's blood and *qi* are in decline, one should guard against avarice. (16.7)

Similarly, when Mencius was asked how he could maintain his will and not violate his *qi*, he answered: "When the will is concentrated, it moves *qi*; when *qi* is concentrated, it moves the will. . . . Falling and running are [the manifestation of] *qi*" (*Mengzi* 3A.2). And the *Huainanzi* speaks of *qi* in relation to body and spirit (ch. 7).

Alan Chan connects *qi* and the heart-mind (*xin* 心), explaining that the Han dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining Characters and Explicating Phrases) defines courage (*yong* 勇) as *qi*, so that it is "an expression of strength, a 'forcing' (*qiang* 強) of *qi* on an object" (2002, 46-47). Courage as a function of *qi* thus gives it a concrete rather than moralistic tone. This sheds a different light on ideas of courage and force in relation to sexual intercourse. The *Suwen* uses "strong force" (3.3.2) while the *Tianxia* speaks of "use strongly" to express sexual activity. The *Suwen* also says that "if one is courageous [sexually] and exerts oneself strenuously, the kidney will sweat" (61.1.2).

As Yoshinobu Sakade notes, it is impossible to gain a proper understanding of Chinese medicine without reference to longevity techniques including sexual cultivation, since both adhere to a fundamental belief in *qi*, which makes up the human body and allows human beings to gain and retain life (1989, 18). *Qi* is part and parcel of the macrocosm and microcosm. As the *Suwen* says: "Heaven and earth exist in the above and

below of the myriad things; yin and yang exist in the blood and *qi* of man and woman" (5.3). In the realm of sex, *qi* is often associated with essence. Though the *Suwen* does not directly impart techniques on how to conserve or generate essence like the Mawangdui manuscripts, it still cautions men not to allow exhaustion of their essential *qi* (45.1) or its dissipation (21.1). Either leads to dire consequences, such as loss of reproductive power, physical decay, and premature death.

The *Suwen* mentions over fifty kinds of *qi* found in the body and nature. In one passage, the Yellow Emperor notes: "When the *qi* [of heaven and earth] unite, there will be form. Due to this transformation, proper names are created" (9.4). Here *qi* is the cosmic energy that gives rise to the myriad things but there is also the *qi* of the twenty-four solar nodes, described in a technique called *qishu* 氣數 (*qi* calculation) or *jieqi* 節氣 (nodal *qi*) (Li ZG 2005, 131n5). Qi Bo explains how the 360 segments or days of the year and those of the body (joints) are determined:

> The six and six [sixty days and six cycles] segments and the nine and nine systems are used to determine the heavenly progress [*tiandu* 天度] while the *qi* calculation [of the twenty-four solar nodes] is used to coordinate transformation and growth [in the seasons]. (9.1)

The most important tenet in sexual cultivation is the manipulation of *qi* (Lo 2001, 41-46), which in turn is encapsulated in the doctrine of the "seven ways of diminishing and eight procedures of increasing [*qi*]" (*qisun bayi* 七損八益). The *Tianxia* states that "*qi* has eight ways of being increased and seven ways of preventing its diminishing." The former include exercises that teach the practitioner to regulate, absorb, and hoard *qi*. The latter involve rules on how to make sure that *qi* is conserved and protected. The *Suwen* states:

> If one knows about the seven ways of diminishing and the eight procedures of increasing [*qi*], both can be regulated. If one does not know about them, there is early weakening of the joints. At age forty, the yin [sexual] *qi* is down to half, and all rising and moving [daily activities] are weakened. At age fifty, the body [feels] heavy and one's ears and eyes are no longer acute. At age sixty, the yin [sexual] organs will be limp, the *qi* is greatly weakened, and the nine orifices do not function smoothly. There is deficiency below and excess above: snot and tears flow out! (5.4.2)

It also says about *qi* in sex:

> When emotions and lust are unbridled, endless worry and anxiety come about; then essential *qi* is weakened and destroyed. (14.2)
>
> If one enters the bedchamber while intoxicated, *qi* is exhausted and the liver injured. Hence, the menses are scant or do not come. (40.1.2)
>
> If one is frightened, there is accumulation of *qi* in the chest. When [the pulse] is rapid and depleted, it is called lung blockage [with] cold and hot [spells]. It is contracted by letting [the penis] inside [the vagina] while intoxicated. (10.4.2)
>
> Due to drunkenness, *qi* reverses it course. Because of [using] strong force [in sexual activity], kidney-*qi* is harmed. (3.3.2)
>
> For someone who is frequently intoxicated, if he enters the bedchamber while fully satiated with food, *qi* gathers inside the spleen and it cannot be dispersed. Also, when the *qi* of alcohol and that of grain contend with each other, abundant heat is [generated] inside. As a result, there is general fever, internal heat and the urine will be reddish. (45.1)

The *Lingshu* further supports the role of *qi* in sex, by saying that "when the receding *qi*. . . resides in the sexual organs, one dreams of contact with the inside [of the vagina or inner chamber]" (43.3); and "when a man has an injury in his sexual organ, the [flow of] yin [sexual] *qi* is severed and he cannot raise it [has an erection]; therefore [his penis] is of no use" (65.2.1).

Qi is thus the pillar of sexual cultivation; it rules sexual health. Although the text does not give advice on how to manipulate *qi* through the sexual act, its authors were certainly aware of these methods and clearly speak of the various harmful and advantageous procedures

The Kidney System

The graph *shen* 腎 appears five times in the Mawangdui medical corpus, but only once it means "kidney." The *Yinyang shiyi mai jiujing* uses it in conjunction with the pathway of the minor yin vessel. In the other four passages, *shen* denotes the testicles—both human and animal. The *Yang-*

sheng fang mentions the use of dried rat testes in making medicinal patches. The *Wushi'er bingfang* has two recipes for inguinal swelling which involve enveloping the testicles in gourds, plus one that serves to cure testicular abbesses. These passages show that "kidney" as an organ and medical concept was gradually developing.

The Mawangdui texts do not mention the system of the five organs and six viscera (*wuzang liufu* 五臟六腑), which is ubiquitous in the *Suwen*. As Douglas Wile notes, *shen* is often misleadingly translated as "kidneys" or the "renal system" (1992, 20). It is essential, especially in regard to life and sex.[5] In fact, *shen* can also be the collective designation for the entire uro-genital complex, which includes not only the kidneys but also the testes, urethra, and urethral opening. To make this fact clear, in this work I use the term "kidney system" for this complex and "kidney" as that belonging to the organs.

The kidney system, like the other storing organs (liver, heart, spleen, and lung) is considered yin (4.2), while the processing viscera are yang. Wang Bing sees the kidney system as a yin depository situated in the lower burner and calls it "yin residing in yin" and "yin within yin." Yang Shangshan states that the kidney and liver systems are situated below the diaphragm and approaching the lowest area. Hence, they are yin in nature. As the kidney system corresponds to water, and water is major yin, he calls it "yin within yin." The *Suwen* notes that the kidney system is a yin storing organ (61.1.2) and calls it the organ of water (44.2). It stores the will or intention (23.1.10) and rules the bones (23.1.11) and "marrow of the body" (44.1).

None of the organs and viscera ever works alone; their functions are always interconnected. "The kidney system rules water. It receives the essence of the five organs and six viscera and stores it. Thus, when the five organs are replete, [the kidney system] distributes [it throughout the body]" (1.3). This passage implies that essence is accumulated from all the organs and stored particularly in the kidney system for further distribution. That is why deficiency of kidney-*qi* affects all the different aspects of the body, especially the kidneys. When essence in the kidney system is replete, kidney-*qi* is abundant; when it is deficient, it declines. This in turn causes physiological weakening and decline.

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[5] See also Sivin 1987, 226-8; Porkert 1974, 140-146; Unschuld 2003, 136-43; Pfister 2011, I:3.4.3.

Later CCM and modern TCM both consider the kidney as one of the five *zang*-organs or "repositories," whose main function is "storing." They therefore believe that it is unable to have excess in terms of yin and yang. However, both the *Suwen* and *Nanjing* state that the kidney is able to have excess which may cause pathological changes.

In addition, "the kidney system rules winter; it is the basis for sealing [the body to prevent leakage] and for storing [essence]. It is also the residence of essence" (9.5). The kidney system as the location where essence is stored is further supported in the *Lingshu*, which describes it as the main reservoir of essence (8.3). Both are fundamental in health and reproduction. The kidney system dominates the reproductive development in both men and women, so that girls have abundant kidney-*qi* at seven years of age and an even supply around age twenty-one; boys have fullness at age eight, abundance when they get to be sixteen, balance at twenty-four, and then enter a gradual weakening and decline with every further eight-year period (*Suwen* 1.3)

The kidney system is key to reproductive physiology, sexual maturity, and aging. Abundant kidney-*qi* in both male and female is required for conception of children; its decline affects fertility and hastens bodily disintegration, leading to increasing susceptibility to illness, premature aging, and death. Vessel dynamics and organ function, combined with the Conception and Penetrating Vessels, also play an important role in female fecundity, but the "center of command" remains in the kidney system, where essence is stored (4.3).

The kidney system is also directly involved in sexual intercourse. As the *Lingshu* has: "If one enters the bedchamber excessively, perspires and bathes in water, the kidney system is harmed" (4.1.1); and: "[After] using excessive strength, if [the person] enters the bedchamber, perspires, and takes a bath, the kidney system is harmed" (66.4).

The complex correspondence network of the kidney system is as follows (see Table 1):

TABLE 1
KIDNEY SYSTEM CORRELATIONS

CORRELATION AREA	KIDNEY RELATION	*SUWEN* PASSAGE
viscera 腑	urinary bladder 膀胱	70.5
directions 方	north 北	5.3, 4.3, 67.5.6
six climates 六氣	cold 寒	5.3, 23.1.4,67.5.6,
five phases 五行	element water 水	5.3, 4.3,60 7.5.6, 1.3, 9.5
nine orifices 九竅	ears 耳	5.3, 4.3
tissues 体	bone 骨	5.3, 4.4, 23.1.11, 67.5.6, 1.3 ,
	bone marrow 骨髓	23.1.7, 67.5.6, 44.1, 9.5
colors 色	black 黑	5.3, 4.3, 67.5.6
tones 音	fifth tone 羽	5.3, 4.3
vocal sounds 聲	groaning 呻	5.3
five flavors 五 味	salty 鹹	5.3, 23.1.1, 4.3, 10.2, 74.5.4, 67.5.6
emotion 志	fear 恐	5.3, 23.1.3, 67.5.6, 80.1
disorders of five organ-*qi* 五氣所病	yawning 欠	23.1.2
five essentials 五精所並	fear 恐	23.1.3
secretions 化液	saliva 唾	23.1.5
orifices 開竅	double yin 二 陰	4.3, 70.1.1
spirit-*qi* 神氣	essence 精	4.3
domestic animals 獸	pig 彘	4.3
movement at change 變動	shivering 栗	5.3
diseases 病	large joints 谿	4.3
grains 穀	(soy) bean 豆	4.3
stars 星	Mercury 晨	4.3
numbers 數	six 六	4.3
odors 臭	putrid 腐	4.3
manifestations 五藏所藏	will 志	23.1.10
labor activities 五勞所傷	longstanding 久 立	23.1.12
pulse conditions 五脈應象	rocky or heavy 石	23.1.13
transformations 化	solemnity 肅	67.5.6
wild animals 蟲	scaled 鱗	67.5.6
order/affectation 政	motionless/calm 靜	67.5.6
cold season 冷	falling snow 雪	67.5.6
variation 變	frozen and cold 凝冽	67.5.6
disasters 眚	violent hailstorm 冰雹	67.5.6
qi 氣	solid 堅	67.5.6
season 四时	winter 冬	7.1, 9.5

Extraordinary Vessels

The main term for all kinds of *qi* channels in the *Suwen* is *mai* 脈. This includes both primary paired vessels (*jing* 經) and complex, collateral network lines (*luo* 絡) (47.1.1). Another usage of the term *mai* is to refer to the pulse and to palpation as in this passage: "The pulse can be weak, strong, slippery, choppy, floating, and sunken; it can be distinguished with the fingers" (10.4.2). In the context of sexual cultivation, the most important are three among the eight Extraordinary Vessels: the Conception Vessel (*renmai* 任脈), the Penetrating Vessel (*chongmai* 衝脈) and the Governing Vessel (*dumai* 督脈).[6]

These three have five special functions relating to the genital and reproductive organs: 1) regulating *qi*; 2) circulating essence, constructive, and protective *qi*; 3) connecting the major vessels; 4) connecting prenatal and postnatal essence and building it up; and 5) supplying essence to the six extraordinary viscera, i.e., the brain, bone marrow, bones, cells, uterus, and gallbladder (see Kirschbaum 1995, 26-34; Lu 1980, 45-52; Furth 1999, 29-44). Their main job is to hold essential *qi* for the benefit of the body and passing it on to the vessels and viscera. However, no two medical books agree on their origin and functions. What, then, are they specifically?

According to the *Suwen*, the Conception Vessel has twenty-eight acumoxa points (59.1.8). It starts below the Central Ultimate (*zhongji* 中極), at a point called Meeting Yin (Huiyin 會陰), located between the external genitals and the anus, and ascends to the suprapubic hair line (60.1.3; *Nanjing* #28). The *Lingshu*, in contrast, states that both the Conception and Penetrating Vessels begin in the center of the uterus (65.2.1). The *Suwen* adds that "it travels up along the [mid-line of the] torso through the point Primordial Pass (Guanyuan 關元)—located three inches below the navel (Hempen 2000, 246-47)—to reach the throat; from there it ascends to the cheek and follows the face to enter the eye" (60.1.3). The *Lingshu* further indicates that branches of the Conception

[6] The other five are the Belt Vessel (*daimai* 帶脈), Yang Linking Vessel (*yangjiao mai* 陽蹻脈), Yin Linking Vessel (*yinjiao mai* 陰蹻脈), Yang Heel Vessel (*yangwei mai* 陽維脈), and Yin Heel Vessel (*yinwei mai* 陰維脈.

Vessel encircle the mouth and gums (65.2.1),[7] where it also connects to various collateral lines.

As far as reproductive diseases connected to the Conception Vessel are concerned, the *Suwen* says that "when there are pathological changes in the Conception Vessel, a man contracts the 'knotted seven protrusions' [disease] [*jieqishan* 結七疝] internally, while a woman develops abdominal masses below the belt" (60.1.3).

Most modern Chinese medical dictionaries translate *shan* as hernia, a condition in which an organ or tissue protrudes through an opening in its surrounding walls, especially in the abdominal area.[8] The *Shuowen jiezi* defines it as "abdominal pain" (*futong* 腹痛). The *Suwen* says that "when the pulse is sunken and weak, it indicates that cold-heat has reached the protruded mass to cause abdominal pain" (18.3.1). The *Shiming* 釋名 (Explaining Names), a Later Han dictionary compiled by Kong Xi 孔熙, glosses it as "heart pain" (*xintong* 心痛). The *Suwen* also makes this connection when Qi Bo explains to the Yellow Emperor that when the heart-pulse is rapid, it indicates a disease called "heart protrusion" (*xinshan* 心疝) (17.5).

The Penetrating Vessel, too, which runs through the center of the torso, has different starting points in the classics. The *Suwen* says that it "begins at the point Qi Thoroughfare (Qijie 氣街, St 30) and [runs] parallel to the primary vessel of minor yin along both sides of the navel. It branches out once it reaches the middle of the chest" (60.1.3). The acu-

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[7] In TCM, the Conception Vessel is also known as "the Ocean of Yin" because it frequently meets the yin vessels of the hand and foot. It is said to be replenished with *qi* and blood from all the yin channels of the body. The character *ren* for "conception" also means "pregnancy." Since the channel is thought to arise from the uterus in women, it is also related to reproduction and therefore responsible for the supply of blood to the fetus. See Kirschbaum 1995, 67-92; Li ZL 1991, 9-10; Shanghai College 1990, 252.

[8] The *Cihai* notes that *shan* refers to: 1) symptoms caused by protrusion of contents in the body cavity, for instance, a part of the intestine that protrudes from the abdominal wall, the groin, or the lower part of the cavity of the scrotum; 2) troubles of the external genitalia, the testicles and the scrotum, characterized by ulcerative lesion, swelling and the outflow of pus and other turbid substances, and the swelling and pain of the testicles and the scrotum, or accompanied by abdominal pain; 3) severe abdominal pain, accompanied by difficulty in urination and constipation (35.1.5).

moxa point Qi Thoroughfare, according to the *Jiayi jing*, is also known as Qi Penetration (Qichong 氣衝). It is located five inches below the navel, about two inches on the side of the anterior median line near the groin.[9] However, the *Lingshu* gives its origin as the uterus, the same as the Conception Vessel (65.2.1). Yet it also says that it is the "ocean" of the twelve major vessels and starts from "below the kidney system" [testes] (62.4). It further explains its relationship with other *qi* channels:

> The Penetrating Vessel is the "ocean of channels." It is responsible for permeating and irrigating the "ravines and valleys" [muscles structures]. It joins with the Yangming at the ancestral tendon, where all yin and yang [vessels] unite. It is the gathering [point] of the ancestral tendon.
>
> The channels come together at the acumoxa point Qi Surge [Qichong 氣沖]. Here the Yangming becomes the leader. They are all related to the Belt Vessel[10] and linked to the Governing Vessel. For this reason, when the Yangming is depleted, the ancestral tendon weakens, the Belt Vessel does not pull, the legs become flaccid, and they cannot be used.[11] (44.3)

The Penetrating Vessel has twenty-two acumoxa points (59.1.9). Any pathological changes cause the *qi* to reverse and give rise to pain in the abdomen (60.3).

The third of the key vessels in this context is the Governing Vessel. The *Suwen* says:

> The Governing Vessel starts from the lower abdomen and moves down to the center of the [pubic] bone. In women it runs through the genitals and connects with the "hall-opening" [urethra], which is at the end part of the urethral canal. Its network line follows the [external] sexual organs and con-

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[9] In TCM it is used to treat hernia, incontinence, menstrual irregularities, and vaginal discharge (Hempen 2000, 100-01).

[10] Unlike these vessels, that each have their own acumoxa points, the Belt Vessels has only points that also belong to other channels and form a belt around the waist. In TCM, its most important function is to supply essence to genitals, hips, and waist. There are two Belt Vessels, located in the lower part of the waist and above the iliac crest. They meet the other vessels at a right angle. See Kirschbaum 1995, 93-113; Li ZL 1991, 9-10; Shanghai College 1990, 252-3.

[11] In TCM the Penetrating Vessel ascends to the head, permeating the whole body and serving as a communications center for the circulation of *qi* and blood. It regulates the *qi* and blood of the twelve paired vessels and is seen as the "reservoir of blood." It is closely related to menstruation and female reproduction.

> nects in the area around the perineum [between vagina and anus]. After circumventing the perineum, it branches out around the buttocks.
>
> At about the middle of the network line, it meets the [foot] Shaoyin [kidney] Vessel and the [foot] Taiyang [bladder] Vessel. It first unites with the former and together they ascend from the back of the inner thigh to penetrate the spine and connect with the kidney system.
>
> From here the two merge with the Taiyang vessel. They emerge from the inner corners of the eyes and ascend to the forehead, then connect at the top of the head. They enter and link with the brain. Turning around, they leave [the brain] again, then branch out and descend along the neck to follow the shoulder blades inward. From here they move along both sides of the spine to reach the middle of the waist. They enter and join the spinal column and thus connect with the kidneys.
>
> In men, the Governing Vessel runs along the penis and descends to the perineum; from there, it is the same as in women. It ascends directly from the lower abdomen to penetrate the center of the navel, ascends further and passes through the heart, then enters the throat. From here it ascends to the chin and encircles the lips, then ascends and connects at the center below the eyes.[12] (60.1.3)

The Governing Vessel, which runs near the spine along the back of the body, has twenty-eight acumoxa points (59.1.7). Pathological changes mean that *qi* rushes up from the lower abdomen to the heart and causes pain. The patient cannot pass water and feces, suffering from a condition called "surging protrusion" (*chongshan* 沖疝). It is often described as a disease "caused by impairment of the Governing Vessel marked by sudden pain in the lower abdomen," which surges up to the heart and stomach and down to the testes. Women suffering from this disorder will have difficulty getting pregnant and they be easily afflicted by illnesses relating to uro-genital system.

Female reproductive physiology is characterized by the penetrability of the Conception Vessel and the abundance of the Penetrating Vessel at age fourteen, which means women are able to have children. On the other hand, both vessels are weak and depleted by age forty-nine, which

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[12] In TCM the Governing Vessel runs along the mid-line of the back, frequently meeting the three yang vessels of the hand and foot. It governs all the yang vessels of the body. It is also known as the "ocean of yang vessels." It also runs within the spinal column and divides to enter the kidneys. See Kirschbaum 1995, 40-66; Li ZL 1990, 9-11; Shanghai College 1990, 250-51.

signals the end of the child-bearing years (*Suwen* 1.3). Wang Bing comments that "when [the flow of] menstrual water is severed and stopped, it will cause the 'earth channel' [of the uterus] to be impenetrable." When both vessels weaken, her body is injured and she can no longer have children. All descriptions make it clear that the three vessels are essential for female reproduction—unlike in men, where they are important for development and growth but not linked to reproduction.

