

# Preface to Shang Han Lun

By Zhang Zhongjing

Translated by Allen Tsaur

余每覽越人入虢之診，望齊侯之色，未嘗不慨然嘆其才秀也。

Every time I read about Qin Yueren's diagnosis of the crown prince of Guo and his observations on the Marquis of Qi<sup>1</sup>, I cannot help but to sigh in admiration for his outstanding talent.

怪當今居世之士，曾不留神醫藥，精究方術，上以療君親之疾，下以救貧賤之厄，中以保身長全，以養其生，但競逐榮勢，企踵權豪，孜孜汲汲，惟名利是務，崇飾其末，忽棄其本，華其外，而悴其內，皮之不存，毛將安附焉。

It is bewildering that the learned men of our time never set their mind into the medicine, or investigate deeply into the remedial arts<sup>2</sup>; with which, to the above, they may cure the illness of the lords and their elders; to the below, they may save the poor and lowly ones from suffering; to [themselves in] center, they may safeguard their body and maintain a healthy life. But they<sup>3</sup> compete with one another to chase after glory and power. They tiptoe to follow after the powerful ones. They drive themselves diligently, striving solely for fame and profit. They adorn the nonessential twigs but abandon the core root. They embellish themselves on the outside, but languish themselves from within. When the skin is no longer there, where should the hair adhere itself to?

卒然遭邪風之氣，嬰非常之疾，患及禍至，而方震栗，降志屈節，欽望巫祝，告窮歸天，束手受敗，賚百年之壽命，持至貴之重器，委付凡醫，恣其所措，咄嗟嗚呼！厥身已斃，神明消滅，變

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<sup>1</sup> Qin Yueren (秦越人), also known as Bian Que (扁鵲), was a famed physician around 700 BC. References here speak of the legend that Bian Que once diagnosed and brought the allegedly-dead crown prince of Guo (虢太子) back to consciousness from his coma state. On his observation on the Marquis Lun of Qi (齊桓公), Bian Que observed that the Marquis first had an illness at the skin surface and warned him about it. The warning was brushed away due to the lack of symptom. The sickness developed progressively deeper each time, he warned, it was spreading from the Marquis's skin to his blood and to his organs. The last time Bian Que went to see the Marquis, he looked in from afar, and then ran away from the palace. When an attendant of the Marquis asked him why he had done this, he replied that the disease was in the marrow and was incurable. The Marquis was said to have died soon after.

<sup>2</sup> Here, Fang Shu (方術), can be alternatively translated as the "immortal" arts. It incorporates practices such as meditation, Qigong, Feng Shui, exorcism, alchemy, and elixir.

<sup>3</sup> For most parts of the passage's translation, "they" should refer to the "learned men" or "scholar" as mentioned in first sentence of the passage. Classical Chinese is often written without a subject in its sentence structure. Thus, unless specifically noted as "learned men" or "I/my", most subject part of the sentence is a creation during the translation into English.

為異物，幽潛重泉，徒為啼泣，痛夫！舉世昏迷，莫能覺悟，不惜其命，若是輕生，彼何榮勢之云哉！而進不能愛人知人，退不能愛身知己，遇災值禍，身居厄地，蒙蒙昧昧，蠢若游魂。哀乎！趨世之士，馳競浮華，不固根本，忘軀徇物，危若冰穀，至於是也。

It is only when invaded by the Qi of the perverse wind, when suffered from unusual diseases, when the misfortune has occurred, that they are shaken in shock. They then lower their status, bow down to ask the shaman for assistance in disgrace<sup>4</sup>. When the rituals prove fruitless, they have no choice but to leave their life up to fate, powerlessly, and wait for defeat. Trading in their prized possessions, they commission and entrust their life, which can live up to 100 years, to the service of incompetent doctors, who then recklessly dictate whatever treatment as they please. Alas, alas! Their bodies have died, their spirits have diminished, and their once-alive flesh are now foreign objects buried deep underground. Others can do nothing but to weep. Oh the grief! All in the society are living a vain, foolish dream. No one is able to wake up from it. No one is treasuring their own life. With such disregard for life, how can they still talk about glory and power? Those who serve in the government cannot care for the people and understand their suffering. Those who are withdrawn from the society cannot care for his own body or understand his own suffering. When the disaster strikes, they are in peril, placed in precarious position, but they are still ignorant and heedless like wondering ghosts. How sad it is! Those who chase after the worldly fashion, competing for the superficial fame, not caring about the core root, and neglecting their own body in the pursuit of worldly matter; it is as dangerous as treading on a thin layer of ice and as being trapped in a deep valley.

