

Review of Complete Compendium of Zhang Jingyue Vols 1-3

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A few months ago, the first notification of the upcoming publication of the Complete Compendium of Zhang Jingyue Vol 1 – 3, (*Jing Yue Quan Shu*) translated by Allen Tsaur and edited by Michael Brown popped up on my facebook page. It is hard to describe how excited I was at the prospect of this publication! I clearly remember on one of my early trips to China in the late 1980's picking up a huge book (over 1800 pages in Chinese), looking through the table of contents and thinking, this is a really important book that should be translated into English. At the time, I did not really know why it was so important, but I bought it, shipped it home, and in the 30 years since have opened it several times, perusing a few chapters and thinking, "someone really should translate this book" but it is a lifetime project. When Tsaur's translation of the first three volumes finally arrived on my desk, I dove right in. As I read the forward and introduction, I saw that others had a similar story to mine, of picking up the book, perusing it and thinking how important the text and a translation of the text would be. This is a monumental text that in many ways shaped the way we learn and practice Chinese medicine today. Allen Tsaur's commitment to its translation is a true gift to the profession of Chinese medicine outside of China.

Zhāng Jǐngyuè, the author of the Complete Compendium, lived from 1563 – 1640, during the final years of the Míng dynasty (1368-1644). He lived during the early days of the advent of the School of Warm Disease (*Wen Bing Xue*) and the 4 Great Masters of the Jin-Yuan Dynasty had already published their works and the shift from a focus on disease as primarily caused by externally contracted diseases as expressed in the *Shang Han Lun* to a greater understanding of internal disease as expressed by scholar-physicians such as had become widely accepted. Many of Zhāng Jǐngyuè's predecessors had explored the ideas of what today we call the Eight Parameters (Eight Principles, *Ba Gang*) but they had not clearly expressed them as fundamentals of diagnosis. In the *Jing Yue Quan Shu*, Zhāng Jǐngyuè, well versed in *Nei Jing*, *Shang Han Lun*, and the works of the Jin-Yuan masters, and the author of the *Lei Jing* one of the most important commentaries on the *Nei Jing*, began the process of clarifying diagnosis and explaining theoretical concepts that today seem almost commonplace. Commonplace they are not however, and a close reading of the first 3 volumes of this text will leave you wanting more.

The text begins with Chapter 1: Clarifying the Principle, and it is here that Tsaur's commitment to historical and philosophical knowledge becomes clearly apparent. From the first line of the text Tsaur asks the reader to understand not just the words as they are written but also that the author of the text and the words he chooses are influenced not only by other medical practitioners (contemporary and historical) but also by the philosophical, political and military trends of the culture in which he lived. The first line of the text reads: "All ten thousand things cannot be detached from the principle" (Zhang, pg 47). Tsaur could simply have left the translation as is but instead, using footnotes, he helps the reader to understand the statement as Zhāng Jīngyùe meant it. The term "principle" or lǐ (理) has had different meanings at different times in history, and different scholars and philosophers understood and explained it differently. Tsaur's Introduction and footnotes immediately point this out and help us to understand that Zhāng Jīngyùe was deeply influenced by the Neo-Confucian writings of *Wang Yangming*, a leader of the "School of Mind" for whom 'principle' is the mind, and all affairs of man are guided by the principle (Stanford 2019). A full discussion of *Wang Yangming's* ethical and philosophical doctrine would far exceed this review, but Tsaur is to be commended for placing Zhāng Jīngyùe and his text within their historical and philosophical context. Understanding the context of 'principle' for Zhāng Jīngyùe helps us to understand his perspective on medicine and the role of the physician. Tsaur continues to educate his reader throughout the text with explanatory footnotes that help the reader to understand textual references to medical, philosophical, political and military texts as well as the internal, not necessarily obvious theoretical debates that Zhāng is having with historical and contemporary scholars.

The first 3 volumes of the *Jing Yue Quan Shu* contains 34 chapters, ranging from a discussion of yin and yang and how to identify the nature of disease from the perspective of internal/external, hot/cold, vacuity/repletion (chapters 2 – 8), to the 10 areas of diagnostic inquiry. There are chapters on determining a treatment, on spirit qi, sovereign and ministerial fire, earlier and later heaven, root and branch, *zang fu*, *míngmén*, and so much more. Each chapter is quite short, but do not be fooled. They often require multiple careful readings to understand the points that Zhāng is making. As with many medical treatises, Zhāng clearly disagrees with statements made by many earlier scholars and his language does not spare them. One of the most interesting aspects of Chinese medicine is its heterogenous nature. It is a medical system that allows for the co-existence of multiple theoretical and diagnostic lenses and in this text Zhāng presents his own point of view, which often clashes with the work of earlier scholars. The more well-versed the reader is in the texts of this medicine as well as in the history and culture of China, the more they will grasp the arguments that Zhāng is presenting.