All these channels, moreover, connect to the face, the mouth, and the lips. Thus, the *Lingshu* states that if a man's Penetrating Vessel is injured, for example, by castration as in the case of a eunuch, he cannot grow a beard (65.2.1). Similarly, if his Conception and Penetrating Vessels are deficient, even though penis and testicles may be intact, he still lacks the *qi* and blood to nourish his lips and mouth to grow a beard. The three vessels are thus important for certain aspects of sexual health and development.

Chapter Eight

Sexual Anatomy

Enter the mysterious gate. Ride the coital tendon.
—He Yinyang

Van Gulik notes that the medical fields of obstetrics, gynecology, and sexual anatomy "have a bearing on sexual life," although he himself did not explore them in any detail (1961, XVII). The *Suwen* supports this by portraying sexual anatomy as dealing with parts of the body that contribute to its overall system of diagnosis, prognosis, etiology, and pathology.

Suwen anatomical knowledge is derived rather than observed and does not seem to have been based on dissection.[1] The *Lingshu*, on the other hand, makes clear references to dissection (*jiepo* 解剖), emphasizing that the dead were cut open to ascertain the structure and placement of the internal organs (12.2). It gives measurement of the bones (ch. 14), presents the dimensions of the vessels (ch. 17), and provides the exact size of intestines and stomach.[2]

The vocabulary used for sexual anatomy in the Mawangdui manuscripts is colorful, imaginative, and metaphorical. For example, the penis is called "jade whip" (*yuce* 玉策) in the *Shiwen* and *Yangsheng fang*, and "red infant" (*chizi* 赤子) in the *Shiwen*. The female sexual organs are described with special care and in great detail because the sexual manuals were written for men. For example, the *Tianxia* describes the vagina in twelve parts and the *Yangsheng fang* has a diagram showing the various terms for its different parts: "red bead" (*chizhu* 赤珠), "zither strings" (*qinxian* 琴弦), "uneven teeth" (*maichi* 麥齒), and the like (see Fig. 10).

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[1] For discussions of anatomy and surgery in early China, see Kennerknecht-Hirth 2009, 28-74; Yamada 1991; Zaroff 1999; Andrews 1991.

[2] See *Lingshu* chs. 31, 32; also in *Nanjing*, #42; and Yamada 1991.

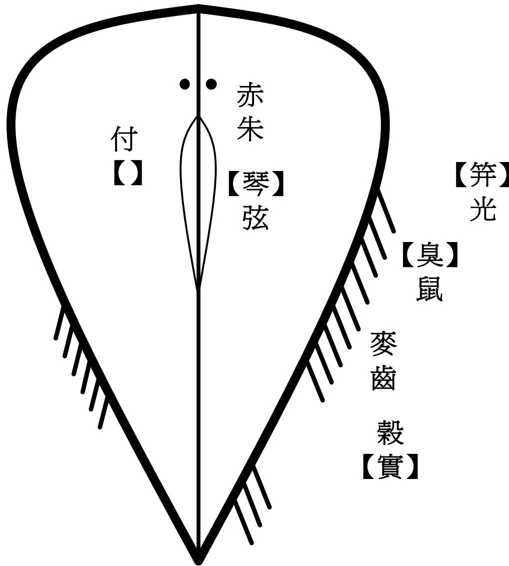

Fig. 10. *Yangsheng fang* drawing of the vagina.

In the *Suwen*, the vocabulary for sexual and reproductive anatomy has become more specific and is highly codified. It is almost as if the authors assumed that their readers had prior knowledge of sexual vocabulary and thus could decipher its meaning. It does not use any flowery language to embellish the male and female sexual organs; rather, it has gone "clinical" and its vocabulary for sexual anatomy is explicit and overt.

Sexual Organs

The most common term used to refer to sexual parts is *yin* 陰. It means "shadowy," "hidden," "in the dark," but it is clear that *Suwen* scholars, physicians, and readers knew that *yin* was a code word used for sex and sexuality, used mostly to denote the female gender and describe women's genitalia. As Van Gulik notes: "In later times the term is used exclusively for 'female' and the female generative organs, but it seems that originally it was employed for both male and female parts" (1961, 71). *Yin* is also perceived as the "hidden or forbidden parts," which include sexual appendages, the anus, and certain parts of the uro-genital system (Pfister 2003, 89). The word also corresponds to the adjective

"sexual"—a typical example is "*yin* flaccidity" (erectile dysfunction), which appears twice in the *Suwen*.

An earlier use of *yin* for the male sexual organ is found in the *Tianxia*, where the Yellow Spirit asks the Left Spirit: "Why is it that even though the *yin* [penis] is born together with the nine orifices and twelve joints, it alone dies first?" In the *Shiwen* (#5), Yao asks Shun the same question by referring to the penis as *yin*.

The *Suwen* uses the term to describe the genitalia and/or anus of both male and female. *Yin* further appears in various compound phrases, such as "yin-yang" for sexual intercourse, female and male, or female and male sexual organs; sexual instrument (*yinqi* 陰器); anterior *yin* (*qianyin* 前陰) for genitals; and two *yin* (*eryin* 二陰) for genitals and anus. The following two passages illustrate that the term also denotes the penis:

> When the lower back is painful and one cannot turn and move [the body], and [if the pain] pulls urgently at the *yin* [penis] and testicles, insert needles into the eight openings [acumoxa points]. (60.1.2)

> The deficiency syndrome of the Jueyin [vessel] will cause swelling and pain of the lower abdomen, distension of the belly, difficulties in defecation and urination, and a tendency to lie down with bent knees. Also, the *yin* [penis] will shrink and [scrotums] become swollen. (45.2)

Gao Shishi comments that the last phrase about the penis (*yin shuzhong* 陰縮腫) means that the sexual organ shrinks and the scrotum is swollen. This comment implies that *yin* in this passage represents the male sexual organ. Other commentators agree that *yin* here is an abbreviation for the sexual organ. For example, Zhang Zhicong interprets it as to mean "anterior *yin*" and Ma Shi as "sexual instrument." These two passages in the *Suwen* are male-specific. The *Lingshu* confirms this usage: "When a man has an injury in his *yin*, the [flow of] *yin* [penile]-*qi* is severed and [the penis] cannot rise; [thus], the *yin* [penis] cannot be used [in penetrative sex]" (65.2.1).

Other passages in the *Suwen* that use *yin* to denote the sexual organs but are not gender-specific include the following: "If sores develop inside the *yin*, hidden twists [sexual intercourse] will not be favorable" (74.2.4). Zhang Jiebin comments that the Taiyang Vessel is connected to the kidney system and corresponds to the bladder vessel. Hence it causes

sores in the sexual organs. Guo Aichun states that the area [around the] sexual organ develops sores. Another passage states:

> [When the complexion is] black and the pulse is at its utmost, rising, firm, and big, there is an accumulation of [injurious] *qi* in the lower abdomen and the *yin* area. This is called kidney obstruction syndrome. One gets it from taking cold baths and [immediately] "going to sleep" [sexual intercourse]. (10.4.2)

Zhang Zhicong comments that *yin* here refers to "anterior *yin*," i.e., the sexual organs, while Ma Shi says it denotes the interior of the sexual organs. It is beyond doubt that the term denotes the sexual organ in the *Suwen*.

A variant expression is "two *yin*" which clearly refers to the genitalia and the anus. For example: "The kidney system . . . governs the two *yin*" (70.1.1); and: "Entry and passage to the kidney system is through the opened two-*yin* orifices" (4.3).

In the *Suwen*, the two *yin* form part of the nine orifices (*jiuqiao* 九竅). They are the eyes, nostrils, ears, mouth, and two lower openings. Though women have three lower orifices, the urethral and vaginal openings are taken as one. For a person to be healthy, all nine must be penetrable and open to free energetic flow. Any hindrance to their passageway is a cause of disease, such as when the "nine orifices are obstructed" (*bi jiuqiao*; 3.1), "not penetrable" (*jiuqiao butong*; 3.3.1), or "not functioning properly" (*jiuqiao buli*; 28.4).

The nine orifices divide into the upper (seven) [3] and lower (two/three) orifices. "Posterior *yin*" clearly indicates the anus but "anterior *yin*" is a bit more complicated because of the physiological differences between men and women. "Anterior and posterior" (*qianhuo*) usually refer to excretory functions: "Front and back [orifices] are blocked" and "non-functioning of the front and back [orifices]" are phrases mentioned in connection with urine retention and constipation (19.4.2; see also 45.2, 60.1.3, 63.2.6).

"Anterior *yin*" (*qianyin* 前陰) frequently describes the genitalia of both male and female. For example,

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[3] The seven orifices (*qiqiao*) of eyes, ears, nose, and mouth are not mentioned in the *Suwen*, but the *Lingshu* refers to them (17.2; 78.2). See Enzinger 2006.

> Anterior *yin* is [the location] where the ancestral tendon gathers and [it is also] where the Taiyin [spleen] and Yangming [stomach] Vessels unite. (45.1)

> When the ceasing *yin* suffers from "receding and reversing [of *qi*]," contractions, lower back pain, depletion, and fullness, then the anterior *yin* is obstructed and nonsense is spoken. (45.2)

"Anterior" thus appears to include urological features in some passages; it often appears as a composite with "posterior." In combination the two have the same meaning as the "two *yin*": "When the vessel is full, the skin is hot, the abdomen is distended, the anterior and posterior [urological, sexual and anal passages] are obstructed, and [one becomes] depressed and vexed. This is called "five-fold repletion" (19.4.2).

Scholars differ in reading "anterior and posterior" as uro-sexual-anal features. The scholars of the Shandong and Hebei Medical School state that the term "'anterior and posterior' indicates stool and urine" (1995). This might be logically true, but the *Suwen* uses *dabian* and *xiaobian* to describe stool and urine, respectively. The interpretation might differ, but etiologically it means the same. When the urological, sexual, and anal passages are obstructed, urine or stool cannot be passed, which may lead to depression and vexation. Two other passages that indicate "anterior and posterior" include urological, sexual, and anal passage:

> When the disease arrives, first the patient has a fishy and gamy odor, discharges green fluid, and vomits blood. Then the four limbs turn green, the eyes blur, and often the anterior and posterior [passages will pass] blood. (40.1.2)

> When ceasing yin suffers from recession and reversal, contractions, lower back pain, depletion, and fullness, then the anterior [sexual organ] is obstructed and nonsense is spoken. Best treat this using [points] that govern the disease. If all three yin [vessels] flow in reverse, one will be unable to "anterior and posterior" [urinate and defecate], and the person's hands and feet will be cold. After three days [the patient will] die. (45.2)

While these various phrases are used in a unisex fashion, yin and yang as technical terms clearly separate the male from the female in the naming of their sexual organs. For example: "When both the yin and yang [*qi*] are overly abundant, [they will] descend to the female and male [sexual organs]" (79.2). Guo Aichun cites Zhou Xuehai 周學海 as saying

that "if the yin and yang *qi* are overly abundant and not harmonized, it means that they have reached their limit. One can certainly see the symptoms in the anterior and posterior yin. This shows that stool and urine (*erbian* 二便) are obstructed from being discharged." Zhang Jiebin comments:

> If "yin and yang *qi* are overly abundant," they will become overbearing and harmful either to the yin or yang. If the disease becomes serious, it moves down to reach the yin-yang [sexual organs]. This affects the penis in men and the vagina in women; it causes imbalanced "hidden twists" [i.e., difficulties in having sex] and eventually develops into a serious illness. (*Leijing* 13.7)

Ma Shi concurs that "when both the yin and yang are replete, the disease of the male will move down to the penis while that of female reaches the vagina." In this context, the *Lingshu* has a more precise reference of yin and yang as sexual organs. It says: "When carbuncles [*yongju* 痈疽]… grow in the yang [penis], in a hundred days [the man] will die; when they grow in the yin [vagina], in thirty [the woman] will die" (81.2). Yang Shangshan comments in the *Taisu* that "a man's yang organ is called 'yang' while a woman's yin organ is called 'yin'." Carbuncles are physical structures that can be seen on body parts such as the sexual organs. It would be difficult to conceptualize them in terms of the yin and yang *qi* or yin and yang vessels. Therefore, it is safe to deduce that "yin" and "yang" in this passage represent the sexual organs of the woman and man.

Another, related term is "*yin* instrument" (*yinqi* 陰器). *Yinqi* is a little more precise than just *yin* in its usage to denote the sexual anatomy. The *Suwen* says: "The network [line of the Governing Vessel] runs along the "sexual instrument" [female genitalia] and connects at the perineum" (60.1.3). It also has this to say: "The Jueyin Vessel follows the "sexual instrument" and connects to the liver [vessel]. Thus, there will be vexation with fullness, and the scrotum will shrink" (31.2).

When the text, discusses specific disease mechanisms and deals with the symptoms of febrile disease, it says that on the sixth day, the Jueyin Vessel will be affected and since it flows around the sexual organs and branches into the liver, extreme physical exertion will cause shrinkage of the scrotum (ch. 31). Shrinkage of the scrotum seems to be a symptom associated with diseases in the Jueyin Vessel. Here it is male specific and "*yin* instrument" refers to the penis. The scholars of Shandong and

Hebei medical schools state that when one's heart is vexed and depressed, the penis and scrotum shrink (1995). This can be compared to another passage, which states that when the anterior and posterior are obstructed, the person becomes vexed and depressed (19.4.2).

The *Lingshu* contains many passages that describe the origin and pathways of vessels. It shows clearly that "*yin* instrument" refers to the genitalia. Thus, the stomach vessel is said to start at the outer flank of the second toe and ascend to gather in the sexual organs (13.1.3). The same also holds true for spleen, kidney, liver, and gall bladder vessels, which all start in some part of the foot and equally assemble at the sexual organs (13.1.4-6, 43.3).

There is no doubt that "*yin* instrument" in the above passages refers to the sexual organ of both male and female. Adding the word "instrument" to "*yin*" strengthens its usage as a term for genitalia. In this instance, *yin* is also used like the adjective "sexual" as in the term *yinwei* 陰痿 for a syndrome called "*yin* flaccidity." "Sexual instrument" appears both in the *Suwen* and the *Lingshu*, which indicates that it is a standard term used for both sexes—which again confirms the reduction in flowery language and the gradual dominance of the clinical.

Penis and Testicles

Male sexual organs are variously known in the Mawangdui texts: "jade whip," "red infant," "yang blaze" (*yangfu* 陽炥), "male" (*nan* 男), "member" (*shi* 勢) and "penis" (*zui* 朘).[4] Western biomedicine ascribes three functions to the penis: 1) as the male sex organ during coitus; 2) as a channel that leads urine from the bladder to the orifice via the urethra; and 3) as the seminal vesicles that open into the urethra and thus allow sperm and spermatic fluid to collect before expulsion as an ejaculate (Wagner and Green 1981, 7-23).

In the *Suwen* and *Lingshu*, the penis is most commonly called "stalk" (*jing* 莖). As the *Suwen* says, "In a man [the Governing Vessel] travels

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[4] See Harper's list in the index (1998). I disagree with him that "crowing cock" (*mingxiong* 鳴雄) is used to describe the male sexual organ. I read the *Shiwen* (#2) to mean that one consume a mature cock that crows as an aphrodisiac to gain potency because a "crowing cock has *jing*" (1998, 389).

along the stalk, then descends to reach the perineum" (60.1.3). This is its only mention of the term, but the *Lingshu* has more. It says: "The branch vessel of the Jueyin Vessel of the foot . . . ascends to the testicles and unites at the stalk" (10.5). "When it moves down, the testes will be painful and so will the stalk" (49.2.3). "In a man there are ten digits—stalk and testicles correspond to them" (71.2). And: "Stalk and testicles are the instrument [located] in the middle of the body" (75.1.4)

In the Mawangdui manuscripts, especially in the *Wushi'er bingfang*, "stalk" commonly refers to plant parts used in the preparation of medical concoctions. This also holds true for medical texts, so that even the *Suwen* uses the word as a botanical reference: "stems and leaves are withered and dry" (5.1). The use of "stalk" to denote male sexual organ implies another way of looking at body dynamics.

Rodo Pfister uses the concept of grafting in his discussion of sexual techniques and physiology. He compares the sexual act to agricultural grafting: the man takes his "stalk" and grafts it into a woman's "slit." The exchange of sap during the contact among plants is likened to the exchange of *qi* in sexual cultivation. He refers to the consistent use of words such as "contact" (*jie*), used for example in the *Shiwen* to describe the sexual act (2011, I:3.6.1). "Stalk" soon became a common way of referring to the penis and is part of the classic expression jade-stalk (*yujing* 玉莖).

Beyond this, the testicles are commonly called eggs (*luan* 卵). Thus, the *Suwen* talks about lower back pain that moves down and impacts the "stalk" and the "eggs" (60.1.2). It also says:

> When the [*qi* of the] Jueyin [Vessel] has reached its end, the central [torso] will be hot and the throat dry. There is a tendency to urinate and one's heart is vexed. When serious, the tongue curls up and the eggs [testes] rise and shrink. This is it! (16.5)

The *Lingshu* calls the testicles "eggs" once when speaking about energy moving down and causing pain (49.2.3); in two other passages it calls them "droopers" (*chui* 垂), once when referring to penis and testes being part of a man's digits (71.2), and once when defining them as the "apparatus" (*qi* 機) in the body's middle (75.1.4). The testicles can be examined by sight when it is swollen or through touch when pain arises; they are important tools for the diagnosis of general health but not discussed as playing a major role in sexual encounters.

The scrotum, next, is called the "bag" (*nang* 囊). Although not directly associated with sexual activity, it is essential in the etiology of disease, because any pathological manifestation is clearly visible here. Symptoms such as having a slack, droopy, shrunken, or swollen scrotum help to diagnose or predict a disease. The *Suwen* says:

> On the 12th day, the disease of the Jueyin [Vessel] lessens [i.e. the patient gets better]; the scrotum relaxes and the lower abdomen descends slightly [to be more comfortable]. (31.3)

> On the 3rd day, if the Shaoyang and Jueyin [Vessels] are affected, [the patient] becomes deaf, his scrotum shrinks and recedes. Water and gruel cannot enter [the patient] and he cannot recognize people. On the sixth day, he will die. (31.5)

> The Jueyin Vessel follows the sexual organ and links up with the liver. Thus, there may be vexation with fullness, and the scrotum shrinks. (31.2)

Male sexual parts are thus clearly differentiated—penis, scrotum, and testicles. Similarly, female parts, such as breasts, womb, and genitalia, are clearly reflected in the language of the *Suwen*.

The Breasts

The breasts are described as "mammae" or "nipples" (*ru* 乳). The Mawangdui manuscripts mention them variously. The *Zubi shiyi maijiu jing* describes the pathway of the Yangming Vessel of the foot as "emerging from the inner edge of the breasts." Similarly, the *Yinyang shiyi maijiu jing* notes that its pathway "ascends to bore [through] the breast." These references are purely anatomical in nature and have no sexual connotation. The *Tianxia* and *He yinyang*, on the other hand, mention that "the nipples harden" (*rujian* 乳堅) as the woman is about to reach a climax.

The *Suwen* warns physicians explicitly against using needles on the breasts and gives details on where to apply needles and moxibustion:

> Insert all needles above the breast. If you [accidentally] hit the breast chamber, it will cause swelling and corrosion of the roots. (52.3)

> The large collateral vessel of the stomach goes through the diaphragm to link up with the Lung Vessel. It emerges from under the left breast and its movement can be felt through clothing. This is the ancestral *qi* of the vessel . . . Below the breast one can feel its movement even through clothing. This is where the ancestral *qi* comes out. (18.2)

The most common method to determine an acumoxa point is the use of the fingers or thumb to measure in *cun*, which in the Han was about an inch or, more exactly, 2.31 centimeters (Harper 1998, 453). The *Suwen* also uses the nipples as a marker to determine acumoxa points. For example: "To determine the Back Transporters (Beishu 背俞) [or *shu*-acumoxa points on the back], first measure the [distance] between the nipples [with a piece of grass], then break it in half…" (24.2). Also, "The *qi* of the Yangming Vessel of the foot emerges from 68 points. . . [They are] parallel on both sides of [the acumoxa point] Turtledove Tail (Jiuwei 鳩尾, CV 15] and about three inches below the breasts—five on each side of the stomach cavity" (59.1.3). The text thus uses "nipples" as a clinical reference to the breasts.

Among word combinations, "nipples" in Chunyu Yi's medical cases once indicates a difficult birth in the expression "not able to use the nipples" (*buru* 不乳) (*Shiji* 105, #18). "Nipple feeding" (*rushi* 乳食) is also used in the context of breastfeeding, but in the *Suwen* the term refers to "milk products" in general: "In the northern highlands, the weather is windy and cold. People live out in the open and live on milk products" (12.1.3).

Another term for breastfeeding is "giving nipples to the child" (*ruzi* 乳子). The *Suwen* has:

> During postpartum and while giving nipples to the child, if the mother gets sick and feverish, her pulse is tiny. Why is that? . . . If at this time she is struck by wind-heat, she pants, utters [sounds], and shrugs her shoulders. Then, what is her pulse like? (28.2)

Guo Aichun identifies "giving nipples" as the state right after a woman has given birth. Zhang Jiebin uses the term to refer to the infant (*Leijing* 15.47). Breasts in the *Suwen* have become clinical.