余宗族素多，向余二百，建安紀年以來，猶未十稔，其死亡者，三分有二，傷寒十居其七。感往昔之淪喪，傷橫夭之莫救，乃勤求古訓，博采眾方，撰用素問、九卷、八十一難、陰陽大論、胎臚藥錄，並平脈辨證，為傷寒雜病論合十六卷，雖未能盡愈諸病，庶可以見病知源，若能尋余所集，思過半矣。

My family had always been big, it had always been around the size of two hundred people. It has not been ten years since the first year of Jian'an (196 CE), two third of my family have perished. Of those who died, seven out of ten were having the Cold Damage (傷寒). I lamented for the loss, and grieved for those who could not be saved and died before their time. I began to study following the guidance of the ancients, and widely collected formulas. I combined the

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<sup>4</sup> Shamans and doctors have been viewed as the lower class of occupation until the later dynasties. On the other hand, the learned men have always been the most respected and influential class of occupation in Chinese culture and history, especially after the collapse of the aristocracy during Qin's unification of China and the subsequent Chu-Han civil war. So when a learned man asks the shaman for assistance, at times, it may be viewed as an act of disgrace.

principles from Suwen<sup>5</sup>, Jiujuan<sup>6</sup>, Bashiyi Nan<sup>7</sup>, Yin-Yang Dalun<sup>8</sup>, Tailu Yaolu<sup>9</sup>, and the pulse taking and clinical observation techniques, to put together these sixteen scrolls of Shanghan Zabing Lun<sup>10</sup>. Even if the knowledge of this work cannot cure all diseases, it can help you understand and identify the source of the illness based on the symptoms. If you can understand what I have put together here, then you are more than half way through the understanding.

夫天布五行，以運萬類，人稟五常，以有五臟，經絡府俞，陰陽會通，玄冥幽微，變化難極，自非才高識妙，豈能探其理致哉！

The heaven places the five phases to provide movements for the ten thousands beings. Men thus have the constant influence of the five elements, and have the five zang, the meridians, the fu, and the shu-points. The yin and yang interact complementarily and coherently with each other. The principles are mythically obscure, and the variations are endless. If without the great talent and ingenious insight, then who could explore the true depth of its knowledge?

上古有神農、黃帝、岐伯、伯高、雷公、少俞、少師、仲文，中世有長桑、扁鵲，漢有公乘陽慶及倉公，下此以往，未之聞也。觀今之醫，不念思求經旨，以演其所知，各承家技，終始順舊，省疾問病，務在口給，相對斯須，便處湯藥，按寸不及尺，握手不及足，人迎跌陽，三部不參，動數發息，不滿五十，短期未知決診，九候曾無仿佛，明堂闕庭，盡不見察，所謂窺管而已。夫欲視死別生，實為難矣。

In the High Antiquity, there were Shennong, Huangdi, Qibo, Bogao, Leigong, Shaoyu, Shaoshi, and Zhongwen. In the Middle Antiquity, there were Changsang and Bianque. In the Han Dynasty, there has been Gongcheng Yangqing and Canggong. But ever since, I have not heard of any exceptional one. Looking at today's physicians, they do not study the principles of the classics to enhance their practice. Though they inherit their family's techniques, they only rely on the old practices. When diagnosing, they focus only on oral inquiry. They meet with the patient for only a brief moment before prescribing their medicines. They only look for the Cun pulse and never care to investigate the Chi pulse<sup>11</sup>. They only look for the hand pulse and never care about the pulse on the feet. They do not consult the pulses from Renyin, Fuyang, and the three different depths. They use their own breath as a reference when taking a patient's pulse,

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<sup>5</sup>素問, the "Plain Questions"

<sup>6</sup>九卷, Nine Scrolls, now called the "Spiritual Pivot" (靈樞)

<sup>7</sup>八十一難, 81 Difficult Questions, now called "Nan Jing" (難經)

<sup>8</sup>陰陽大論, The Great Discourse of Yin-Yang, now part of Chapter 5 in Suwen, or possible the "Great Discourses" replenished into Suwen by Wang Bing

<sup>9</sup>胎臚藥錄, Tailu Materia Medica, now lost

<sup>10</sup>傷寒卒病論, "Treatise on Cold Pathogenic and Miscellaneous Diseases"

<sup>11</sup> Cun Pulse refers to the upper pulses (I, II, IX, X) and Chi pulse refers to the lower pulses (III, IV, V, VI).

and usually observing less than fifty beats of pulse<sup>12</sup>. They cannot even learn that the patient is near death from their diagnosis. They do not know much about the nine sites of pulse. They do not observe the forehead, the eyebrows, and nose. Their diagnosis is like observing the sky through a thin tube. If they want to create life in the face of fatal disease, then how difficult must it be!

孔子云，生而知之者上，學則亞之，多聞博淺，知之次也。余宿尚方術，請事斯語。

Confucius once mentioned, “Those who are born with the possession of knowledge are the highest class of men. Those who learn, and so, readily, get possession of knowledge, are the next. Those who learn from the worldly experience and by their broad listening, are another class next to these.” I have been passionate only about the remedial arts. Please consult and put my words into practice.

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<sup>12</sup> Mitchell, Ye and Wiseman note that the fifty beats is the minimum time devoted to feeling the pulse, as described from the Nan Jing.