Just the first three volumes of the enormous text can give the reader a better theoretical understanding of Chinese medicine and the importance of clear, focused and objective diagnosis. The reader may look at the table of contents and think that, at the very least, the first 10 – 15 chapters is information that is already widely known and readily available in English. But read carefully. There are tidbits of knowledge in each chapter that will help to guide the reader to a

diagnosis. It is from correct diagnosis that correct treatment and formula selection emerge. This first volume from Tsaur and Purple Cloud Press does not include formulas, but it is expected that the next publication in this series will include Zhāng's 183 formulae and commentaries. This volume, however, elucidates the fundamentals, and, as Zhāng makes clear, we must start at the beginning and clarify the fundamentals in order to treat disease. All of us study the fundamentals while in school and when we begin our clinical training, we may have faculty who ask us to discuss the theory that informs our diagnosis. But having been a teacher of Chinese medicine for nearly 25 years, all too often I see students and clinicians who, upon beginning practice, feel that the theory is irrelevant to the clinical outcomes. Throughout the *Jingyue Quan Shu* Zhāng admonishes us to return to theory, because it is through understanding and clarifying principle, through understanding yin and yang and through clarifying diagnosis that we will have effective treatment. "For the diagnosis and treatment of any disease, one must first assess the yin and yang, which are the headropes and outlines for the art of medicine" (Zhang, pg 51). Over my years of study, I have returned to China for extended periods of time to study and I have taken students to study. When a professor is invited to give a lecture, no matter the topic, they will, almost invariably, begin with a discussion of yin and yang. Early on, I found this frustrating. Did these professors not understand that I had studied Chinese medicine theory and understood yin and yang? Sometimes, my students would complain about the "basic" level of teaching because of the fundamental theory being discussed. Over time however, I realized that the study and understanding of yin and yang is not as simple as I thought it was and that what these professors were discussing was invaluable. Zhāng begins his treatise with a discussion of yin and yang and the concepts of what was to eventually be named the Eight Parameters (Eight Headropes or *Ba Gang*) because he is trying to reinforce the importance of understanding these fundamentals and not skipping over them.

One of the themes that can be found throughout this work is discussion of the míngmén. This text is, in fact the text that "started the Míngmén School of Thought" (Zhang, pg 54 fn 90). Earlier physicians, most notably Li Dongyuan and Zhu Dan Xi had certainly explored the concept of the míngmén, but their treatment of míngmén fire differed greatly from Zhang's perception of correct treatment. Li Dongyuan discussed the disturbance of míngmén fire as ultimately occurring as a result of spleen qi falling into the lower burner and he treated it through treatment of the spleen. Zhu Danxi also saw míngmén fire as a cause of disease, but his treatment methodology was to clear fire and supplement the blood in order to nourish the yin. Zhāng Jīngyùè however, emphasized the need to protect the yang by warming and supplementing. His discussion of míngmén (Chapter 13) sharply criticizes Li Dongyuan's concept of míngmén fire as the "bandit of the original qi" (Zhang, pg. 198) which he states Zhu Danxi also agreed with. In this chapter and in Chapter 26 (as well as with references to the míngmén throughout the text) he explores the concept of míngmén and states that "the míngmén is the root of the original qi and the residence of [both] water and fire." He describes the manifestation of the míngmén's fire in each of the three burners and the importance of warming and nourishing the fire so as to keep it safe. One may use a cooling method to clear heat that has

invaded into the body, but as for the míngmén fire, it is more correct to use sweet and warm substances to return the fire to its source. He goes further to state that “when water is warmed, it can engender qi; after qi is engendered, it ascends and brings life to all [beings] without exception. When water is cooled, it become ice; after it become ice, it descends and brings death to all [beings] without exception.” (Zhang pg 312). I certainly cannot fully explicate Zhāng’s discussion of míngmén fire in this review, (and I need to read the chapters on this again several times before even trying), but as Tsaur points out in his Introduction to this translation, Zhāng Jīngyùè is not only the founder of the Míngmén School, he also popularized the use of substances such as Shù Dì Huáng to nourish the kidney yīn and the use of warming substances such as Ròu Guì to warm the míngmén (Tsaur, pg. 12). It is from his work that popular formulas such as Zhī Bǎi Dì Huáng Wán emerge.

Besides the enormity of the information presented in Zhang Jingyue’s text itself, two things near and dear to my heart also stood out for me in this translation. These are Tsaur’s commitment to a translation style and terminology and to allowing the reader to follow his thinking and reasoning around terminological choices as well as the historical context of the text through the extensive use of footnotes. Translation is a relatively thankless task that takes endless hours of tedious, painstaking work. Tsaur’s careful and meticulous translation is to be commended. His choice of the terminology of the *Practical Dictionary of Chinese Medicine* (Wiseman & Feng) ensures that the text complies with translation standards of consistency and, whenever he chooses to use terms outside of the PD choices, he explains, through the use of a footnote, the reasoning for his choice and his terminological choices remain consistent throughout the text, giving the reader the ability to move smoothly between the Chinese and English and to have appropriate referents for each term choice. Throughout the text, Tsaur’s use of footnotes helps the reader to understand otherwise obscure references to Chinese texts from Daoist canons, Confucian classics, Buddhist sutras as well as the Nei Jing, the Shang Han Lun and other medical texts. The footnotes show us not only the depth of knowledge that Zhāng Jīngyùè had to have had but also the amount of research that Tsaur had to do to be able to understand these references. These footnotes are an invaluable resource and guide to reading the text itself.

The work that Tsaur, Brown and Purple Cloud Press have put into producing this first volume in the Zhāng Jīngyùè series is immeasurable. The complexity of the text and its references to so many cultural and historical aspects both of the medicine and of the philosophical, political and military texts of China makes it an invaluable resource for understanding both ancient and modern Chinese medicine. Certainly, during his lifetime and after, there were those who disagreed with and critiqued Zhāng’s work, but it is only through the work of people like Tsaur and the commitment of a press like Purple Cloud Press, that these important conversations can be made available to us in English. As a translator myself, I cannot even begin to fathom the amount of work that Tsaur has put into the production of this text. I encourage you to get a copy and begin the journey of exploring the work of Zhāng Jīngyùè.

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