Uterus and Vagina

Another essential female sexual organ is the womb commonly called "uterus" (*bao* 胞) and actively used in "uterus vessel" (*baomai* 胞脈), "uterus network lines" (*baoluo* 胞絡), "uterine *qi*" (*baoqi* 胞氣), "uterine essence" (*baojing* 胞精), and "uterine obstruction (*bibao* 痺胞). The *Taichan shu* 胎產書 (Book of the Fetus and Birth) from the Mawangdui corpus uses the term to refer to the placenta or afterbirth, which was buried ritually in an auspicious place to ensure the good health and prosperous future of the child. In the *Suwen*, Qi Bo explains:

> Brain, marrow, bones, vessels, gall bladder, and uterus: these six are generated by earth-*qi*. They are used for storage like yin and are stable like earth. Thus, they store and do not emit *qi*. They are called the extraordinary palaces. (11.1; 76.1) [5]

In order for procreation to take place the Earth Channel" (*didao* 地道) of the uterus has to function optimally, which means that when a woman reaches her fifties, her Conception Vessel is depleted and her Penetrating Vessel weakens. Then her Earth Channel becomes impassable and she can no longer have children (1.3). This Earth Channel is in fact the uterus vessel, which has to be open for the flow of the various substances and energies required for conception. The woman's ability to have children is clearly connected to her menses or "monthly affair" (*yueshi* 月事). Any condition of menstrual impairment—periods being irregular, too heavy, or too scant—is traced to the uterus vessel:

> When the monthly affair does not come, this is caused by the obstruction of the uterus vessel. It connects to the heart and the various networks inside the uterus. When its *qi* ascends and presses against the lungs, the heart *qi* cannot descend smoothly. For this reason, the monthly affair does not come. (33.4)

The uterus vessel, one of the many *qi* channels described in the *Suwen*, connects to the heart and has collateral network branches through-

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[5] The same terminology is still used today: the uterus is the "child's palace" (*zigong* 子宮) or the "uterine palace" (*baogong* 胞宮). Sivin believes that it encompasses the womb auxiliary system and its appendages (1987, 230).

out the uterine area. It is obstructed when *qi* moves upward and puts pressure on the lungs. Then heart *qi* cannot descend smoothly, which in turn leads to the absence of menstruation and interferes with conception.

However, even after the woman has conceived, the uterus vessel has to stay healthy to bring the pregnancy to completion. If it does not function properly, it can play havoc with her health. In one recorded case, a pregnant woman had become mute in her ninth month. Qi Bo explains this as being due to "the collateral network vessel of the uterus having been severed." He continues: "It connects to the kidneys; the Minor Yin Vessel penetrates the kidney organ and links up with the root of the tongue. Thus, she could not speak" (47.1.1). He also says:

> When the pulse has reached its limit and is [taut] like a bowstring, it is due to the insufficient contribution of uterine essence. If she becomes ill and loves to talk, she will die as at the first frost; if she does not speak, she will be cured. (48.2)

Wang Bing comments:

> The uterus vessel is linked to the kidney organ; its vessel passes on both sides of the base of the tongue. When *qi* is insufficient, there is the inability to speak. In the present case, on the contrary, the patient became very talkative. This is [a sign] that true *qi* has been interrupted internally. If it leaves the kidney and turns to the tongue and toward the exterior, [the patient] will die.

Zhang Jiebin adds that the uterus vessel is linked to the kidney vessel, which in turn reaches the base of the tongue. So when uterine *qi* is insufficient, the patient becomes quiet and mute. However, in this case, being talkative is a sign that yin-*qi* is not contained. Yang Shangshan adds: "When there is excessive sorrow, the collateral network vessel of the uterus is severed. When this is the case, yang *qi* cannot move internally" (*Taisu* 44.2). In one case he also uses the word *bao* to indicate the pericardium (*xinbao* 心胞) (48.2). Similarly, Wu Kun identifies *bao* as the same as the "essence chamber" (*jingshi* 精室).

Uterine obstruction is a condition that "will cause the abdomen and bladder to press against it, leading to internal pain" (43.2). Most commentators read *bao* here as "uterus" but the scholars of the Shandong and Hebei medical schools cite Wang Yuanyu as saying that it refers to the urinary bladder (*pangguang* 膀胱). The precise meaning of *bao*, in other words, depends on the context.

In some cases, *qi* is insufficient: "If the carbuncle suddenly bursts, the tendons [become] soft and after opening there is quite a bit of pain. If perspiration continues unabated, uterine *qi* will go into depletion. This needs to be treated with the [points] of the channel" (28.3). Other diseases connected to the uterus include, for example, conditions "when the uterus moves heat to the urinary bladder and there is blood in the urine" (37.3).

Judging by the number of times *bao* appears as the uterus (13 times in 9 chapters), women's reproductive health formed an important aspect of Han medicine. This is not surprising given the Confucian environment with family-centered ethics, ancestor worship, and a strong emphasis on healthy offspring.

The obvious female organ pertaining to sex mentioned in the *Suwen* is the vagina. The Mawangdui manuscripts name it variously as: "dark gate" (*xuanmen* 玄門), "woman" (*nü* 女), "female" (*pin* 牝), "hole" (*xu* 洫), "horse" (*ma* 馬), "inside" (*zhong* 中), "jade hole" (*yudou* 玉竇), and "recess" (*bi* 庳) (Harper 1998, 517). Not only are the Mawangdui texts creative in these names but they are also precise in naming its various parts. Thus, the *Tianxia* divides the vagina into twelve parts: 1) "hairpin light" (*jiguang* 笄光), 2) "sealing cord" (*fengji* 封紀), 3) "dry gourd" (*kuhu* 枯瓠), 4) "rat wife" (*shufu* 鼠婦), 5) "grain fruit" (*gushi* 穀實), 6) "wheat teeth" (*maichi* 麥齒), 7) "infant girl" (*yingnü* 嬰女), 8) "depart to return" (*fanqu* 反去), 9) "why remain" (*heyu* 何寓), 10) "read thread" (*chilü* 赤縷), 11) "red bead" (*chizhu* 赤珠), and 12) "*lei* stone" (*leishi* 磂石).[6] Some of these names also appear in the *Yangsheng fang* illustration (see Fig. 10 above).

The *Suwen* usually resorts to more clinical terms and just calls it *yin*, the female part (45.1). In some cases it also uses "anterior *yin*" (45.2) or "*yin* instrument" (60.1.3). Similarly, it refers to the urethral opening as "urine aperture" (*nikong* 溺孔), noting that in women the Governing Vessel connects to a spot at its top end called the "court aperture" (*tingkong* 廷孔) (60.1.3). Wang Bing comments that "court aperture" is also called "obscure leaking" (*yaolou* 窈漏) and is close to the opening of anterior *yin*, i.e., the vagina. Zhang Jiebin, on the other hand, identifies the "court aperture" with the urine opening. Zhang Zhicong comments that it is the female sexual organ, which is obviously wrong. The scholars of the

[6] I follow Pfister's reading *lei* 磂 instead of *zao* 磲. The *lei* stone is a round pebble. Larger ones were thrown at enemies from the city wall (2011, I.4.1.1-13).

Shandong and Hebei medical schools state that the "court aperture" is the opening of the urethra canal. Guo Aichun cites Sun Dingyi 孫鼎宜 to support his idea that "court" means "*yin*." They all agree that the Governing Vessel in women is linked to the urethral or vaginal opening, whereas in man it follows the penis right to the tip.

Except for the womb, all sexual parts described in the *Suwen* are external and can be identified and understood with ease. Its knowledge of the internal structure and physiological processes of the body constitutes an informed, deductionist abstraction linked to their external functions. Overall, the accuracy and precision of their observations are astounding—as are their more abstract concepts, such as the "ancestral tendon."

The Ancestral Tendon

The "ancestral tendon" (*zongjin* 宗筋) is an abstract concept pertaining to sexuality; its existence is expressed by its function rather than its physicality. It is not found in any other Han or later medical text and is overall a rather confusing and exciting term (found six times in ch. 44 and once in ch. 45). Commentators throughout the ages have offered different views on what it could be and where it might be located but generally have placed it in the context of sexual organs.

The dictionary *Guangya* 廣雅 (Extensive Poetic Analysis) identifies *zong* with *zhong* 眾 or "all." The *Shuowen jiezi* defines *zong* as "venerable ancestors" or the "source," "origin" (*ben* 本). It cites the *Daode jing* as saying "words have an origin and affairs have a master." *Zong* can therefore mean "base" or "foundation." From a more socio-historical perspective, Bernard Karlgren says:

> What the ancestor (*zu* 祖) is to the clan as a whole, the fundamental point, the "eldest brother" (*bo* 伯) is to the living generations of the clan: he is the clan, he carries it and respects it, he brings the sacrifices to the ancestors, he is sometimes called, straight out, *zong* the "clan man." He is the present progenitor of the family—the main man. (1930, 6)

Zong 宗 is therefore "ancestral," "main," "basic," "key," "focal," or "vital." Zhang Jiebin reads it to mean "main," "base," or "foundation" (*Leijing* 5.11) or "collect" (18.79). The *Suwen* uses it in this latter sense

when it says: "Water collected is accumulated water, which in turn is utmost yin or kidney essence. The reason why this collected essence-water cannot be discharged is due to essence binding it" (81.2). Then again, it uses the term to mean "ancestral" when it speaks of the stomach vessel moving underneath the breasts in a tangible manner—this is its ancestral *qi* (18.2). In the *Lingshu*, the term means "main" or "vital." For example: "The eyes are where the main vessels gather" (28.2.8); and: "The ears are where the vital vessels gather" (28.2.11). Yet, *zong* generally alludes to a main location or source where all or many things congregate to form the foundation or base. It is therefore, a vital, main, basic, and pivotal structure.

The use of *jin* is more ambiguous. It can refer to tendons, muscles, sinews, fascia, or nerves. Donald Harper translates *zongjin* as "manifold muscles" and discusses it in conjunction with the term *jiaojin* 交筋, which he translates as "coital muscles" (1998, 414n3). Douglas Wile translates it as "coital sinew" (1992, 78) while Rodo Pfister has "crisscrossed tendons" (2003, 74). However, the compound *jiaojin* is not used in the *Suwen*. So, what exactly is *jin*?

The *Lingshu* provides a detailed description of the nature and structure of *jin* (ch. 13), often referring to something akin to the nervous system rather than muscles and tendons. It describes *jin* as corresponding to the twelve paired vessels and names the tendons or fascia accordingly, such as that of the Taiyang Vessel of the foot. Like the various *qi* channels, *jin* has many secondary branches and run on the surface of the body when compared with the five organs and six viscera. They all start from the fingertips or toes and move along the arms or legs, passing over the buttocks, along the spine, and through the neck and head. Unlike the channels, they do not penetrate anywhere nor do they have any contact with the inner organs or are associated with the passage of *qi*. Disorders in the *jin* are usually due to cold or heat; the main symptom is usually *jin* strain, pulling pain, cramps, or spasms.

To avoid confusion I translate *jin* as "tendon" and indicate when used otherwise. Keeping in mind the inherent insecurity and ambiguity of the term, the rendition "ancestral tendon" is preliminary. What, then, is it and where is it located? The *Suwen* has it in the sexual organ: "Anterior *yin* is where the ancestral tendon gathers. This [is also] where the Taiyin [spleen] and the Yangming [stomach] vessels unite" (45.1). Wang Bing comments:

> Therefore, the ancestral tendon descends along both sides of the navel and joins in the sexual organs. Therefore the text speaks of "anterior *yin*." The Taiyin [Vessel] is the spleen and the Yangming, the stomach. They all attach closely to the ancestral tendon. Therefore the text says "where the Taiyin and Yangming unite."

Ma Shi thinks that the ancestral tendon is the upright line of muscle above and below the "horizontal bone," i.e., the pubic bone underneath the pubic hair. Zhang Jiebin notes that it "is where all the tendons gather." He adds that the tendon-vessels of the three yin channels of the foot as well as the three main extraordinary vessels all gather there which is why it is called "ancestral tendon" (*Leijing* 15.34). Guo Aichun agrees and says: "[According to the] *Jiayi jing*, *zong* [ancestral] should be *zhong* [all]." He reads the passage as "the area of the sexual organs is where all the tendons meet."

Wu Kun calls the ancestral tendon "the big tendon in the middle of the body;" Zhang Zhicong says that it "is the sexual organs." Ma Shi contradicts this and notes that if ancestral tendon indicated the sexual organs, then the text should actually spell this out. Indeed, there are passages in the *Suwen* which note that "the sexual organ is where the ancestral tendon gathers." This is not the same as equating it with the sexual organs.

Damage or deterioration of the ancestral tendon is a symptom of disease. In one passage it speaks of incessant thinking, limitless yearnings, and especially excessive sex as reasons why the ancestral tendon weakens and becomes flaccid leading to the occurrence of white discharge (44.2). Wang Bing comments that this discharge "in men is like semen in consistency and flows like urine; in women it flows from the vagina like smooth satin." Yang Shangshan in the *Taisu* makes a similar comment:

> Entering the bedchamber excessively will lead to the slackening and relaxing of the sexual organs. They are the foundation of all the tendons. When the ancestral tendon is injured, tendons will become flaccid. In woman, a white discharge occurs.

Wang Bing and Yang Shangshan differ. Wang Bing believes that the symptoms of a slackened ancestral tendon affect both male and female,

whereas Yang Shangshan thinks it is limited to women. The discussion then touches on the role of ancestral tendon in the treatment of flaccidity:

> The Yangming [Vessel] is the ocean of the five organs and six viscera. It is responsible for moistening the ancestral tendon, which in turn is responsible for holding the bones [together] and facilitating the joint mechanism. (44.3)

Yang Shangshan reads the last section as "the ancestral tendon binds bone and flesh together," indicating that *jin* means tendons rather than muscles. Wang Bing goes on to explain the function of the ancestral tendon by detailing all the muscles connected to it:

> The ancestral tendon is the upright tendon above and below the horizontal [pubic] bone, located underneath the pubic hair. It ascends to link up with chest and abdomen, descends to penetrate the hipbone and coccyx. It also runs from the back and abdomen up to the head and brow. Thus, it is said that the ancestral tendon is responsible for holding the bones [together] and for facilitating the joint mechanism. In other words, the torso becomes the body's big joint-section. For this reason it controls all bending and stretching and we speak of "release and lock."

Rodo Pfister concludes that Wang Bing sees the ancestral tendon as part of a greater complex of abdominal muscles, i.e., the pyramidal muscles, those of the pelvic diaphragm, and of the uro-genital diaphragm (2011, I:2.3.2). This may be so, but there is still no consensus on its exact location.

How, then, does it connect with the extraordinary vessels? What happens when it does not function optimally? To begin, the *Suwen* mentions that the Penetrating Vessel is responsible for irrigating all the different muscles and fascia of the body. It joins with the Yangming Vessel at the ancestral tendon which is "where all yin and yang [vessels] unite" (44. 3). The etiology suggests that the ancestral tendon is a structure or tissue that has tensile qualities and a bonding function. Any pathological factors that cause the Yangming Vessel to be exhausted lead to its slackening. This in turn causes flaccidity in the legs and the inability to walk. Since the ancestral tendon is further associated with the sexual organs, its optimal functioning is also crucial to the development of sexual characteristics.

The *Lingshu* describes the consequences of damaging the ancestral tendon in men. Why is it that a man who has suffered an injury to his

sexual organs and can no longer achieve an erection can still grow a beard, while eunuchs will not be able to do so? The *Lingshu* answers: "When a eunuch has his ancestral tendon removed, his Penetrating Vessel is injured. The blood that is discharged cannot be recovered, his skin knits inward, his lips and mouth are no longer nourished. Therefore, he cannot grow a beard" (65.2.1).

Why, then, is it that a "natural [born] eunuch," who has suffered neither severance of the ancestral tendon or lost a large amount of blood, cannot grow a beard? This is because "he does not have sufficient natural [heavenly *qi*], his Conception and Penetrating Vessels are not full, and his ancestral tendon is not developed. There is *qi* but no blood, thus his lips and mouth cannot be nourished and he cannot grow a beard" (65.2.1).

These two passages indicate that the ancestral tendon is responsible for the development of male secondary sexual characteristics, such as the growth of a beard. When the ancestral tendon is not well developed at birth or damaged (e.g., through castration), the flow of blood and *qi* is interrupted which leads to lack of energetic support of lips and mouth.[7] This means that the ancestral tendon must be closely connected to the uro-genital complex.

The *Lingshu* also shows that the vessels and tendons have various corresponding vessels, which are closely related to the sexual organ. This holds true for all the major *qi* channels of the foot (ch. 13). Any disorder in the tendons causes pain and spasms in the inner flank of the thighs, which in turn leads to the inability to use the sexual organs. If the injury is internal, then there will be erectile dysfunction; if it is due to cold, the penis will shrink and withdraw; if it is due to heat, the penis remains erect and does not subside, i.e., detumescence. Similarly, when there is a

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[7] Endocrinologically it indicates a disruption of hormonal functioning. Secondary sexual characteristics, such as beards, are controlled by hormones. The removal or damage of the ancestral tendon in man disrupts the production of sexual hormones and as a result no beard can grow. Another interesting consequence suffered by eunuchs is incontinence. They lose control of their urinary function, which has led to the description of any unbearable smell as being "stinky leaking eunuch." It is also said that eunuchs could be detected by their stench 300 meters away (Mitamura 1970, 38). Van Gulik notes that "a large number of the eunuchs suffered from chronic incontinence of the bladder and other ailments (1961, 255-56).

heat disorder in the Shaoyin or heart tendon of the hand, it slackens and cannot retract, leading to the inability to use the sexual organ.

From the above passages and commentaries, it seems that the expression "ancestral tendon" refers to an area or a structure in or around the sexual organs of both male and female, where various tendons, muscles, fascia, and nerves come together. Like the "coital tendon" in the *He yinyang*, it is "the same as the 'coital vessel' [*jiaomai* 交脈] inside the dark gate [vagina]." It can be stimulated by the penis, "causing both bodies to experience ecstatic excitement." Here the "coital tendon" sounds like an area in the vagina where the muscles fascia, and nerves come together. It is tempting to equate "coital tendon" to the so-called elusive Gräfenberg Spot (G-spot;).[8] For argument's sake, if the "coital tendon" is the G-spot, then "tendon" must indicate a group of cells and not really a muscle or tendon. On top of that, the ancestral tendon is also part of the male sexual organs. Therefore, it is difficult to make the association. Hence, there is still no consensus among scholars on its nature or exact location.

The ancestral tendon might well be an area, structure, or tissue that connects important muscles, fascia, nerves and energy lines. It could also be a specific line of tendon or nerve attached to the sex organs, whose damage—such as in cases of castration or overuse through excessive sexual activity—causes a reduction in the tensile strength and leads to diseases, such as genital discharge, leg paralysis, and incontinence. Then again, it could also be a chimerical associative complex, something that is not objectively present but felt proprioceptively. Regardless of its constitution and location, whether it is in a man or a woman, or whether it is physical or perceptive, any injury to this important part inevitably affects sexual reproduction.

To sum up, sexual and reproductive anatomy, both physical and abstract, form a major part of the *Suwen's* discussion of sex and sexuality. This shows that medical masters even in the Han expected students and

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[8] For the debate on G-Spot, its existence, function, and role in female ejaculation, see Ladas, Whipple, and Perry 1982; Syed and O'Connel 1999; Hines 2001; Pfister 2007; 2010, 1:-3.5.2.

practitioners to be familiar with anatomy and the functioning of all major parts. Beyond this, moreover, the *Suwen* accordingly expects its readers to understand not only medical theories and sexual anatomy but also the specific physiology associated with reproduction.

Chapter Nine

Reproductive Physiology

> *At sixteen, his kidney-qi is abundant; his "heavenly stock" arrives; his essential qi overflows; and he discharges his semen. If he has sexual intercourse, he can have children.*
>
> —*Suwen*

As with most civilizations, the Chinese attempted to legitimize their existence by establishing their origins through creation myths. In the ancient cosmologies of Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and others, mythic narratives describe the primeval element as water, and in Vedic myth, it is fire in water. In contrast, the basic principle of Chinese cosmology is primordial *qi*, a cosmic energy that governs matter, time, and space. This energy underwent a transformation at creation, and its nebulous, vaporous basis differentiated into the dual elements of yin and yang, male and female, hard and soft, and other binary factors as outlined in classic yin-yang cosmology (Birrell 1993, 23; Mackenzie n.d., 256-73).

It seems that the more awesome the creation myth, the more power, credibility, and legitimacy is bestowed on the group. Based on mythic narratives found in six Chinese classical texts, Anne Birrell names five main traditions:

(1) The cosmogonic list that describes the world picture in the "Tianwen" 天問 (Heavenly Questions) chapter of the *Chuci*, dating from the 4th century BCE.
(2) The cosmogonic myth that describes the creation of the universe and humans out of formless misty *qi* in the Huainanzi of 145 BCE and in the *Daoyuan* 道源 (Source of the Way), a recently excavated mortuary text believed to date from the 4th century BCE.

(3) The cosmogonic myth that describes the separation of earth from sky and the origin of the firstborn semi-divine human in the *Sanhuang wudi shiji* 三皇五帝史記 (Historical Record of the Three Sovereigns and Five Gods), dated to the 3rd century CE.

(4) The myth of the cosmological human body in the *Wuyun linian ji* 五運歷年記 (A Chronicle of the Five Cycles of Time), from the 3rd century CE.

(5) The myth of the making of human beings by a creatrix in the *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 (Pervasive Explanations of Common Customs), from the late 2nd century CE.

