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The transmission of Chinese medicine

This is the first time that an ethnographer has studied three different forms of medical education simultaneously. Conducting extensive fieldwork in Kunming in the People's Republic of China, Elisabeth Hsu became the disciple of a *qigong* healer, who taught her his esoteric arts by imitation and repetition only. She also attended seminars of a senior Chinese doctor who plunged his followers into studying arcane medical classics, and she took the regular courses for Chinese students at the Yunnan College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, where the standardised knowledge of official Chinese medicine is inculcated. Dr Hsu compares these different medical traditions and shows how the same technical terms may take on different meanings in different contexts. This is a fascinating insider's account, which brings out the way in which the context of instruction shapes knowledge.

ELISABETH HSU is a teaching and research fellow in the history of Chinese science at the University of Cambridge. She has published in scholarly journals and is co-editor of *Naxi and Moso Ethnography* (1998) and editor of *Chinese Medicine: Innovation, Convention and Controversy* (forthcoming).

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK,
<http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 1011-4211, USA
<http://www.cup.org>
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

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First published 1999

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in 10/12pt Plantin [GC]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Hsu, Elisabeth.
The transmission of Chinese medicine / Elisabeth Hsu.
p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in medical anthropology; 7)
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0 521 64236 1 (hardback). – ISBN 0 521 64542 5 (paperback)
1. Medicine, Chinese – Study and teaching – China. 2. Medical anthropology – education, medical – China. I. Title. II. Series.
R601.H697 1999
610'.951—dc21 98-50700 CIP
ISBN 0 521 64236 1 hardback
ISBN 0 521 64542 5 paperback

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Acknowledgements

This book has gone through many stages, and I would like to thank all those who have contributed to its completion; it would be impossible to acknowledge them all here. The book is based on my Ph.D. thesis, 'Transmission of Knowledge, Texts, and Treatment in Chinese Medicine' (1992), which was conducted under the supervision of Gilbert Lewis. My first and foremost thanks go to him for his trust in me at that stage of my studies in anthropology and for his insights which continue to give me guidance. But a thesis makes no book, and Sir Geoffrey Lloyd not only encouraged me but also gave me vital advice on how to refine my work. In addition, I thank the Press's four anonymous reviewers and the style editor. The book would not have taken its present form without their comments.

The research was funded by the Swiss National Foundation, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the National Science Foundation of the United States who provided a Research Fellowship at the Needham Research Institute, and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for a post-doctoral Teaching and Research Fellowship in the History of Chinese Science and Technology at the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Cambridge where the manuscript was completed. I should also mention the British Council, Clare Hall College, the Overseas Research Scholarship, and the Zürich City Council who in the beginning of my researches provided relatively small but decisive support. The contact between the sister cities Zürich and Kunming was crucial for favourable fieldwork conditions.

Above all, I wish to express my gratitude to the people in Kunming, in and outside the Yunnan Traditional Chinese Medical College. I would like to thank my teachers Wu Zongbo and Yan Yuwei who really cared that I acquire a comprehensive training and Zhou Yongsheng who arranged my stay at the college with a warm-hearted concern. Thanks also to *qigong* master Qiu and Jade Blossom who made me feel so much at home, and to all the friends, patients, students, and doctors on whose cooperation this research depended.

Note on Chinese terms

Chinese words are all rendered in *pinyin*, the official transliteration system of the People's Republic of China (PRC), even in quotations from works in which other transcription systems have been used. Chinese medical terms have all been approximated by an English term, but where these need to be understood in a special sense I have used initial capital letters to identify them. Blood (*xue*), for instance, is not in all respects equivalent to the English term 'blood'. These terms have been translated into English previously, but the Chinese medical terminology varies greatly between different authors. In the context of the government-promoted Chinese medicine, I have used primarily the *Revised Outline*, partially translated by Sivin (1987), and Wiseman's (1990) comprehensive *Glossary of Chinese Medical Terms and Acupuncture Points*. However, since I worked in different social contexts, style and register had to be adjusted, and therefore the same Chinese term has been translated differently in different contexts in approximation of the speaker's understanding of its connotations. Some terms clearly have changed their connotations over time, and they are treated accordingly in translation. The precise interpretation of these terms will of course continue to be subject to debate.

The glossary concerns medical and philosophical terms and includes a synopsis of the various translations given by Manfred Porkert, Paul Unschuld and Nathan Sivin.

Translations are my own if not otherwise indicated. Personal names and certain biographical details have for reasons of discretion been disguised.