These five traditions contain four separate accounts of how human beings were created (1993, 25). The best-known among them tells how the goddess Nü Wa 女娲 kneaded them from yellow earth. Although she worked feverishly, she was unable to finish her task. So she drew a cord in a furrow in the mud and lifted it out to make human beings. This is why there is a distinction among people: those wealthy and noble are handmade from yellow earth, while ordinary, poor commoners are from the cord's furrow (Birrell 1993, 35). In the Han, Nü Wa was paired with Fu Xi 伏羲 to symbolize marriage. A common image on stone coffins in Han tombs (see Finsterbusch 2004), the pair is depicted as joined by entwined serpentine lower bodies (see Fig. 11).

Fig. 11: Nü Wa and Fu Xi.

Later depictions, such as those found in Tang silk paintings in the Aurel Stein Collection (Astana in the National Museum, New Delhi), show that their legs have been absorbed into their serpentine lower bodies and have become even more entwined.

The earliest documentation of Chinese creation myths can be traced back to late Warring States period; the latest appeared in the 3rd century CE. Thus, it seems that the emergence of these myths ran parallel to the compilation of the *Suwen*—yet it does not ascribe the creation of children to any myths. On the contrary, the *Suwen* is dedicated to the empirical concept that human beings are the product of the sexual union between man and woman. It specifies that, in order to produce offspring, not only opposite sexes (male and female, yin and yang) are required, but they have to be sexually mature. Sexual maturity for a female means being able to menstruate, which happens around age fourteen, and for a male to be able to produce semen, which occurs around sixteen. This once more shows how much the text documents the overall Chinese development away from mythical and magico-spiritistic thinking toward a new medical, clinical, and proto-scientific thinking.

In the beginning of the text, the Yellow Emperor wants to know why people lose the ability to have children as they grow older. He asks: "Is it due to the exhaustion of their reproductive potential or is it according to the law of nature?" In response Qi Bo outlines reproductive physiology and the fertility cycle as connected to the aging process, which is parallel but different in males and females. He describes in detail how the bodies of both men and women grow, develop, mature, age, and decline—all in accordance with physiological processes.

Qi Bo explains that a female of fourteen is able to bear children because her "heavenly stock" has arrived, her Conception Vessel is penetrable, and her Penetrating Vessel is abundant—thus her menstruation arrives on time. Similarly, a male at sixteen has abundant kidney-*qi*, his heavenly stock has arrived, his essential *qi* overflows, and he is able to emit semen, so that he can have offspring as and when he "harmonizes with yin" (in sexual intercourse). As long as they stay healthy, both will remain fertile and productive until well beyond middle age. At forty-nine years, the woman's Conception Vessel is depleted and her Penetrating Vessel is weakened, becoming limited in function. At this point her heavenly stock is exhausted and her uterus or earth channel becomes impassable, which leads to the absence of menstruation. At this stage,

her body is considered "flawed," i.e., unfit for childbearing, and she can no longer become pregnant.

Male reproductive physiology works along similar lines. The kidney stores the essence received from the five organs and six viscera, and when they are filled abundantly, he can produce semen to be emitted. However, at sixty-four, the storage capability of the kidney is weakened, the heavenly stock is exhausted, and both quality and quantity of essence diminish. Hence, he is unable to have children.

There are, however, some exceptions to this rule, and the Yellow Emperor immediately wants to know why some men and women of advanced years are still able to have children. Qi Bo replies that they are people who follow the Dao and have kept their bodies in perfect condition with the help of longevity practices. Thus, although advanced in age, they can still produce offspring.

The *Suwen* represents a clear shift in the understanding that human reproduction is an empirical process in which male and female bodies have to ripen, i.e., there must be menstruation in women and ejaculative capability in men, followed by active sexual intercourse (the mixing of essence), before a new spirit potency in the form of an individual being can be created. The first condition (menstruation and ejaculation) involves visible processes which can be objectively quantified. Medical practitioners know that any menstrual problem affects fertility. Similarly, the inability to manage penetration is another visible sign that contributes to the understanding of reproduction as an empirical process.

This empirical understanding is further augmented by various philosophical and medical theories, such as the idea of the mixing of essences to create a new person. Such theories also involve details of sexual energetics, describing the exact function of essence, *qi*, kidney, extraordinary vessels, and so on in reproductive physiology. The most intriguing of them, however is the "heavenly stock."

Heavenly Stock

Like the "ancestral tendon," the concept of the "heavenly stock" (*tiangui* 天癸) appears only in the *Suwen*, where it is central to reproductive physiology. After its appearance in the *Suwen*, it does not appear again in the literature until in the Qing when Xiao Xun 蕭壎 discusses it in con-

junction with illnesses relating to menstruation in his *Nüke jinglun* 女科經論 (Comprehensive Discussion of Women's Medicine; dat. 1684). The many references to heavenly stock in other Qing medical texts are mostly in relation to women's disorders and usually refer back to the *Suwen* or Wang Bing's commentary. No new ideas or discoveries are found there. It remains a puzzle why such an important concept in human physiology stayed dormant for so long.

What, then, does *tiangui* mean? *Tian* has been a cosmological and spiritual aspect of Chinese thought and religion since time immemorial. It plays an essential role in sexuality, and some positions even refer to it in their names (see Fig. 12).

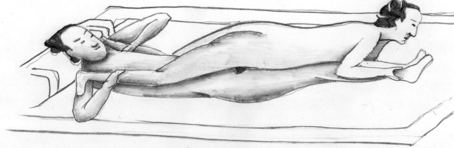

Fig. 12. "Turning earth and reverting heaven."
Position # 32 in the *Su'e pian*.

Already Wang Chong 王充 (27-97) opposed "a moralistic approach to the study of heavenly phenomena" (Kalinowski 2004, 258). Together with other scholars, he deconstructed cosmic orderliness of the ancients and showed that *tian*, rather than referring to a deity, means "nature" or the "sky." Fung Yu-lan summarizes these and other studies, and lists five different meanings of *tian* in early China:

(1) A material or tangible entity such as the sky, seen in opposition to earth and as the other half of a binary pair; it refers to the physical universe.
(2) A ruling or presiding figure as in "Highest Emperor of Sovereign Heaven" (Huangtian shangdi 皇天上帝).
(3) A fatalistic idea equivalent to the concept of destiny (*ming*), over which humans have no control and which appears in the *Mengzi* (1B14).

(4) A naturalistic force similar to the world of nature as described in "Discussion on Heaven" in the *Xunzi* 荀子 (ch. 17).
(5) An ethical or moral principle as exemplified in the "Zhongyong": "What heaven confers on humanity is called his nature." (Fung 1952, 31)

Tian, then, is both tangible and abstract at the same time. However, in the compound *tiangui*, the term indicates something more physiological and medical and refers to the state before conception. It is similar to the idea of a state prior to creation known as "before heaven" (*xiantian* 先天) (Wang HT et al. 1997, 1030). Hence, *tian* in *tiangui* represents the cosmological constellation of the universe before the intermingling of essence creates a being.

The word *gui* makes up the second part of the compound. It is the last of the ten Heavenly Stems (*tiangan* 天干), which are names of the ten days of the week (*xun* 旬), already used in the Shang. The Chinese combined these with the twelve Earthly Branches (*diji* 地支), used to name the months of the year and also the years—matching the stations of the planet Jupiter and well known as the Chinese zodiac—into sixty character-pairs and used them to designate years, months, days, and hours.[1] The *Zhoubi suanjing*, portrays the stems and branches as part of the model representing heaven and earth, which the early Chinese embraced as their universe (Cullen 1996, 44-45). Joseph Needham describes the system as "two enmeshed cogwheels, one having twelve and the other ten teeth, so that not until sixty combinations have been made will the cycle repeat. . . .The practice of using them for [naming] the years as well did not come in until the end of the Former Han in the 1st century BCE, but thence forward its uses continued into modern times" (1959, 396-98).

The character *gui* also relates to yin in the yin-yang pattern, to water among the five phases, and to the north among the directions. These associations appear in conjunction with the "five circulatory phases and six seasonal influences" (*wuyun liuqi* 五運六氣). Catherine Despeux has shown that this principle was still in use as "a source of innovation in medicine under the Song (960-1279)" (2001, 121-69).

[1] For a detailed discussion on the Chinese calendar, see Keightley 1999, 249-51; Cullen 1996, 7-10; Zurndorfer 1995, 297-309. The "eight characters" for the year, month, day, and hour of birth are still essential in fortune-telling today.

The *Suwen* employs *gui* to name days and years.[2] It also describes the "influences of the six kinds of weather" on each and every item in the sexagenary cycle (71.2.1). There is, therefore, no mystery about *gui* as employed in the context of the calendar. However, what does it mean when combined with *tian*?

In its outline of the stages of reproductive physiology in both sexes, the *Suwen* uses the *tiangui* variously. The heavenly stock arrives fully during puberty (at age fourteen for girls; sixteen for boys) and stops functioning at the end of the fertile years (at age forty-nine for women; sixty-four for men). The general rule is that "when kidney-*qi* is abundant, *tiangui* arrives; when kidney-*qi* is weakened, *tiangui* is exhausted" (1.3).

Wang Bing comments that *gui* means *rengui* 壬癸, which corresponds to the north among the directions and to water among the phases, and is also the name of an earthly branch. Guo Aichun defines it as kidney-*qi* in males and females—the kidney system belonging to the same cosmological coordinates of water, north, etc. Yang Shangshan states that *tiangui* is the same as essential *qi*, the inherent energetic function of the kidney system. Zhang Zhicong says that *gui*-water is produced by *tianyi*—heavenly unity. Gao Shishi agrees and adds that males are ruled by essence and females by blood. Ma Shi describes *tiangui* as yin essence. The scholars of the Shandong and Hebei medical schools, finally, comment that it is a product of the kidney-*qi* function but not the same as kidney-*qi* or yin essence. All in all, they agree on the link with the kidney system and with essence. But what is it, really?

Among Western scholars, Claude Larre translates it as "fertility" (1994, 59), Henry Lu as "sex energy" (1978, 4), Nguyen Van Nghi as "sexual maturity" (1996, 36), Charlotte Furth as "puberty" (1999, 46n20), Robert van Gulik as "the term ordained by heaven" (1961, 16), and Ilza Veith as "menstruation" (1966, 100n8). The most plausible interpretation is by Nelson and Andrew Wu, who say that it is "the substance necessary for the promotion of the growth, development, and reproductive function of the human body" (1997, 9)—which is why I call it "heavenly stock." I see it as a fixed quantum of concentrated reserve bestowed by heaven or nature called into use as and when the body requires it for the purpose of growth, sexual development, and reproductive function.

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[2] The word appears to denote days in 18.3.4, 22.1, 22.2.1, 22.2.2 (2x), 22.2.3 (2x), 22.2.5, 23.1 (3x); to denote years in 42.1.2, 67.1 (e.g. 戊癸).

According to the *Suwen*, heavenly stock is present in both men and women. It "arrives" at puberty, when kidney-*qi* is abundant and indicates some kind of energy or substance that promotes growth, development, and reproductive physiology. It maintains menstruation and pregnancy in woman and allows men to father children. Abundant from puberty through maturity, it starts to decline in middle age—the mid-thirties for women, the forties for men. When it is exhausted, menstruation ceases in women, which signifies the end of her reproductive life. In men the amount of semen produced declines, and his chances of producing offspring are reduced.

Reproductive Hormones

Heavenly stock cannot, therefore, be simply kidney-*qi* or essential *qi* as the scholars of Shandong and Hebei medical schools note correctly. Rather, it indicates the presence of something else, something that functions at a subtler level, something heavenly or natural. Already in 80 CE, Wang Chong believed that such a substance existed in the human body, as outlined in the discussion of sex reversal in his *Lunheng* 論衡 (Balanced Discussions).

Several substances are potential candidates. The Chinese first used the human placenta for medical purposes in the 8th century CE and made it common in the 13th. In the 16th century, urine derivatives known as autumn stone (*qiushi* 秋石) or autumn ice (*qiubing* 秋冰) were used. Physicians collected urine in large quantities and divided it according to age and sex, just like a steroid factory might do today (Needham et al. 1983, 285-86, 310).

Among Western equivalents, reproductive hormones are the foremost candidate for *tiangui*. Endocrinology is a relatively recent field, and the term hormone was coined by Ernest H. Starling in 1905 in Britain. He introduced the concept of hormones as powerful substances regulating processes in the body, understanding them as chemical messengers, carried by the blood stream from the organ where they are produced to the organ which they affect. The continually recurring physiological needs of the various organs, then, determine hormonal production and circulation in the body (Oudshoorn 1994, 16).

Not until the early 20th century did physiologists focus on the secretions of the gonads (testes and ovaries) or hormones as chemical substances. By 1910, the idea of gonads as agents of sexual difference had given way to the concept of sex hormones as chemical messengers. The gonads were then considered to be the seat of masculinity and femininity, their secretions giving rise to the genderization of the two sexes: you are either male or female. This may be true for most people but, as shown by Suzanne Kessler (1998) and Alice Dreger (2000), construction of gender identity is more complicated for some people such as the intersexed and hermaphrodites.

The closest match of the "something else" the ancient Chinese called *tiangui* in terms of biochemical parallels is the gonadotrophins—hormones that stimulate cell activity in the gonads and are essential in male and female fertility. At puberty, a stage between childhood and adulthood, secondary sexual characteristics develop, sexual organs mature, and reproduction becomes possible. In girls, puberty usually starts between the ages of nine to thirteen, when the first menstruation (menarche) takes place. It is usually complete by age fourteen to sixteen. Boys tend to start puberty a year or so later, i.e., between the ages of ten and fourteen; the first ejaculation occurs around this time (Klinke and Silbernagl 1996, 443-44, 488).

About two years before the onset of menstruation or the first ejaculation, the hypothalamus begins to secrete a substance known as Gonadotrophin-Releasing-Factor (GRF). It travels to the pituitary gland at the base of the brain and causes two chemical substances or hormones to be released: the first is called the Follicle-Stimulating Hormone (FSH), the second is Luteinising Hormone (LH). Both enter the blood stream and travel around the body to activate the ovaries in the female and the testicles in the male. FSH stimulates the growth of the follicles containing eggs in the ovaries and the production of estrogens, which helps the growth of breasts and genitals in girls. It also triggers the production and development of sperm, while LH helps the production of testosterone (Oudshoorn 1994, 19).

Heavenly stock and gonadotrophin hormones thus certainly share similar characteristics, but this does not mean that they are the same. The difference in interpreting ancient Chinese medical theories and modern biomedical thinking is that the primary interest of biomedicine is in the substratum as opposed to function. In other words, heavenly stock, al-

though linked with an underlying "something else," is dominantly described in terms of function, while sex hormones are seen as substances or substrata with their own chemical structures and properties. As such, heavenly stock is a physiological concept unique to Chinese medicine, its functions formulated within the sphere of the prevailing system of philosophical thought such as yin-yang and the five phases.

Menstruation

The Mawangdui manuscripts include the *Taichan shu* specially on midwifery. It contains some objective observations, but for the most part is entrenched in spirit-based, magical thinking. The *Suwen*, having moved toward empirical analysis, gives a more sober view of women's reproductive dynamics but does not have a special chapter or section on it, rather it discusses female conditions in connection with the etiology of various ailments or in the presentation of medical theories. There is no field of obstetrics and gynecology (*fuke* 婦科), which does not arise until the Song (Furth 1999, 59-93).

The *Suwen* recognizes that menstruation—known as monthly affair (*yueshi* 月事), moon, or month (*yue* 月)—is the most important aspect of women's reproductive dynamics and that any disturbance of the cycle will affect fertility (1.3). It links it with heavenly stock, fertility, and conception. To produce progeny, a woman must menstruate regularly and in the right amount. Irregularity and abnormal menstruation are signs of pathology. For example: "The sickness of the second yang [vessel] develops in the heart and spleen … and the woman has no monthly affair" (7.2). Wang Bing comments:

> When the large intestine and stomach [vessels] get sick, the heart and spleen are affected. When the heart is affected, blood does not flow [smoothly]; when the spleen is affected, the flavors [of food] cannot be transformed. When blood does not flow [smoothly], the woman cannot menstruate.

These are also the same physio-pathological conditions that produce amenorrhea in TCM.[3] About another condition in which menstruation stays away, the *Suwen* states:

> When it arrives, [the patient's] *qi* is diminished and she [feels] hot at times… Her body is heavy and she has difficulty walking. Her monthly affair will not come. . . This is called "wind-water" and it is discussed in the *Chifa* [刺法, Rules of Needling] (33.4)

Wang Bing notes that this treatise was lost by his time. This passage refers to the symptoms of a person suffering from kidney-wind, in which kidney-*qi* is depleted and there should be no insertion of needles. If the patient is treated with needles, injurious *qi* enters the body to cause, among other symptoms, amenorrhea. Yang Shangshan adds that injurious *qi* refers to pathogenic *qi*; when this arrives, the woman will be sick (*Leijing* 31). Absence of menstruation is thus a symptom of kidney-wind. In the same passage, Qi Bo explains:

> When the monthly affair does not come, this is due to obstruction of the uterus vessel. The uterus vessel is related to the heart and it connects inside the womb. When *qi* ascends and presses against the lungs, heart-*qi* cannot descend smoothly. Then the monthly affair does not come. (33.4)

The absence of menstruation in this case is caused by blockage of the vessel in the uterus. The expression "the monthly affair does not come" (*yueshi bulai* 月事不來) is a general symptom and it does not differentiate between primary or secondary amenorrhea.

In another passage, the *Suwen* discusses the cause of amenorrhea and oligomenorrhea (scantiness of discharge) with special reference to dryness of blood, which affects both men and women. The result of a combination of complex pathological factors, in women it manifests not only as an absence of menstruation but also as a scantiness of discharge.

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[3] In biomedicine, absence of menses is called amenorrhea, divided into primary and secondary. Primary amenorrhea occurs when a woman has not had her menarche (first menstruation) by the time she is eighteen; secondary amenorrhea occurs when a woman has had periods but they have stopped for at least three months. In TCM, the absence of menstruation is called "blocked flow" (*bijing* 閉經). See Maciocia 1998, 273-301.

> The disease is called "dryness of the blood." It is contracted at a young age, when one has lost a large amount of blood or enters the bedchamber often while intoxicated. It leads to an exhaustion of *qi* and to injury of the liver. The monthly affair will decline or not come at all.[4] (40.1.2)

When large amounts of blood leave the body, Wang Bing speaks of "loss of blood" (*tuoxue* 脫血), indicating a down-flow from the uterus similar to nosebleeds. Wang Bing explains that when one is drunk, the vessels are abounding with blood which causes the interior to become hot. If one enters the bedroom and engages in sexual intercourse, the marrow and other liquids flow down and kidney-*qi* is depleted. Since the liver stores blood, smaller or larger losses injure it. In males, this leads to a weakening of the essential fluids (including semen); in females, the monthly affair diminishes or fails to arrive. Zhang Jiebin adds that dryness of blood means that the passage of the monthly water is interrupted (*Leijing* 17.63).

Absence of menstruation and scanty discharge are two different illnesses which go back to earlier injuries. Treatments include sparrow eggs with black cuttlefish bones and madder root formed into pills and taken before meals with abalone broth.

From the empirical point of view, the easiest way to ascertain the cause of infertility is the obvious sign of "absence of menstruation." However, the early Chinese also noted that irregular bleeding and the amount of discharge affect fertility. As the text has: "When yin is depleted and yang throbs, it is called collapse [due to overflowing]" (7.3). Wang Bing comments that a situation when the Yang Vessel beats with abundance and the Yin Vessel has insufficient *qi* can result in an internal collapse with blood flowing downward. Yang Shangshan defines *beng* 崩 as "downpour of blood." The scholars of the Shandong and Hebei medical schools describe it as "profuse and rapid bleeding: forceful like the collapse of a mountain."[5] Zhang Jiebin says: "When yin is depleted, it

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[4] This refers to two pathological conditions, i.e., oligomenorrhea (scanty menstruation) and amenorrhea (absence of menstruation). See Maciocia 1998, 217-18, 273-300.

[5] Excessive loss of blood due to increased discharge during menstruation is called menorrhagia. There is also metrorrhagia, which is bleeding between cycles which may be heavy. In TCM, menorrhagia is called *yuejing guoduo* 月經過多 (Maciocia 1998, 207-17).

sinks and is insufficient. When yang is contending, it floats up and there is surplus. This causes yang repletion and yin depletion and lead to a state of internal 'collapse' with loss of blood" (*Leijing* 6.29).

Altogether, there is thus much evidence that the Chinese were quite aware of the importance and role of menstruation both for fertility and within the woman's own bodily system.

Pregnancy

After the Chinese made the connection between the importance of regular periods and fertility for the begetting of progeny, any irregularity in the menses was viewed with alarm and given full attention simply because perpetuating the family line was such an important duty.

In the context of the *Suwen*, "having children" (*youzi* 有子) indicates the ability to have offspring, used for both men and women (see 1.3). It can also mean being "with child" or pregnant: "When the yin [pulse] beats [vigorously] and is different from the yang, it is called being 'with child'" (7.3; 71.3.3). Wang Bing comments that "yin is said to be within the foot-length [*chi*]" and "beating alone in the hand. When the [pulse] at the foot-length beats differently from that of the inch-opening; the yang-*qi* stands out: that is a sign of pregnancy." This is how a *Suwen* physician determined that a woman was pregnant.

Among the books listed on the bedchamber arts in the *Hanshu*, one text has the title *Sanjia neifang youzi fang* 三家內房有子方 (Prescriptions of the Three Schools for the Inner Chamber for Begetting Progeny). It is lost now but could well have been the first Chinese book on eugenics.

Another term for a pregnant woman is "heavy in body" (*zhongshen* 重身). For example: "When a woman is heavy in body and loses her voice in the ninth month—what is the cause of this?" (47.1.1). Wang Bing notes that *zhong* (heavy) can also be pronounced *chong* 蟲 (insect) and thus indicate that there is [another] body inside her: she is pregnant. During the gestation period of ten lunar months, the Shaoyin Vessel of the foot is key to nourishing the fetus. If its *qi*-flow is interrupted, the mother will lose her voice and cannot speak. Zhang Jiebin adds that at ninth month of pregnancy, the fetus is at its biggest and can obstruct the *qi* flow in the collateral network vessel of the uterus (*Leijing* 17.62).

Yang Shangshan in the "Chapter on Miscellaneous Diseases" of the *Taisu* says:

> When the primary and network vessels of the uterus are obstructed. . . because the secondary vessel of the uterus is connected to the Shaoyin [kidney] Vessel, which runs through the kidney and connects to the root of the tongue. . . there may be the inability to speak. (ch. 31)

The *Suwen* also discusses this loss of voice during the ninth month of pregnancy (47.1.1). The *Lingshu* confirms the affliction and explains that the kidney vessel starts from the *popliteal fossa*, ascends along the legs, runs through the torso, and connects to the root of the tongue (11.1.2, 10.2.8). Its path takes it past the uterus and as the fetus grows, it may put pressure on it that cause obstructions. Since it is connected to the root of the tongue, it can affect the ability to speak. The *Suwen* considers this an abnormal disease but says that no treatment is necessary because after the pregnancy ends the ability to speak will return naturally. Another condition involves "inward dissipation that causes recession and will lead to muteness and lameness; this is called kidney depletion" (49.1). The same connection of kidney and tongue is also found in a condition where the patient "loves to speak" (48.2).

Another common term is "pregnant" (*yun* 孕): "When there are pathological changes in the Governing Vessel . . . in women, they may not be able to get pregnant (*buyun* 不孕) and suffer from dysuria, hemorrhoids, incontinence, and a dry throat" (60.1.3). Wang Bing comments that the reason for this is that the Penetrating and Conception Vessels start together from the lower abdomen and ascend to the throat. Also, the Governing Vessel goes along the sexual organs and meets the others at the perineum. This is why the woman cannot get pregnant. Pathogenic changes in the Governing Vessel cause the *qi* to rush upward from the lower abdomen to the heart and cause pain. The patient will have difficulty in urination and defecation. This will cause the "surging protrusion" in men and the "inability to get pregnant" in women. Another use of the word *yun* is to describe the embryo or fetus: "[Under such conditions] the people feel wretched and sorrowful. When cold wind is at its utmost; for those who oppose it, the embryo will die" (71.1.2).

Yet another term for pregnancy is "carrying a child" (*renzi* 妊子): "When the [pulse of the] Shaoyin Vessel of the hand in a woman pulsates violently, she is carrying a child" (18.3.6). Wang Bing states that

"according to Quan Yuanqi's commentary, it should be the Shaoyin [kidney] Vessel of the foot and not of the hand [heart]. The latter can be felt with the little finger in the fold of the palm." Yang Shangshan notes that this vessel rules the blood (*Taisu* 15). When a woman is pregnant, her monthly blood is obstructed and cannot flow. Hence, the Shaoyin Vessel of the hand is inwardly replete, which causes its pulsation. In any case, a good physician should be able to determine whether a woman is pregnant by feeling the movements in her pulse.

Similarly, the *Maijing* says:

> According to the classics, beating yin and distinct yang indicate that she is carrying a child. . . . If the Shaoyin Vessel of the hand has a pulse that stirs in big movements, pregnancy is indicated. Shaoyin is the pulse of the heart. The heart governs the blood vessels. In addition, the kidneys are named the uterine gate and infant's door. The pulse in the foot-length is that of the kidneys. If the pulse in the "foot-length" does not yield under pressure, it should indicate pregnancy. (*Maijing* 1997, 319).

This compares to the *Suwen*, which states that "when the yin [pulse] beats [vigorously] and is different from the *yang*, it is called being with child" (7.3).

Another way a physician is able to determine whether a pregnant woman is about to give birth is by pulse diagnosis. The *Suwen* states: "The Yellow Emperor asked: 'How does one know that a pregnant woman is about to give birth?' Qi Bo replied: 'The body has sickness but there is no injurious pulse [movement]" (40.1.6).

Another aspect of care during pregnancy is possible by optimizing conditions for the fetus. The *Suwen* says:

> The name of the disease is fetal sickness. It is contracted when [the fetus] is still in the mother's abdomen and the mother has a great fright, which causes the *qi* to ascend but not descend. It resides together with essential *qi* and the child will develop "peak illness." (47.1.9)

Zhang Jiebin adds that "when a child is born with epilepsy, people nowadays call it fetal sickness" (*Leijing* 15.65). Fetal sickness is considered a rather uncommon condition, caused by a sudden scare to the mother, so that *qi* rises but does not come down again. This may cause confusion in the fetus and lead to epilepsy after the child is born. The *Suwen* also notes that pregnant women put their health at risk by giving

in to excessive sorrow—one of the five emotional pathogenic factors (44.2, 71.1.2).

The *Suwen* deals extensively with women's health; especially as it pertains to fertility and the production of healthy offspring by looking in details of the conditions of reproductive physiology and pregnancy. This matches classical interests, determined by the social and religious climate of the time, dominated as it was by Confucian thought. It was only in the Song that its interest and knowledge developed into the separate medical faculties of gynecology and obstetrics. Despite the late development in women health care, the study and development of sex and sexuality have continued both in the realm of longevity and medicine.

Chapter Ten

Overindulgence and Intoxication

> *The people of today do not live according to nature; they drink alcohol as if rice soup; they employ recklessness in regular activities; they enter the bedchamber in an intoxicated state; and they allow their lust to exhaust their essence. Hence, they reach only half a hundred years and are decrepit.*
>
> —*Suwen*

The most frequently cited doctrine that links health and sexual cultivation since the discoveries of the Mawangdui manuscripts is encapsulated in the "seven ways of diminishing and eight procedures of increasing [*qi*]" (*qisun bayi*).[1] Before then, these procedures—mentioned briefly in the *Suwen*—were interpreted variously. For example, Wang Bing associates them with growth and development in seven- and eight-year phases of the female and male respectively (1.3). He believes that the female is injured by menstruation while the male benefits from the maturation of his seminal essence. Yang Shangshan believes that the expression "seven ways of diminishing" refers to the sevenfold depletion syndrome caused by yang predominance, while the phrase "eight increases" indicates the eightfold repletion syndrome caused by yin predominance. For Zhang Jiebin, seven being an uneven number means that it is yang, while eight as an even number is yin; "diminishing" and "increase" refer to the waning and waxing of yin and yang. Other commentators also have plausible interpretations, but they were all superseded after the *Tianxia* was unearthed at Mawangdui. From the latter, it is clear that the set refers to specific areas of the bedchamber arts among longevity practices.

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[1] For a general discussion of the methods in the Mawangdui corpus, see Wile 1992, 81; Harper 1998, 428-30; Pfister 2003, 21-23; Shandong and Hebei 1995, 84-85 n5; Xin 1994.

Procedures for Enhancement

The *Tianxia* describes in detail how incorrect sexual practices cause the seven ways of diminishing *qi*, but a man can prevent them from happening or use the eight procedures of increasing *qi* to make up for them. It says:

> There are eight ways to increase *qi* and seven of diminishing it. If one does not apply the eight procedures of increasing and fails to eliminate the seven ways of diminishing it, at age forty yin-*qi* [sexual energy] will be reduced to half, at fifty daily activities [mobility] are weakened, at sixty ears and eyes will not be sharp and clear, at seventy the lower body is dry and the upper body depressed. At this point one cannot use the yin-*qi* any longer and suffers from the flow of snot and tears.
>
> There are, however, ways to restore strength: by eliminating the seven activities that diminish *qi* to shake off diseases, and by using the eight procedures of increasing *qi* to double it. This is why some old people can restore their strength, and those who are strong already will not be weakened. . . . In other words, the correct application of the procedures of increasing *qi* and the complete elimination of the seven activities that diminish it will prevent the five [kinds] of diseases.

According to the *Tianxia*, the eight procedures to increase *qi* include: 1) regulating *qi* 治氣; 2) stimulating [the production] of froth 致沫; 3) knowing the right timing 知时; 4) hoarding *qi* 畜氣; 5) harmonizing froth 和沫; 6) amassing *qi* 竊氣; 7) waiting for the overflow 待嬴; and 8) relaxing into collapse 定倾. The text specifies:

> 1) At sunrise, sit up, straighten the spine, open the buttocks, contract the anus, and push down: this is "regulating *qi*."
>
> 2) While eating and drinking, relax the buttocks, straighten the spine, contract the anus, and allow *qi* to pass through: this is "stimulating [the production] of froth."
>
> 3) Begin with foreplay and then move on to pleasure; first link the desires, then use [the penis]: this is "knowing the right timing."
>
> 4) Use [the penis] but relax the spine, contract the anus, and press it down, entering and exiting in harmonious regularity: this is "hoarding *qi*."
>
> 5) Use [the penis] but do not move in haste or with speed: this is "harmonizing froth."

> 6) After withdrawing, allow someone to make it erect [again], so that it is [repeatedly] aroused and again subsides: this is "amassing *qi*."
>
> 7) When concluding, keep the inner spine still, absorb *qi*, push down, and calm the body in a state of waiting: this is "waiting for the overflow."
>
> 8) After completing [intercourse], wash the penis and if it becomes aroused [again], rest it: this is "relaxing into collapse."

In other words, these eight techniques enhance a man's physical health by consciously guiding and enhancing *qi* with the help of various physical moves. They teach how to regulate *qi* in daily life. During intercourse, he needs to recognize the right timing, i.e., make sure that the penis is properly aroused before intromission. He should thrust regularly to keep the *qi* strong and conclude the session by absorbing it. There is no mention of ejaculation, but the text speaks of washing the penis after concluding the sexual act. Should it be aroused or "angered" again after withdrawal, it should be rested (Umekawa 2003, 9).

In addition, the techniques imply a general knowledge of how *qi* is generated, regulated, absorbed, circulated, and stored. They closely connect to non-sexual methods of guiding and enhancing *qi*, such as those first outlined in an inscription on a dodecagonal jade block of the Zhou dynasty that dates from the 4th century BCE. The original function of the block remains uncertain (Chen 1982), but the inscription has been studied by several scholars (see Wilhelm 1948; Engelhardt 1996, 19; Li 1993, 320-23; Roth 1999; Kohn 2008). It reads:

> To guide the *qi*, allow it to enter deeply [by inhaling] and collect it [in the mouth]. As it collects, it will expand. Once expanded, it will sink down. When it sinks down, it comes to rest. After it has come to rest, it becomes stable.
>
> When the *qi* is stable, it begins to sprout. From sprouting, it begins to grow. As it grows, it can be pulled back upward. When it is pulled upward, it reaches the crown of the head.
>
> It then touches above at the crown of the head and below at the base of the spine. Who practices like this will attain long life. Whoever goes against this will die. (Harper 1998, 126)

This describes a fundamental *qi* practice commonly undertaken as part of longevity techniques in the Han and dominant in both healing exercises and Daoist meditation from the middle-ages onward. People inhale deeply, allow the breath to enter both the chest and the mouth, and in

the latter mix it with saliva, another potent form of *qi* in the body. Moving their tongue around their mouth, they gather the saliva and gain a sense of fullness, then swallow, allowing the *qi* to sink down. They feel it moving deep into their abdomen, where they let it settle in the central area of gravity, known in Chinese medicine as the Ocean of *Qi* (*qihai* 氣海) and in Daoism as the cinnabar field (*dantian* 丹田). There the *qi* rests and becomes stable (Kohn 2008, 14). The eight techniques, therefore, clearly adopt this fundamental method of *qi*-guiding in the context of sexual practices, utilizing a powerful form of energy in the body.

A later record of the eight procedures to increase *qi* appears in the *Ishinpō* in a citation of the *Yufang mijue*. Here they are much more general and, without having more detailed specifications, seem to refer to general methods of nourishing life. They include: 1) firming essence (*gujing* 固精); 2) calming *qi* (*anqi* 安氣); 3) supporting the organs (*lizang* 利藏); 4) strengthening the bones (*qianggu* 强骨); 5) regulating the pulse (*tiaomai* 調脈); 6) amassing/storing blood (*chuxue* 畜血); 7) increasing fluids (*yiye* 益液); and 8) adjusting the body (*daoti* 道體) (see Harper 1998, 428n1; Hsia et al. 1986, 186-87). All eight may be achieved with the help of sexual practices, but could also be worked on with the help of physical exercises, meditations, or diets.

What to Avoid

After outlining what best to do, the *Tianxia* also spells out the seven ways of diminishing *qi*, which should be avoided to prevent loss of vigor and disease. They include obstruction (*bi* 閉), leakage (*xie* 泄) exhaustion (*ke* 竭), incapacity (*wu* 勿), vexation (*fan* 煩), interruption (*jue* 絶), and wastage (*fei* 費) of *qi*. More specifically, they occur in the following situations:

> Experiencing pain while using [the penis]: this is internal "obstruction."
> Sweating while using [the penis]: this is external "leakage."
> Not stopping while using [the penis]: this is "exhaustion."
> Feeling great desire [for sex] and being unable [to be aroused]: this is "incapacity."
> Panting and irregularity in the center while using [the penis]: this is "vexation."
> Feeling no desire [for sex] yet forcing it to perform: this is "interruption."

> Getting sick while using [the penis]: this is "wastage."

These instructions on how and when to have sexual intercourse are simple and easy to follow, but if the man does not know how to use them, he brings imbalance to his *qi*, which in turn causes premature aging, ill health, and early death.

The "Yangsheng Chapters" of the *Suwen* closely echo the instructions of the *Tianxia*. Upon the Yellow Emperor's question on how yin and yang are regulated, Qi Bo replies:

> One must know about the seven ways of diminishing and eight procedures of increasing [*qi*], then one can regulate yin and yang. If one does not know how to apply these, one will suffer from weakness of the joints early on. At age forty, yin [sexual] *qi* is down to half and daily activities [mobility] are impaired. At fifty, the body becomes heavy, ears and eyes are no longer sharp and clear. At sixty, one suffers from *yin* flaccidity [erectile dysfunction], *qi* is greatly weakened, the nine orifices do not function smoothly, the lower body is dry and upper body sunk, and snot and tears flow without control.
>
> In other words, those who know how to apply these techniques will become strong [and healthy]; those who do not know them will grow old [before their time]. Although people may be of the same origin, they may yet have different levels of health. The wise investigate the similarities; the ignorant investigate the differences. Fools are deficient, while wise men are abundant [in *qi*].
>
> Abundance [of *qi*] means that the ears and eyes are sharp and clear, the body is light and strong, old people regain their strength, strong people increase their vigor.
>
> Thus, follow the sages and practice non-action, open yourself to joy, peace, and tranquility. Turn away from desire, pleasure, and the [unruly] mind and focus on guarding nothingness. Then your longevity will be without limit, just as heaven and earth have no end. This is the way the sage cultivates his body. (5.4.2)

The *Suwen* does not list or describe the procedures in detail but has matching correspondences with regard to the aging process, warning against undertaking sexual intercourse without following the Dao of sex. Similar signs of aging for people who fail to practice properly also appear elsewhere (*Suwen* 1.3; *Lingshu* 54.3).

The seven ways of diminishing *qi* also appear with similar terms and characteristics in the *Ishinpō*. It lists them as: 1) exhaustion of *qi* (*jueqi* 絶氣); 2) excess of essence (*yijing* 溢精); 3) dissipation of the pulse

(*duomai* 奪脈); 4) emission of *qi* (*qixie* 氣泄); 5) exposure of the [body's] mechanism and thus causing recession and injury (*jiguan jueshang* 機開厥傷); 6) the hundred obstructions (*baibi* 百閉); and 7) blood exhaustion (*xueke* 血竭) (see Harper 1998, 428n1; Hsia et al. 1986, 188-90).

Like upper-class people in any culture, members of the Chinese elite were victims of all kinds of overindulgence and suffered from maladies due to excess. The *Suwen* warns consistently that intemperate sexual behavior either by itself or in conjunction with alcohol causes numerous health problems in both sexes. This is supported by Chunyu Yi's medical cases, which indicate that excessive sexual activity was a common cause of illness in Han China. However, sex together with alcohol was by far the most common misbehavior to ruin health and cause disease. Both men and women indulged in this vice. As a result, one of the most common problems was sexual dysfunction, suffered by males as erectile dysfunction and by females in the form of fertility problems.

Alcohol and Intoxication

In many ancient cultures, alcohol was a stimulant and aphrodisiac. As a brain depressant, it can affect sexual performance if consumed in larger quantities. A certain amount—which varies from person to person—can reduce anxiety and inhibitions, making it easier for a shy person to make social and sexual contacts (Wagner and Jensen 1989, 81-86). Chinese poets throughout history have eulogized the elated and euphoric states induced by alcohol. Intemperate drinking, on the other hand, is known to have produced reckless behavior.

Both the ancient Chinese and modern biomedicine recognize that copious consumption of alcoholic beverages to the point of drunkenness not only causes a person to lose control of sexual ability but also creates all kinds of health problems. An early reference on the "evils of alcohol" in ancient China is recorded in the *Shujing*: The Duke of Zhou once instructed the king on how to persuade his people to stop drinking by citing King Wen, who forbade alcohol consumption everywhere and at all times, except during state ancestral sacrifices. The Duke added that the last Shang king lost his empire and the support of heaven due to excessive drinking (Jiuguo 133-37; Lu X 1998, 103).

Alcoholic drinks in China are called by the generic word *jiu* 酒, which in the Han referred primarily to "a brew made from fermented grain with added yeast, close to modern beer" (Sterckx 2005, 35). However, it is not really beer, either, since it does not involve hops or malt, but was made from all kinds of grain, including rice, wheat, and millet, with a fermenting additive made from cooked grain and known as *qu* 麴, variously translated as "barm," "leaven," "yeast," and "starter" (Huang 2000, 154). In contrast, wine made from grapes and other fruits, which was known in the West since antiquity arrived in China from Ferghana under the Han but did not play a significant role until recently, its local production essentially a modern phenomenon (Huang 2000, 239-40).

The social role of *jiu* being close to wine in Western societies, however, the translation "wine" is not completely inappropriate (Huang 2000, 150). To complicate matters even further, in texts of the middle ages, *jiu* might also indicate hard liquor, again made from various fermented grains but with a much higher alcohol content.[2] Archaeologists confirm that the Shang people already possessed considerable experience to make alcohol with the cultivation of agricultural products. When they have harvested enough grain, the excess are stored in granaries. A portion of this excess grain was used to brew alcohol and before long a flourishing alcohol industry came into existence. Over time, alcohol production became an essential part of the economy (Qin 1989, 325).

Alcoholic beverages have held a dominant position in the "drink and food" (*yinshi* 飲食) combination through the centuries (Huang 2002, 149). The drinking of alcoholic beverages (*yinjiu* 飲酒) by the Chinese upper classes was a standard social feature, important also for sacrificial rituals. The importance of alcohol in the lives of the ancient Chinese can be gauged by the personnel of a royal household in Zhou China. In a typical royal household, 2,263 out of the 4,133 (i.e., 55%) of officers were involved in the preparation of food and drink. Included among the personnel in charge of food and drink are 110 "regulators of alcohol" (*jiuzheng* 酒正) in charge of 340 wine makers (*jiuren* 酒人), who were usually women (Hinsch 2002, 66; Knechtges 2002, XIII, 45; *Zhouli* 1.19-21). There were also 170 fermenters (*jiangren* 漿人), who produced fermented fruit beverages, like cider, slightly sour and with low alcohol content.

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[2] On the history of alcohol in China, see Huang 2002, 149-68. On its origin, see Li HR 1995; Yü 1977, 69; Anderson 1988, 120-21.

Archaeological finds of bronze vessels for drinking and the ritual offering of alcohol in brewery remains along with remnants of yeast therein confirm the importance of alcohol in the lives of the ancient Chinese (Qin 1989, 324-25). The majority of the bronze vessels found from the Shang and Zhou periods are made either for brewing, storage, or ritual presentation.[3] The *Liji* documents the use of alcohol in religious rituals, while many pre-imperial texts on society and customs describe the consumption of huge amount of alcohol on social occasions. Michael Fishlen summarizes the use of alcohol in the *Shijing*, noting that it served as a means "to formalize bonds of brotherhood, political alliances, and more broadly, community relations. In other contexts it can reflect a sense of well-being and can be a social lubricant, which if taken to excess, lead to moral decay" (1994, 262-64).

An early source detailing alcohol problems is the *Shijing* where a hostess complains about her drunken guests:

> When the guests are drunk, they howl and bawl,
> Upset my basket and dishes, cut capers, lilt, and lurch,
> For when people are drunk, they do not know what blunders they commit. (Legge 1893, 22-23)

Alcohol also plays an important role in Confucianism, and Confucius himself is said to have been fond of his drink. But since the Confucian teachings call for respectability and harmony in the social environment, drunkenness in public or at home was frowned on (Oldstone-Moore 2003, 170-71).

What, then, is the limit of consumption? How do the Chinese describe the state of being drunk? The main word use is *zui* 醉, "intoxicated," which is basically close to what *Webster's* calls "being in a condition caused by alcoholic drink in which control of the faculties is impaired and inhibitions are broken and in the later stages in which one tends toward or reaches insensibility" (1993, 696). But it goes also beyond this. According to James Liu,

> [*Zui*] carries rather different implications and associations. The word does not imply gross sensual enjoyment, nor does it suggest hilarity and convivi-

[3] For vessels relating to alcohol see Qin 1989; Ma CY 1986, 193-201; Rawson 2003, 76-94. For sacrificial drinks, see Armstrong 1998, 37-54.

> ality, as do many European drinking songs. The character consists of a pictogram for a wine-jar and a phonetic *tsu* [*zu*] 卒, which by itself means "finish" or "reach the limit." According to the *Shuowen jiezi*, a philological work of about A.D. 100 and the cornerstone of Chinese etymology, the phonetic here is significant, and the whole composite character explained as meaning 'one reaching the limit of his capacity without offending propriety'. Even if we do not accept this explanation, it still remains true that in poetry *tsuei* [*zui*] does not mean quite the same thing as 'drunk', 'intoxicated', or 'inebriated', but rather means being mentally carried away from one's normal preoccupations. . . . I therefore, prefer not to use any these words but to translate *tsuei* as 'rapt with wine'. . . Being *tsuei* in Chinese poetry is largely a matter of convention." (1962, 58-59)

The *zui* of Chinese poets is a state in which the drinkers have reached their limit but without losing control. I associate it with a state of slight euphoria, like being tipsy, in which the mental state of the person is slightly altered but not quite to the extent of losing his or her senses. However, in the *Suwen*, *zui* is usually described as a state of complete intoxication in which the affected person has no control of his actions. For example, one "enters the bedchamber in an intoxicated state and allows one's lust to exhaust the essence" (1.1). This indicates that the person has lost control of his or her emotions and cannot contain his lust. This loss of control, moreover, turns sexual intercourse into such a dangerous endeavor.

Therefore, the poetic state of drunkenness and the medical intoxication during sex are two different states. This difference is enhanced by the perception of the writers. Poets usually praise their personal state of being "rapt in wine" whereas physicians talk about the drunken state of others. The early stages of being drunk, i.e., tipsy, corresponds to the poetic rapture and as such is not a bad state; intoxication during sex, on the other hand, is highly detrimental. The *Suwen* accordingly speaks of two cases where the person is in a state of extreme intoxication (*dazui* 大醉 52.3; *dayin* 大飲; 3.3.2).

Alcohol is among the 120 drugs in the *Shennong bencao jing* 神農本草經 (The Divine Farmer's Pharmacopoeia) and it is commonly used as a

medium for medicinal tinctures.[4] In Chinese dietetics, alcoholic drinks are generally considered to be 'non-poisonous' and can be used to cure diseases if consumed in the right doses. The first indication that alcohol was used medicinally (*yaojiu* 药酒) appeared in the Western Zhou (1122-770 BCE), when it was part of the diet prescribed by physicians in the royal household to enhance health and cure diseases.

Of the 25 cases treated by Chunyu Yi, two involve medicinal alcohol. In the first, he used it to treat the King of Jibei for wind inversion and fullness in the chest; the king took it for three days and was cured (#9). The second case concerns Concubine Pin of King Cao Chuan who had difficulty giving birth; she too it and had a successful delivery (#14).

There are seven formulas for the preparation of medicinal alcohol in the *Yangsheng fang* and one in the *Zaliao fang* 雜療方 (Miscellaneous Healing Recipes). The *Shiwen* mentions alcohol as part of a cure: King Wei of Qi（r. 357-320 BCE) asks Wen Zhi 文摯, a physician from the state of Song, what he should eat to go to "sleep," a word that could indicate insomnia or a deficiency in sexual energy. Physician Wen suggests pure alcohol and "clumped chives" (*jiu* 韭）, a yang plant taken to improve sexual potency.[5] When the king asks why the alcohol, Wen Zhi says: "Alcohol is a form of essential *qi*; when it enters the middle, it disperses and flows; when it enters the inside, it penetrates and circulates. . . Thus, we use it [as the medium] for the hundred drugs" (#9).

The early Chinese knew about the healing properties of alcohol and used it for making medicinal decocts with all kinds of materia medica. According to the *Taichan shu*, couples seeking to have a child are advised to use a plant called *jiuzong* 九宗 to make a medicinal alcohol and drink

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[4] Li Shizhen lists three categories of alcohol in *Bencao gangmu* 25: normal alcoholic drinks (*jiu* 酒) (25-24), distilled spirits (*shaojiu* 燒酒,) (25-25), and wine from grapes (*putao jiu* 葡萄酒) (25-26). See Luo 2003, IV:2438-55.

[5] The reading "clumped" goes back to Harper (1998, 406n6). The botanical name for *jiu* 韭 is *Allium tuberosum* (Zhang YJ et al. 1994, 1186); it is commonly known as Chinese chives or garlic chives. Its seeds, roots, and leaves can be used medically, but in this case it is not clear which part was used. If we accept "sleep" to indicate "sexual intercourse," we can assume that the seeds or roots were used to strengthen sexual prowess. The seeds also are known for their power to cure "dreaming of ejaculation" (*mengzhong xiejing* 梦中泄精) and dreaming of "sex with demons" (*guijiao* 鬼交).

it together.[6] Similarly the *Yangsheng fang* has many recipes involving medicinal alcohol for treating erectile dysfunction.

The *Suwen* dedicates chapter 14 to the production of medicinal alcoholic potions and various methods of their application. Thus, the Yellow Emperor asks Qi Bo how medicinal concoctions, turbid alcohol, and sweet alcohol are made from the five grains. Qi Bo replies that rice must be used as the raw material with paddy stalks as the faggot, because rice is a "complete" grain and rice stalks are hard.

On another level, *Suwen* physicians also recognize how excessive intake of alcohol can cause health the problems: "When the pulse is small [and yet] blood is plentiful, this [it is due to excessive] drinking [of alcohol] and heat in the middle [burner]" (53.1.3).

The *Cijin lun* 刺禁論 (Discourse on Forbidden Needling) (ch. 52) advises physicians not only which acumoxa points not to use but also in which situation not to treat with acupuncture. It warns: "Do not insert needles [when a person] is in a serious state of drunkenness; it will lead to a person's *qi* being confused" (52.3). However, one of most dangerous situations regarding the use of alcohol in the *Suwen* is having sexual intercourse while intoxicated.

Sex and Alcohol

Sex and alcohol, either separately or together, are among the oldest social and health problems in cultures around the world and they have not gone away (see Schuster 1988). Chunyu Yi's medical records mention two cases of diseases specifically caused by sex and alcohol (#1, 7) and three cases where alcohol is the culprit with a high probability of sex involved. The *Suwen*, too, makes it clear on how the combination of sex and alcohol is ruinous to health. Having sexual intercourse while intoxicated (*zui yi rufang* 醉以入房) appears to be a common causes of disease, so that people who "treat alcohol like broth" will let their lust exhaust their essence and lose vigor at an early age (1.1). By age fifty they have lost half of their vital energy. It also notes that sex while intoxicated will exhaust *qi* and harm the liver, so that in women the menses become ir-

[6] See Harper 1998, 383n1 for discussion on what *jiuzong* could be. He suggests that in this context, it is a plant.

regular or stay out (40.1.2). This shows that the problem is not confined to men.

Having sexual intercourse while intoxicated can further cause dryness of blood as well as lung blockages with cold and hot spells (10.4.2). This syndrome manifests through physical appearance and the quality of the pulse. The patient's complexion is pale and the pulse rapid and floating. The remaining etiology corresponds to excessive sexual activity. "Due to heavy drinking, *qi* will reverse its course. Due to strenuous sexual activity, kidney *qi* will be injured" (3.3.2). Wang Bing explains that when one drinks excessively, the lung *qi* in the "lobes" will rush upward in reversal of its course (*benqi* 奔氣), while using force during sex (*qiangli* 強力) means "to overexert oneself during sexual intercourse." He further adds that the flavor of alcohol is bitter and dry and thus benefits the heart internally. On the other hand, if one is intoxicated and has sexual intercourse, the heart *qi* will rise and move into the lung system, which leads to lung obstruction syndrome.

Also, if the reversal of *qi* flow caused by excessive alcohol intake is not stopped, and if this *qi* eventually finds it way to reside in the male sexual organ, it will cause dreams of sexual intercourse. The *Lingshu* says: "When the receding *qi* . . . resides in the *yin* instrument [sexual organs], one will dream of intimate contact" (43.3).

Another passage notes that it can be quite harmful to expose oneself to a cold wind after drinking or after sweating due to sex (42.1.2). Wang Bing comments that "if heat is strong, the pores [will open]; if struck by wind, one will sweat profusely as if fluid is leaking; hence, it is called "leaking wind'." The scholars of the Shandong and Hebei medical schools state that "'leaking wind" is another name for a disease called alcoholic wind [syndrome]."

The *Suwen* also mentions that "leaking wind" (*loufeng* 漏風) comes with profuse sweating and the inability to exert oneself (42.2). Since, tears, saliva, and sweat, like essence, are body fluids that should not be wasted (Pfister 2003, 12). Heavy perspiration during intercourse may create weakness due to pathogenic wind invasion. Chunyu Yi's medical documentation in the *Shiji* confirms such a problem (#9). As Elisabeth Hsu says, "Sweating seems to designate an aspect of behaviour or, rather, misbehaviour. Paradigmatic reading of the case histories revealed that sweating is often associated with sexual intercourse" (2001b, 71).

Another example mentions that a habitual drunk and glutton who insist on having sex can cause himself some damage. When *qi* reverses, it can manifest itself either as a cold- or heat-receding complex. This is not a disease but a syndrome. Qi Bo explains that having sex with a full stomach and in a state of intoxication will cause *qi* to enter the spleen with no way of dispersal. "When the *qi* of alcohol and that of grain contend with each other, heat becomes abundant inside. When it fills the body, inner heat arises and the urine will be reddish" (45.1). This matches a passage in the *Yinshu* which states that in the fall one should eat and drink as needed and enter the chamber "as often the body finds it beneficial and comfortable (*Wenwu* 1990/10: 82).

The intake of alcoholic beverages being part of the social fabric and viewed with tolerance in Han society meant that the combination of sex and alcohol is a recurring theme in Chinese texts. "Having sexual intercourse while in an intoxicated state" is by far the most common social misbehavior that causes illnesses. The *Suwen* mentions it no less than six times (1.1, 3.3.2, 10.4.2, 40.1.2, 42.1.2, 45.1). Another common motif is 'food, sex, and alcohol'. Already the *Liji* indicates: "The great desires of human beings are drinks, food, and sex" (ch. 19). Similarly the *Shiwen* #5 states that one should "give breath as well as food and drink to the penis." The *Mengzi* has: "The desire for food and sex are part of human nature" (IVA.1). As Paul Goldin notes, "The image of eating portends sexual activity" and that hunger is frequently seen as an image for sexual appetite in the *Shiji* (2002, 8-10).

The *Lingshu* too has the sex, food, and alcohol motif: "Every [disease] is caused by wind, rain, cold, or heat, as well as by yin and yang [sexual intercourse], joy and anger, food and drink, the living environment, great fright and overwhelming fear" (28.1; 44.1).

The Chinese relationship between food and sex continues to be an intriguing subject. In the 20th century, John Weakland states that a basic and powerful Chinese conception is of sexual intercourse as an image of the oral relationship of feeding and eating (1956, 244-47).[7] These motifs

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[7] See Weakland; Muensterberger 1969. These studies are controversial and they are quoted here only to illustrate the fascination with sexuality and orality. See also Margulis and Sagan 1997, 16: "Sentient life is attached to sex and food because by loving and devouring, life maintains and increases itself." For "sexuality and food" see Mote 1977, 248-52; and Spence 1977, 278-79.

reflect not only the society and its maladies but, in the context of the *Suwen*, depict an understanding of the doctrine of moderation in the medical context.

The Mawangdui manuscripts mention the use of alcohol as a medium for making medicinal alcohol to use as remedies for various illnesses. However, there is no mention of the danger of excessive drinking of alcohol or that sex and alcohol as pathogenic factor in the three sexual manuals. This again shows that the Mawangdui stage of medical development has not been systematized to make the link between sex and alcohol as a pathogenic factor. By the time that the *Suwen* was compiled, medical theories were formulated to take into account that excessive drinking as well as having sexual intercourse while intoxicated causes serious health problems.

The drinking habits of the Chinese did not change much through history. According to Van Gulik, drinking bouts and "visiting flower houses" were a favorite pastime among the well-to-do class. He notes that "during the Tang and preceding dynasties, intemperance in drinking was a common foible, viewed with much tolerance. At banquets, both men and women were wont to drink excessively" (1961 178). This behavior was so innate that sex and alcohol continued to be a major problem in the late Ming. Wang Ji 汪機 (1463-1539) was a physician from Anhui province who wrote copious notes documenting medical cases he treated. These writings were compiled by his students and published in the *Shishan yi'an* 石山醫案 (Stone Mountain Medical Cases) in 1531. "The illness is often attributed to one or more causal factors, usually related to the patient's lifestyle. . . The effects of excessive sexual activity, alcohol consumption, or overeating figure highly, particularly if the patient is male" (Grant 2003, 78).

Chapter Eleven

Sex and Health

> *What causes injury to life is sex. That is why, when the adepts have sexual intercourse, they follow certain principles; they practice the Dao of sex.*
>
> —*Tianxia zhidao tan*

The ancient Chinese knew that sexual excess is unhealthy, but they also knew that no sex is harmful. Already in the 4th century BCE, the *Zuozhuan* disapproved of sexual abstinence and stated that abstinence, voluntary or coerced, can produce both psychological and physiological problems. In the *Sunü jing*, the Plain Woman advises the Yellow Emperor not to abstain from sexual intercourse because his "spirit would have no opportunity for expansiveness. Yin and yang would be blocked and cut off from one another," and his jade stalk would die (Wile 1992, 7-8, 85). Sex was and is never the problem as long as the participants follow the basic rules of the bedchamber arts and do not engage in it excessively, which as the *Suwen* indicates, depletes kidney-*qi* and essence and thus may lead to sickness, diminish sexual performance, interfere with reproductive capability, and cause premature aging and early death.

The Gu Syndrome

The oldest and most famous case of disease caused by sexual excess is recorded in the *Zuozhuan* (Zhao 1; see Legge 1985, 5:568-82; Riegel 2000, 1-10). Physician He of Qin diagnosed Duke Ping of Jin (r. 557-532 BCE) as suffering from a disease known as *gu* 蠱, which is caused by "approaching the woman's chamber" (*jin nüshi* 近女室) excessively and

without moderation. He explains that the "delusion" caused by excessive sexual activity destroys the mind. Sexual activity, like other sensory impact on life—the six climates (*liuqi* 六氣), five flavors (*wuwei* 五味), five colors (*wuse* 五色) and five sounds (*wuyin* 五音)—must be well regulated.

Absorbing this diagnosis, the duke asks whether he had best avoid all sexual intercourse with women. In response, the physician notes that intercourse must be regulated lest it produce diseases that cause internal heat and *gu*.[1] He then defines *gu* etymologically as consisting of the characters for "worm" or "insect" (*chong* 蟲) and "bowl" (*ming* 皿). He likens it to grains that are eaten by worms or insects and then disappear—a metaphor for utter destruction. He further emphasizes that, according to the *Yijing*, *gu* as a disease is caused by a woman deluding a man through sexual indulgence and that it is similar to the "wind devastating [the trees] on the mountain." The latter appears in Hexagram 18 and is interpreted as "work on what has been spoilt," i.e., decay (Wilhelm 1950, 75-78).

Derk Bodde translates the word *gu* as "poison" and refers to three definitions from the *Shuowen jiezi*: 1) worms in the stomach, 2) nocturnal emissions, and 3) the ghosts of people who have suffered public execution (1975, 100-01). Paul Unschuld provides a detailed discussion of *gu*, starting with the Shang dynasty where the character first appears on oracle bones. He mentions four contexts. First, *gu* is described as a "worm spirit" in demonic medicine: it could wreck the body of its human host. Second, *gu* is a real poison that can be manufactured for malicious purposes. Third, it is associated with an illness resulting from "[sexual] excesses" as described in the *Zuozhuan*. Fourth, in a more Confucian context, it is a disease caused by the "social atmosphere of envy" and intentionally prepared to "obtain the wealth of others." This last definition is close to black magic used to cause illnesses in another person for the purpose of revenge or envy (Unschuld 1985, 46-50). Wolfram Eberhard demonstrates that *gu* originated in the south and gives information on how the poison and its antidote are prepared and used (1968, 149-52).

The *Wushi'er bingfang* mentions eight types of *gu*—diseases connected with insects that have nothing to do with sex (Harper 1998, 74-75).

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[1] The flaccidity syndrome is often associated with heat in the five organs, which in turn causes laxity in the corresponding tissues (44.1). Erectile dysfunction is also a flaccidity syndrome.

Gu is also not unlike *yu* 蜮, a disease from Nanyue (south China or Vietnam), contracted when women entice men to practice debauchery in small streams. The "Treatise on the Five Phases" in the *Hanshu* cites Liu Xiang (ca. 77-6 BCE) as saying: "The females are dominant and produce disorderly *qi* [in the men] and that is why the sage [Confucius] named it *yu*." The two syndromes are similar in that they are both propagated by women and cause delusion and deception.

The *Suwen* describes the symptoms associated with *gu*: "[When the disease is] not treated, the spleen transmits it to the kidneys, which leads to protruding abdominal lumps [*shanjia* 疝瘕]. The lower abdomen feels tense, hot, and painful. One emits a white [substance]. Another name is *gu*. At this stage, it can [be treated] with massage or drugs" (19.2.3).

Wang Bing notes that the phrase "emits a white substance" (*chubai* 出白) means that "urine is discharged with a white fluid." At the same time, "the flesh feels as if it is food for worms or insects. It wastes away internally day by day. For this reason, it is also called *gu*." Wu Kun interprets *chubai* as "excessive turbidity" (*yinzhuo* 淫濁), while Ma Shi adds that "what is emitted in white color is urine discharged with a white fluid."

As a disease, *gu* here has moved from the moralistic and metaphysical to a more evidential level: its cause is not just psychological but physical through sexual excess. Though the latter is not mentioned directly as the cause of the involuntary discharge, there is a similar condition which specifically has excessive intercourse as a cause. The text says:

> Entering the bedchamber excessively will cause the "ancestral tendon" to slacken and relax. This leads to tendon flaccidity and eventually to an overflow of a white [substance]. Thus, according to the *Xiajing*, tendon flaccidity comes from allowing [the penis] inside [the woman]. (44.2)

Wang Bing's comment to this passage defines the "white substance" more closely: "It resembles the consistency of semen. In men, it flows down like urine; in women, it flows from the vagina like satin." Zhang Zhicong states that it "is caused by abundant 'fire of lust' and [after excessive sexual intercourse] sperm is emitted involuntarily." Ma Shi adds that "in men, it is the involuntary discharge of semen; in women it is

[discharged] as "white belt.""[2] These comments infer that the outflow is a symptom caused by excessive sex, and is associated with *gu* in both men and women. The *Lingshu* says that while "men have *gu*, women act like Dan [Ji]: their bodies and spines feel as if they were splitting."

Dan Ji was a woman of ill repute described in the *Lienü zhuan* section on "Pernicious and Depraved Women" (ch. 7). She was the wife of King Zhou (d. ca. 1122 BCE), the last ruler of the Shang, famous for his dissolute lifestyle, love of alcohol, and engagement in lewd pleasures. He is said to have "stored up grain until it was like a hill, let wine flow until it filled a pond, and hung up meat like the forest." He was so besotted with Dan Ji that he made men and women pursue each other naked for long nights of feasting in order to please her. He even tore out the heart of one of his ministers who chastised him for "following a woman's counsel," so that Dan Ji could see if the heart of a sage had seven orifices. The records depict Dan Ji not only as the evil woman who caused *gu* in King Zhou, but also as suffering from nymphomaniac desires, another form of *gu*. Because of her, the king was so deluded that he lost his senses and was unable "to practice virtue." After he was defeated in battle, he killed himself which ended the Shang dynasty. Dan Ji was beheaded (O'Hara 1978, 187-89).

The *Lingshu* phrase, "men have *gu*, women act like Dan [Ji]" infers that when a man is deluded by sex, he suffers from *gu*, i.e., "he completely loses his senses and acts as if he had been devastated by wind" [gone mad], while when a woman is deluded by sex, she behaves like Dan Ji. The *Taisu* confirms this:

> When a man is deluded by a woman [to sexual excesses], he suffers from *gu* and his body becomes wild and wasted. He loses his reasoning, cannot distinguish right from wrong, and is in a state like intoxication. When a woman is deluded [to sexual excesses] by a man, she suffers from behavior like Dan Ji. Her body is weakened, jaundiced, emaciated, and she too is in a state like intoxication. (ch. 30)

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[2] *Baidai* is the description of the discharge i.e. whitish in color and strand-or belt-like. In TCM, *baidai* is known as leucorrhea, which must be distinguished according to color, consistency and smell. A white discharge indicates a "cold" pattern. This could be caused by spleen- or kidney-yang deficiency, or exterior cold-damp, or sometimes from stagnation of liver-*qi* (Maciocia 1989, 161).

The *Lingshu* notes more generally that too much sex is bad for health, especially of the kidneys (4.1.1; 66.4). Not only excessive physical sexual activities can cause disease, but also excessive sex-related emotions such as lust. For example: "Cravings and lust that are unbridled as well as endless worry and anxiety diminish and ruin essential *qi*" (14.2). Guo Aichun states that "cravings and lust means emotions and lust" . . . and "diminish and ruin" indicates a state where "essential *qi* is weakened." Unbridled emotions such as excessive sexual cravings and lust are bad for health because they exhaust essence—usually associated with excessive desire or activity—and thus lead to decline and ailments. Being obsessed with sex is like any other excessive emotion: it injures the body. On the other hand, illnesses such as liver-wind (*ganfeng* 肝風) can affect a person's attitude toward sex: "The manifestation of liver-wind comes with profuse sweating, aversion to wind, tendency toward sadness, a slightly green complexion, a dry throat, a tendency toward anger, and now and then the detestation of women" (42.2).

The emotional state of hating women (misogyny) thus is a psychological symptom in the etiology of liver-wind. Here the *Suwen* has moved from the physical into the psychological, giving pathological factors of the mind just as much prominence as those of the body. This again indicates just how much medical thinking advanced from the mundane into the abstract in the course of the Han dynasty.

Wang Bing, too, was aware of sexual excess as a factor contributing to the deterioration of health, the development of ailments, and premature death. He felt compelled to emphasize those passages related to sexual excess and the loss of essence, focusing especially on the first two chapters, which deal mostly with longevity doctrines. This thinking also continued into the Song dynasty, when it played a role in forensic medicine. "Death due to sexual excess" is one of the causes of death in the *Xiyuan jilu* 洗冤集録 (Collected Writings on the Washing Away of Wrongs) by Song Ci 宋慈. It states:

> When men die as a result of sexual excess, it is because their vital energies have been exhausted. When men die while having sexual relations with women, the facts of the case must be investigated, if it is really a case of death from this cause, the erection will not have subsided. If not，then it would have subsided. (McKnight 1981, 151; see also Eberhard 1967, 61-65)

As early as the *Zuozhuan* the Chinese identified excessive sexual appetite as the cause of illness. Both the *Suwen* and *Lingshu* describe the pathological processes clearly. Indulging in intemperate sexual activity may be an understandable human foible with natural and psychological roots, but having sex excessively and especially when intoxicated seems to have been a common form of misbehavior in the Han.

Sexual Dysfunction

Sexual dysfunction as a social and pathological affliction must be as old as humanity itself. It affects men more than women both physically and psychologically. Women's problems in sexual activity overall tend to be less visible than men's, however, for women the consequences are harsher, since the inability to conceive is a serious issue. Both the Mawangdui manuscripts and the *Suwen* discuss men's sexual dysfunction more often and in more detail, partly because of the physical nature of their sexual endowment, but also because men in early China were supposed to be movers and shakers, empowered to dominate and lead in public life, as well as sexually superior at home. Men ideally ran the state in time of peace, went to war to attack the enemy or protect their home, and in the family ruled over their womenfolk.

Not being able to get an erection might be a problem, but the inability to produce progeny was a catastrophe. A man's social standing would be jeopardized and his power at home seriously compromised. Therefore, sexual prowess, authority, and power were closely interconnected. Any kind of sexual dysfunction was considered not only a personal loss but a failure in society (Farquhar 2002, 48). What good is a man serving as a high official in society with power over thousands of households if he has no control even over his own member?

Even today, sexual dysfunction in healthy persons is confined mostly to men. The four most common male sexual disorders in Western medical literature are: 1) erectile dysfunction, 2) premature ejaculation, 3) spermatorrhea, and 4) nocturnal emission. Erectile dysfunction, com-

monly known as impotence,[3] is by far the most common sexual disorder that affects most men at some time in their lives. Premature ejaculation is said to have occurred if the man ejaculates before he wants to, before his partner wants him to, or if the ejaculation occurs before the penis penetrates the vagina.[4] Spermatorrhea is the involuntary emission of seminal liquid in the absence of sexual excitement or intercourse; it can occur at any time of the day. Nocturnal emission takes place at night and is usually accompanied by sexually stimulating dreams. There is no direct mention of premature ejaculation or nocturnal emission in the *Suwen*. Spermatorrhea is mentioned once as a disease caused by excessive sexual intercourse (44.2), and there are two direct references to erectile dysfunction (*yinwei* 陰痿) (5.4.2; 70.3).

The *Yangsheng fang* and *Zaliao fang* suggest that sexual dysfunction was a common problem in the sexual life of the Qin and Han elite. Both include numerous recipes for treating sexual dysfunction as well as for enhancing sexual performance. The *Yangsheng fang* contains cures for erectile dysfunction, increasing the size of the penis (*jia* 加), boosting male sexual prowess by "regulating yang" (*zhi*[*yang*] 治[陽]) or "washing the male organ" (*xinan* 洗男) with a concoction to stimulate it, facilitating sexual intercourse (*shi jinnei* 使近内), and generally improving relations. There are prescriptions for women on how to tighten the vagina and increase pleasure (Li and McMahon 1992, 151-52; Harper 1998, 328-62).

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[3] The word "impotence" comes from the Latin *impotentia*, meaning "lack of power." It was first used to describe loss of sexual power in 1655 but apparently is unfashionable today, though it remains an apt description of the condition.

[4] The bio-medical definition of erectile dysfunction (ED) is the inability to achieve or maintain an erection for the satisfactory completion of sexual intercourse, i.e., an adequate erection of sufficient hardness, maintained for a sufficient length of time of intercourse that ends in ejaculation and provides sexual satisfaction for both partners. In most cases, ED is caused by psychological factors, which may be temporary (e.g., caused by fatigue or stress) or longstanding (e.g., due to feelings of anxiety and guilt). Inability to perform sexually may also be accompanied by symptoms of severe depression. About 10 percent of erectile dysfunction is caused by physical disorders (e.g., diabetes mellitus or a disorders of endocrine system) or by a neurological disorder (e.g., the damage to the spinal cord or alcohol-related disorders). The problem is more common as men get older, possibly because of altered circulation or, occasionally, lower levels of testosterone. See Smith 1990, 574; Brewer 1999, 137-152; McMahon 1993, 50-85.

The Mawangdui manuscripts are concerned mostly with various failures of sexual "mechanics," perceived as the basis for satisfactory sex, whereas the *Suwen* depicts sexual malfunction as part of the etiology of disease and therefore of medical issues. For example, it describes the disease called "kidney-wind," which is marked by profuse sweating, aversion to wind, a puffy face, spinal aches that prevent one from standing upright, a soot-coloured complexion, and the inability of the "hidden twists" (male or female genitalia) to function smoothly (42.2). In this passage, inability to perform sexually or sexual dysfunction becomes part of the etiology of "kidney-wind" disease.

However, terminologies for the description of sexual dysfunction can also be gender specific. The *Yangsheng fang* uses *buqi* 不起 (not rising) to denote the failure to have an erection. There are three recipes for the condition "not rising due to old age" and one recipe for simple "not rising." The *Tianxia* uses *wu* 勿 (incapacity): "When [the penis] has great desire for [sex] and is unable [to perform], it is called incapacity."

The most common terms in the *Suwen* include "*yin* flaccidity" (*yinwei*), "not rising" (*buqi*), and "unusable" (*buyong*). As regards the first, the *Hanshu* (ch. 53) mentions that Prince Tuan suffered from *yin* flaccidity every time he approached a woman. *Wei* by itself, as Yang Shangshan describes it in the *Taisu*, is a condition of "powerlessness," "lack of capability," "given to weakness," or "being rendered useless." According to Paul Unschuld, *wei* may originally have only denoted the inability to walk. However, it was subsequently subsumed under the five phases and yin-yang doctrines, so that it's meaning of "incapacity" came to extend to a wider range, including a general state of exhaustion leading to the loss of ability affecting all the organs and their correlatives. Hence, Unschuld translates *wei* as "limpness" and says that it "is not a label for a disease, nor is it a standard symptom. Limpness means a lack of strength or firmness; it means drooping or exhaustion. . . or may simply be a sign of being tired or of getting old" (2003, 212-17). The syndrome is sometimes also known as *yangwei* 陽痿, general weakness of yang or positive life energy (Luo 1995), or simply penis limpness.

The *Suwen* devotes a whole chapter to the *wei* syndrome. It shows that flaccidity is a syndrome that affects not only the penis but all other parts of the body. It says:

Heat in the lung . . . . leads to flaccidity of the legs.
Heat in the heart . . . . leads to flaccidity of the vessels.
Heat in the liver . . . . leads to flaccidity of the tendons.
Heat in the spleen . . . . leads to flaccidity of the flesh.
Heat in the kidney . . . . leads to flaccidity of the bones.

If vessels, tendons, flesh, and bones are flaccid, limp, tired, exhausted, or drooping, it follows that the most affected physical function of the body will be mobility, and walking is the most basic of all movements. On the other hand, since the greater part of the penis is made up of skin, tissues, blood vessels, and nerves, it is not surprising that when flaccidity occurs there, it sets the stage for erectile dysfunction.

The *Suwen* states that if a man understands the "seven ways of diminishing and eight procedures of increasing [*qi*]," he can regulate his sexual behavior and therefore prevent injuries that lead to premature aging and early death. Those who know the bedchamber arts will live out their allotted lifespan but for those ignorant of the Dao of sex, there will be early weakening of joints and other parts of the body (5.4.2). It further links sexual flaccidity to the winter season, when the weather is damp and overcast and there is lots of dust. At this point *qi* cannot flow smoothly in the chest and there may be sexual dysfunction (70.3). The *Lingshu* makes the same connection: "[When the kidney pulse] is big, it indicates *yin* flaccidity" (4.2.4), but it also allows for the possibility that this occurs due to heat rather than cold or dampness (13.1.12) or because "a man has an injury to his sexual organ" (65.2.1).

Another dimension of sexual dysfunction is the injury inflicted to the sexual organ of men to turn them into eunuchs. Eunuchs have a long history in China. Oracle bones from the reign of King Wuding (r. 1720-1691 BCE) show them as part of the Shang court. However, the earliest written reference appears in the *Zuozhuan* of the year 535. The *Zhouli* 周禮 (Rites of Zhou) calls them *siren* 寺人: men who take care of the emperor's women and are in charge of punishment. Their presence was so prominent during the Eastern Zhou that it offended Confucius, who left the state of Wei after only a month's stay. The *Shijing* says:

Not heaven but women and eunuchs bring misfortune to mankind.
Wives and those without balls bleat with similar voices.

By the Eastern Han, under Emperor Huandi (r. 146-67 CE), eunuchs were acknowledged as an "evil influence that could bring ruin to an empire" (Tsai 1996, 11-12). Their influence continued throughout Chinese history and in fact ruined the empire on many occasions. However, the most famous of all eunuchs in the Han is the court historian Sima Qian, who was castrated for political reasons under Emperor Wu (r. 140-187). He lived for another ten years to finish the historical record *Shiji* (Goldin 2002, 75-77).

Henry Tsai also provides a description of the physical and physiological changes that took place after Wei, the infamous eunuch in the Ming, was castrated at the age of twenty-three:

> There is an apparent loss of height and beard; his nose has become broader and his earlobes thicker. Decreasing hormone level caused loss of elasticity: his skin wrinkled, his joints stiffened and his muscle strength gradually weakened. His nail had a dull yellow appearance, the half-moon disappeared and the nails developed ridges. (1996, 4-5)

Though Wei lived in Ming China, this description certainly applies to eunuchs in ancient times—after all, the physical and physiological characteristics of human beings have not changed much in the last five thousand years. Therefore, any damage to the male sexual organ produces changes in the physical appearance of the man.

Another explanation for erectile dysfunction is vessel theory. Among the vessels, the Jueyin [liver] Vessel of the foot joins at the genitals and links up with the various tendons. Should there be a tendon disorder, the inner thigh will hurt and spasm, and sexual dysfunction may result. Different specific causes—internal or external, cold or heat—lead to various forms of flaccidity, but the connection to the vessels is made clear. Yet another cause is natural aging, which means that the amount of essence is reduced over time and a diminishing of sexual prowess occurs starting around at age forty, culminating in the inability to have children around the age of sixty-four.

Given the importance of eugenics, it is obvious why the subject of sexual dysfunction preoccupied the early Chinese. Sexual dysfunction was not just a medical problem, but had widespread social implications. As Vivienne Lo emphasizes: "Promotion of reproductive health and prevention of sexual weakening were always a central focus of Chinese self-cultivation" (2005, 246). As such, considerable efforts were channeled

into making sure that sexual and reproductive physiology functions optimally including the use of aphrodisiacs.

Aphrodisiacs and Philters

"Uses of aphrodisiac recipes to arouse desire, increased strength, and stimulate the genitals are evidently quite acceptable in sexual cultivation" (Harper 1998, 140). For example, the *Yangsheng fang* and *Zaliao fang* devote considerable space to aphrodisiac and philter recipes for both men and women. They include prescriptions for erectile dysfunction both in younger man and due to old age. There are also philter recipes for "increasing [penis] size," "tightening the vagina," and generally "increasing pleasure." Harper argues that such recipes are "*prima facie* evidence that the idea of sexual cultivation did not define sexual experience . . . nor did it diminish eroticism" (2005, 93).

The *Suwen* does not deal with aphrodisiacs or philters. However, it contains a prescription that alludes to restoring male potency in a recipe for dryness of blood caused by "having lost a large amount of blood when young and engaging in sexual activity while in an intoxicated state." It says:

> Use four [portions] of black cuttlefish bones and one [portion] of madder root. Combine them with sparrow eggs to form pills the size of small beans. Take five pills before meals by drinking abalone broth with them. This will smooth the intestine and the middle, and aid the injured liver. (40.1.2; see also *Taisu* 30)

The *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目(Compendium of Materia Medica) states that black cuttlefish bones (Os Sepiellaeseu sepiae), madder root (Radix Rubia cordifolia), and abalone (Haliotis) are effective for removing blood blockages, while sparrow eggs (Passer montanus saturatus stejneger) are used to restore male sexual function. Sparrow eggs are listed as: sour in flavor, warm in nature, and non-poisonous. They are best collected in the fifth month and should be taken for descending *qi*, sexual flaccidity, and erectile dysfunction. It will strengthen these with heat and increase essence, so that one can have chldren.

The *Shiwen* (#2) encourages men to eat spring dickybird's (including sparrow) eggs to replenish essence if they intend to conduct sexual inter-

course frequently. The *Yangsheng fang* and the *Wushi'er bingfang* also have recipes using these eggs to improve sexual function. Absence of the mention of aphrodisiac and philter recipes in the *Suwen* indicates that the Mawangdui medical corpus is still in the period of "practicing recipes" while the *Suwen* physicians sees sexual dysfunction as part of the medical equation and are treated according to medical theories. There is no mention of philters of any kind.

Sexual dysfunction is seen as a disease with grave consequences for both men and women. The *Suwen* describes many causes and symptoms of sexual problems and disease, but it does not offer many practical methods like the *Yangsheng fang*. Failure to get an erection is gender-specific, but women too suffer from various forms of sexual dysfunction, which may also lead to premature aging and various diseases. The *Suwen's* most important message on sex and health, therefore, is to rely on medicine for acute conditions and study the bedchamber arts for long-term health while at all times avoiding the dangerous combination of sex and alcohol and refraining from excessive sexual activity.

Chapter Twelve

Sex in the Suwen

The love of food and everything sensual is human nature.
—Mengzi

By studying sex and sexuality in the *Huangdi neijing suwen*, I have shown that longevity techniques, and especially the bedchamber arts, influenced the development of medical theories. I did so by looking at how longevity doctrines in the "Yangsheng Chapters" acted as a bridge for the transition from pure longevity materials to systematized medical theories. The *Suwen* medical theories represent a stage in the development of Chinese medicine when theories are well-defined and sex and sexuality play a clear part in pathology, etiology, and diagnostics.

The Mawangdui corpus and the various categories of pre-Han and Han literature reveal sexual culture in different historical, intellectual, and social contexts. The three Mawangdui manuals indicate that sex and sexuality was an integral part of health and longevity. Their descriptions of the bedchamber arts together with the latest archaeological findings of erotic objects from the Han impart important information on early Chinese sexual culture. All dating from the Han dynasty, they provide the synchronic dimension of this study. Materials pertaining to sex and sexuality in other more technical medical texts, such as the *Nanjing*, *Taisu*, and *Lingshu*—as well as the numerous later commentaries of the *Suwen*—provide the sources for diachronic comparison. The texts reveal that sexual intercourse is problematic if performed without knowledge of the Dao of sex, discussed especially also within medical theories.

The Mawangdui manuscripts show that in the early Han medical theories were still at the stage of forming pathological and physiological theories and medical practices still meant the "practice of recipes."

Acupuncture played no role, and only eleven vessels were known. The vessels were divided into yin and yang, but few theories related to the flow of *qi*. The *Suwen*, on the other hand, advocates well-defined physiological pathways of *qi*, etiology through the description of pathological mechanisms, diagnosis by pulse examination and other methods of investigation, as well as treatment by acupuncture. This shows that it represents a more advanced stage in the development of medical theories.

This shift arose, no doubt, out of the multifaceted development of Han society. The Mawangdui manuals highlight the importance of sexual cultivation as an important branch of longevity techniques. They employ sex to enhance health, prevent sickness, and achieve longevity. *Suwen* physicians, on the other hand, explain health care and disease based on natural phenomena (climatic conditions), psychological manifestations (extreme emotional changes), lifestyle choices (human behavior, including sexual intercourse), and living conditions (environment). They advocate acupuncture based on medical theories as the technique of choice for dealing with disease.

The *Suwen* describes health problems caused by sexual intercourse by referring to well-formulated diagnostic, prognostic, and treatment methods. It thereby does away with traditional concepts of health care based on good and bad luck and the belief that human ailments were caused by demons, sprites, spirits, ancestors, and other supernatural agents. The *Suwen* promotes principles that encourage people to take responsibility for their own health by looking at their behavior in relation to nature and to seek medical explanations and solutions.

Unlike the Mawangdui manuals, the *Suwen* does not present sexual techniques. Yet it mentions the "seven ways of diminishing and eight procedures of increasing [*qi*]" without going into any detail, confirming the assumption that anyone reading the *Suwen* with regard to health and sickness would know these techniques and thus have some background knowledge of the bedchamber arts. Sex is set in the human realm of familiar day-to-day living, i.e., it occupies a role in health, sickness, and death.

The *Suwen* physicians link the sexual act with pathological, diagnostic, and therapeutic roles in health and reproductive physiology. They portray sex in a wide context within the medical environment of their time by integrating it into various medical theories as presented in the

different chapters. The sexual act here is both a cause as well as a symptom of disease.

Finding a balance in everything is the overriding tenet that permeates the *Suwen*. Regulation and moderation, e.g., "not too much and not too little," is the key. Any excess or deficiency will manifest itself as disease and sexual excesses is a major cause. Sexual diseases and cures, too, are based on an objectified view of the world with no trace of personal search for higher-level truth or immortality; there are no moral or religious connotations. Medicine has become empirical and is now based on objective observation and the theory of cause and effect

The new medical thinking of the time enabled the *Suwen* physicians to medicalize and physiologize sex. They present reproductive physiology without moralistic, religious, spiritistic, or magical overtones, and do not ascribe the creation of offspring to creation myth or supernatural forces. Instead, they describe these processes in great detail as empirical concepts, seeing human beings as the product of the sexual union between man and woman.

The body is anatomized in the *Suwen*. Sexual anatomy is categorized and described in a plainly straightforward manner and they play important roles in the formation of the medical system. Male and female sexual anatomies are clearly distinguished and these sexual entities are incorporated as part of the medical equations, as symptom, disease or therapy, and consequently become components of medical theories.

This produces a medicalized atmosphere in which physiological processes, reproductive health, fertility and the aging process in men and women are discussed rationally in relation to medical theories. There is no search for immortality like the immortality cult. The main objective is to live out the lifespan allotted by heaven or nature and not to die prematurely. This indicates a sober and objective perception of the organic nature of life itself. The compilation of the *Suwen* signifies a new direction in which innovative ideas on dealing with health and disease were not only presented as an alternative to the traditional thinking but were backed by well-defined theories.

The Mawangdui manuscripts, in terms of sexual vocabulary, are still in the longevity phase before systematized medicine, while the *Suwen* has moved toward a new, clinical, and codified vocabulary that tries to define sexual intercourse in a medical frame. Many sexual expressions found in the manuscripts did not survive into the *Suwen*. Sexual phrases,

such as "entering the bedchamber," "letting in," and "using [the penis]," on the other hand, became standard expressions for sexual intercourse. In addition, the *Suwen* itself has several terms and abstract concepts—notably the "heavenly stock" and the "ancestral tendon"—which did not survive and are only found there.

Although the examination of sex in early China did not lead to the development of the field known as "sexology" today, it still plays an important role by setting the stage for the development of other medical fields of study, such as gynecology or obstetrics, in which women's disorders relating to reproduction were treated as a separate field that required special training.

The identification, documentation, and analysis of sex reveal some interesting motifs. The most common is sex and the use of alcoholic drinks, i.e., having sex while in an intoxicated state. Other motifs used are "drink, food, and sex" or just "food and sex." These motifs reflect not only ancient society and its maladies but in the context of the *Suwen* depict an understanding of the doctrine of moderation in the medical context. The *Suwen* thus represents a development from a magico-spiritistic environment into one that is more theoretical and empirical. It embraces the expression of a systematic, well-developed Chinese medical thinking, which integrates theoretical knowledge with clinical observation and practice. Diseases can now be diagnosed and treated with appropriate techniques, and the healing process is observed and recorded.

The *Suwen* "Yangsheng Chapters" clearly encapsulate the shift from longevity doctrines and budding medical theories into well-defined and systematized theories. By the time Han scholar-physicians finished compiling the *Suwen*, medical theories had become defined and well organized. The medical theories of the text in due course became the model for all other medical books. The *Suwen's* presentation of sex within the confines of these medical theories, therefore, provided the basis for all future understanding of human sex and sexuality in Chinese culture.

Translations

Suwen 1.3

(From "On Heavenly Integrity in High Antiquity" 上古天真論)

帝曰: 人年老而無子者, 材力盡邪, 將天數然也. 岐伯曰: 女子七歲, 腎氣盛, 齒更髮長. 二七而天癸至, 任脈通, 太衝脈盛, 月事以時下, 故有子. 三七腎氣平均, 故真牙生而長極. 四七筋骨堅, 髮長極, 身體盛壯. 五七陽明脈衰, 面始焦, 髮始墮. 六七三陽脈衰於上, 面皆焦, 髮始白. 七七任脈虛, 太衝脈衰少, 天癸竭, 地道不通, 故形壞而無子也.

丈夫八歲, 腎氣實. 髮長齒更. 二八腎氣盛, 天癸至, 精氣溢寫, 陰陽和, 故能有子. 三八腎氣平均, 筋骨勁強, 故真牙生而長極. 四八筋骨隆盛, 肌肉滿壯. 五八腎氣衰, 髮墮齒槁. 六八陽氣衰竭於上, 面焦, 髮鬢頒白. 七八肝氣衰, 筋不能動. 八八天癸竭, 精少, 腎藏衰, 形體皆極, 則齒髮去, 腎者主水, 受五藏六府之精而藏之,故五藏盛乃能寫. 今五藏皆衰, 筋骨解墮, 天癸盡矣, 故髮鬢白. 身體重, 行步不正, 而無子耳.

The Emperor said, "When people age in years, they cannot have children. Is it due to the exhaustion of their material strength [reproductive potential] or is it according to the heavenly numbers [age]?"

Qi Bo said, "For female, at seven years of age, her kidney-*qi* is abundant; she changes to her permanent teeth; and her hair grows long.

At 2 times 7 [14] years, her "heavenly stock" [*tiangui*] arrives, her Conception Vessel becomes penetrable, and her Penetrating Vessel is abundant. Her menstruation begins and she is able to bear children.

At 3 times 7 [21] years, her kidney-*qi* is balanced and even. Her wisdom teeth appear and she grows to her limit.[1]

[1] Her physical growth is complete. Similarly, in bio-medicine, at the age of seventeen-eighteen physical growth is complete. Her body becomes fuller and rounder, the growth of her skeleton ceases, her genitals are mature, her menstruation stays regular, and her bones grow harder and change in proportion.

At 4 times 7 [28] years, her tendons and bones become firm, her hair grows to the fullest, and her body is full and strong.[2]

At 5 times 7 [35] years, her Yangming Vessels weaken;[3] her face begins to become parched [wrinkle]; and her hair begins to fall out.[4]

At 6 times 7 [42] years, her three yang vessels[5] weaken from the above; her face is entirely wrinkled; and her hair begins to grey.

At 7 times 7 [49] years,[6] her Conception Vessel is depleted and her Penetrating Vessel weakens and lessens; her "heavenly stock" is exhausted and the "earth channel" [of her uterus] becomes impassable [leading to the absence of menstruation]. Hence, her body is flawed and she cannot have children.[7]

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[2] She continues to develop sexually, and her menstruation is regular. If she stays healthy, she remains fertile until around age thirty-five. After thirty-five, a woman's chances of conceiving naturally decline by as much as fifty percent.

[3] Wang Bing comments: "The Yangming vessels [foot and hand] rule the face. Hence, when they weaken, the hair will fall out and the face is parched." He cites the *Lingshu* which describes the pathways of the foot Yangming (stomach Vessel) (10.2.3) and hand Yangming (Large Intestine Vessel) (10.2.2).

[4]. In most women today, it is also around this time that the first wrinkles appear and their hair becomes less lustrous. This process is not different from the path that women in early China have taken.

[5] The three yang vessels mentioned here refer to the Taiyang (Major Yang or Small Intestine), Shaoyang (Minor Yang or *San Jiao*), and Yangming (Yang Brilliance or Large Intestine). These three vessels ascend laterally to the face and when *qi* and blood are deficient in these vessels, it will cause their appearance to age and hair to turn grey.

[6] In industrial countries, menopause (the date of a woman's last menstrual period) usually occurs between the ages of forty-eight to fifty-five with the median at fifty. A woman is said to be in her menopause if menstruation has ceased for more than six to twelve months. Climacterium or peri-menopause is the phase in a women's life, during which she makes the transition from a reproductive to a non-reproductive stage. This transition is a period of declining ovarian function which usually spans two to five years and it is also accompanied by physical and psychological changes, which occurred as a result of reduced production of estrogen by the ovaries. The follicles in the ovaries stop producing ova (eggs) and less estrogen is produced. This leads, eventually, to the absence of menstruation.

[7] Wang Bing comments that [the flow of] menstrual water is severed and stopped, causing the 'earth channel' to become impenetrable. When the Penetrating and Conception Vessels weaken and diminish, it is said that her body is

For a male, at eight years of age, his kidney-*qi* is replete; his hair grows long; and he changes to his permanent teeth.[8]

At 2 times 8 [16] years, his kidney-*qi* is abundant; his "heavenly stock" arrives;[9] his essential-*qi* overflows and he discharges [his semen];[10] [when] yin and yang harmonize [have sexual intercourse]; hence he can have children.

At 3 times 8 [24] years, his kidney-*qi* is balanced and even; his tendons and bones are strong and firm; hence, his wisdom teeth appear and he grow to its limit.

At 4 times 8 [32] years, his tendons and bones are fully developed and his muscles and flesh are full and firm.[11]

At 5 times 8 [40] years, his kidney-*qi* weakens; his hair falls out and his teeth dry out.[12]

At 6 times 8 [48] years, his *yang-qi* weakens and is exhausted in the above [head]; his face 'withers' [wrinkles]; and the hair on his head and temple turns grey.

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flawed and she can no longer have children. This can also be transposed to describe the reproductive life of a woman today.

[8] Up to this age (females seven and males eight), there is no difference in the development between a boy and a girl.

[9] As a general rule, boys mature later and more slowly than girls both sexually and physically.

[10] In this context, one can assume the production of semen is subsumed under essential-*qi* and when it overflows, it will have to be discharged. Wang Bing comments that "man and woman have properties of both yin and yang. Since their "heavenly stock" are different, then the constituents of their essence and blood are also different. When yin is calm, the "sea" will be full and blood will leave. When yang moves correspondingly united, it will emit *jing* (semen). When both (yin and yang) communicate and combine [together their *jing*], they can have children. The Great Appendix of the *Yijing* says: when a man and women unite their essence, the myriad things transform and are brought forth. See Harper 1998, 391 and n3 (in the *Shiwen*), who translates *xie* 寫 as 'emission' (ejaculation) and in *He yin-yang* as 'spilling' (ejaculation) (ibid. 417). To paraphrase *jingqi yixie* 精氣溢寫: When essential-*qi* overflows, he discharges his semen.

[11] Like the woman, a man reaches his physical and sexual prowess in his twenties and early thirties.

[12] This is the proverbial middle-age, in which a man starts to experience sexual and physical decline.

At 7 times 8 [56] years, his liver-*qi* weakens; his tendons cannot move.[13] The kidney rules water; it receives the essence of the five organs and six viscera for storage. Hence, when the five organs are filled abundantly [with essence] then it can be emitted [for distribution].

Now, if the five organs are all weakened, the tendons and bones become 'sluggish' and his "heavenly stock" will reach its limit [exhausted]. Hence, the hair [on his head] and at his temple turns grey; his body grows heavy; his walking posture is no longer erect; and he is unable to have children.

At 8 times 8 [64] years, his "heavenly stock" is exhausted; his *jing* [essence and semen] diminishes;[14] storage [capability] of the kidney weakens; the whole body reaches its limits [in physical strength]; then he loses his teeth and hair.

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[13] Ma KW states that judging by the literary style and the context of the passage, there is an obvious disarrangement of the original bamboo slips and therefore, part of the text of (7X8) years has been moved to the (8X8) years passage (1989, 11).

[14] It can also be interpreted that the amount of semen produced is lessened.

Lingshu 54

(From "Heavenly-given Years" 天年)[15]

黃帝問于岐伯曰: 願聞人之始生, 何氣築爲基, 何立而爲楯, 何失而死, 何得而生. 岐伯曰: 以母爲基, 以父爲楯, 失神者死, 得神者生也. 黃帝曰: 何者爲神? 岐伯曰: 血氣已和, 榮衛已通, 五藏已成, 神氣舍心, 魂魄畢具, 乃成爲人. 黃帝曰: 人之壽夭各不同, 或夭壽, 或卒死, 或病久, 願聞其道. 岐伯曰: 五藏堅固, 血脈和調, 肌肉解利, 皮膚致密, 營衛之行, 不失其常, 呼吸微徐, 氣以度行, 六(府)腑化穀, 津液布揚, 各如其常, 故能長久.

黃帝曰: 人之壽百歲而死, 何以致之. 岐伯曰: 使道隧以長, 基牆高以方, 通調營衛, 三部三里起, 骨高肉滿, 百歲乃得終. 黃帝曰: 其氣之盛衰, 以至其死, 可得聞乎. 岐伯曰: 人生十歲, 五藏始定, 血氣已通, 其氣在下, 故好走. 二十歲, 血氣始盛, 肌肉方長, 故好趨. 三十歲, 五藏大定, 肌肉堅固, 血脈盛滿, 故好步. 四十歲, 五藏六腑, 十二經脈, 皆大盛以平定, 膝理始疏, 榮華頽落, 髮頗斑白, 平盛不搖, 故好坐. 五十歲, 肝氣始衰, 肝葉始薄, 膽汁始滅, 目始不明. 六十歲, 心氣始衰, 苦憂悲, 血氣懈惰, 故好臥. 七十歲, 脾氣虛, 皮膚枯. 八十歲, 肺氣衰, 魄離, 故言善誤. 九十歲, 腎氣焦, 四藏經脈空虛. 百歲, 五藏皆虛, 神氣皆去, 形骸獨居, 而終矣. 黃帝曰: 其不能終壽而死者, 何如. 岐伯曰: 其五藏皆不堅, 使道不長, 空外以張, 喘息暴疾, 又卑基牆, 薄脈少血, 其肉不石, 數中風寒, 血氣虛, 脈不通, 真邪相攻, 亂而相引, 故中壽而盡也.

The Yellow Emperor asked Qi Bo: "I would like to hear about the beginning of life of a person. What [kind of] *qi*[16] is used to build the founda-

[15] The title of the chapter, "Heavenly Years" refers to the life span allocated to a person by nature or heaven. One of the main objectives of the longevity doctrines is to live out one's natural life span and avoid an early death. According to the adepts, this can be achieved by living a sensible lifestyle based on moderation and using various techniques such as physical (*daoyin* 導引) and breathing exercises, dietetics and sexual cultivation. See also the reference to heavenly years in conjunction with longevity doctrines in *Suwen* 1.1.

[16] *Qi* here refers to the basic substance that makes up the myriad things and in this case it is the different types of *qi*—primordial (*yuan* 元), constructive (*ying* 營), and protective (*wei* 衛) and so on—that make up a person's constitution.

tion? What must be erected to make the railings?[17] What was lost, so that one dies? What was gained, so that one lives?"

Qi Bo replied: "Use the mother for the foundation and use the father for the railings.[18] Those who have lost their spirit will die and those who have obtained their spirit will live."

The Yellow Emperor asked: "What is this that makes the spirit?"

Qi Bo replied: "When the blood and *qi* are already harmonized, when *rong* [nutritive]) and *wei* [defensive] *qi* are already flowing [unimpeded],[19] when the five organs are already formed, when the spirit and *qi* are housed in the middle, and when the ethereal soul and earthly soul[20] have accomplished entirely, the person is formed."

The Yellow Emperor asked: "Each person's [ability] to live long or die young is not the same; some shorten their allotted life span; some die abruptly; some are sick for a long time; I would like to hear the principles [reasons behind it]."

Qi Bo replied: "When the five organs are firm and solid; when the blood vessels are in harmony and regulated; when the muscles and flesh

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[17] The *Shuowen jiezi* defines *shun* 楯 as *lanshun* 闌檻 railings or balustrade. The two questions: *heqi zhu weiji* 何氣築爲基 and *heli er weishun* 何立而爲楯 refer to the material required for the development of a person, internally and externally.

[18] Ma Shi comments: "The beginning of life depends on the mother to build the foundation and this is the female principal that forms the person. It depends on the father to build the railings and this is the male *qi* that is used for defense and protection." It also implies that the "construction" of a person is similar to building a house, where the foundation represents the interior and the railings the exterior, which is also associated with protection and defense.

[19] *Wei* refers to the protective or defensive *qi* and it is mostly paired to *ying* but also sometimes to *rong*, and *rongwei* is used interchangeably with *yingwei*. *Rong* means flourishing, plentiful, luxuriant, and lush and in the *qi* context, it is often translated to nourishing *qi*. *Yingqi* is usually translated as "camp" *qi* (Unschuld 2003, 163-7) or constructive *qi* (Porkert 1974, 188-90)

[20] *Lingshu* 8.1.2 states: "That which follows the spirit's coming and going is called ethereal-soul (*hun*) and that which corresponds to *jing's* going in and out is called earthly-soul (*po*)." Needham defines *hun* and *po* in this way: "The *hun*-souls, upward-floating, were no doubt its yang part, and the *po*-souls, downward-seeping, its yin ones" (1983, 27).

are smooth and flexible;[21] when the skin [structure] is tightly close;[22] when the movement of *ying* (camp) and *wei* (defensive) [*qi*] do not lose their normal [function]; when the inhalation and exhalation [respiration] are light and slow; then *qi* moves in proper measures.[23] The six residences transform grains [into grain-*qi*]; the body fluid is dispersed and propagated; and each and everyone is [functioning] according to its normal standard; hence, one can live for a long time."

The Yellow Emperor asked: "A person who lives up to a hundred years and then dies, how does one achieve it?"

Qi Bo replied: "When the [*qi*] sending way [nasal passage] is deep and long;[24] when the foundation and wall [of the nose are] are high and square;[25] when the *ying* (camp) and *wei* (defensive) [*qi*] penetrate and regulate [all]; when the three parts[26] and the three *li*[27] (i.e. upper, middle

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[21] Guo Aichun comments that *jieli* 解利 is also the same as *yueli* 悅利 and 悅 is close in meaning to 和 *he*. The extended meaning of 和利 is smooth and flexible. Yang Shangshan says, "It means muscles are found in the exterior and flesh in the interior; each has separate advantage."

[22] Yang Shangshan comments: *pifu zhimi* 皮膚致密 means that the skin is closed and dense. Paraphrased, the pores should be fine and skin texture closely woven i.e. without blemishes. Cf. *picou manmi* 皮腠曼密 from *Tainxia* (Ma JX, 1992, 1030). According to the *Shuowen jiezi*, Ma concluded that 腠 *cou* means *wenli* 纹理 pattern (texture). He also quotes two definitions for the graph 腠 by Wang Bing. In 50.1 Wang Bing comments that *couli* 腠理 refers to the texture of the skin and in 39.4, he explains that 腠 is where the body fluids emit i.e. the pores of the skin. It is generally accepted that *cou* is the tissue between the epidermis and muscles, which forms the skin structure that is made up of different layers.

[23] Yang Shangshan comments that when breathing in and out is calm, restful *qi* will flow six *cun* [every respiration], following the measure of 100 *ke* in a day and a night (i.e. 24 hours).

[24] Yang Shangshan comments in scroll 2 that the *shidao* 使道 "sending way" is the way that the nose sends air [in and out of the body]. *Duiyizhang* 隊以長 means that exhalation is not obstructed. Guo Aichun states that *dui* means deep.

[25] Yang Shangshan said, "When the brilliant hall of the nose and the wall and foundations are high, big and square; it is the cause of the third longevity."

[26] In 20.2, *sanbu* 三部 is referred to as "the lower, middle and upper parts." It can be the three parts of the body or the three parts of the face (i.e. upper, middle and lower). It is also used to indicate the three different types of [malevolent] *qi* as in 66.1. Zhang Zhicong comments that *sanbu* are the three parts of the body.

and lower parts of the face) are raised,[28] when the [facial] bones are high; the [face] is fleshy and full; [then one] can live up to a 100 years."

The Yellow Emperor asked: "Death depends on the abundance or exhaustion of one's *qi* - can I get to hear about it?"

Qi Bo replied: "When a person's life reaches 10 years, the five organs begin to stabilize, the blood and *qi* are already flowing unimpeded, and the *qi* is below; hence, one is fond of running.

At 20 years, the blood and *qi* begin to fill up, the muscles and flesh become square and long; hence, one is fond of hasting along [running fast].

At 30 years, the five organs are stable, the muscles and flesh are solid and firm, the blood vessels are filled to the utmost; hence, one is fond of walking.

At 40 years, the five organs and six viscera, and the twelve primary vessels are greatly filled, making them balanced and stable. Though the texture of the knees may begin to thin, the luster in the complexion may begin to wane, the hair on the head and the temples may become variegated and grey, [one is] so balanced and full that one cannot be swayed. Hence, one is fond of sitting.

At 50 years, the liver *qi* begins to weaken, the lobes of the liver begin to shrink, the bile begins to lessen and one's eyes begin to be unclear.

The *Zhongyi dacidian* also refers to the *sanbu* as the three pulse locations on the wrist classified as *cun*, *guan* and *chi*.

[27] Ma Shi comments that the *sanli* is the same as the *sanbu*. Zhang Jiebin in the *Leijing* says, "There are two *sanli* and they are called foot *sanli*. They are acumoxa points on the foot Yangming (stomach) Vessel." Zhang Zhicong thinks that the *sanli* is the vessel of the hand Yangming, i.e., Large Intestine Vessel. The *Zhongyi dacidian* refers to *sanli* as the acumoxa point *zusanli* (ST 36) and *shousanli* (LI 10). Yang Shanshan in scroll 2 comments that *sanbu* is called the three areas of the [Triple] Warmer; *sanli* is called the *sanli* [acumoxa point] below the knee and it is [part of] the stomach vessel; when the Triple Warmer and Sanli [vessels?] are all penetrable and regulated; this is the third longevity. Shandong and Hebei scholars state that *sanli* indicates the three sections of the face i.e. upper, middle and lower.

[28] I choose to follow preferences of Ma Shi and Zhang Zhicong in reading the phrase as 三部三里起.

At 60 years, the heart *qi* begins to weaken; if one worries and is sadden, blood and *qi* will be slackened and sluggish; hence, one is fond of lying down.

At 70 years, the spleen *qi* is depleted, the skin is dried.

At 80 years, the lung *qi* is weakened, the earthly-soul departs; hence, one speaks with full of mistakes.

At 90 years, the kidney *qi* is dried up; the four organs[29] and the primary vessels are empty and depleted.

At 100 years, the five organs are all depleted, the spirit and *qi* have all departed, the form and skeleton alone remain and that is the end!"

The Yellow Emperor asked: "For those who are not able to conclude their longevity (natural life span) and die; how is it so?

Qi Bo replied: "When the five organs are all not firm;[30] when the [*qi*] sending way (nasal passage) is not long [enough]; when the outside holes (nostrils) are spread out;[31] when [the breathing] is gasping and violently fast; when in addition, the foundation and wall are inferior; when the vessels are weak and the blood is small [in amount]; when the flesh is

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[29] *Taisu* 2 has it as *zangku* 臟枯: the organs are dried out; the *Jiayi jing* has *zang nai weiku* 臟乃萎枯: the organs becomes withered and dry; the *Taiping shenhui fang* does not have the two graphs.

[30] Yang Shangshan says, when the five organs are all depleted, which is easy to be subjected to malevolent [attacks] and injury.

[31] Guo Aichun comments that *yi* 以 and *yu* 又 have the same sound in ancient Chinese. Therefore, this 以 can be translated as 'also'. Yang Shangshan adds that when the nasal passage is short and stub and the nostrils are large, it can cause excessive breathing.

not firm[32] and [one is] often struck by wind and cold; the blood and *qi* will be depleted; the vessels are not penetrable; the true and injurious [*qi*] will mutually attack [each other] causing disorder and mutual pulling (tension); thus, they end their lives in the middle of their natural span.

[32] In the *Taisu* instead of *shi* 石"stone," it is written as *shi* 實 "replete."

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