

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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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page viii
<i>Note on Chinese terms</i>	ix
Introduction: ways of learning	1
1 The secret transmission of knowledge and practice	21
2 <i>Qigong</i> and the concept of <i>qi</i>	58
3 The personal transmission of knowledge	88
4 Interpreting a classical Chinese medical text	105
5 The standardised transmission of knowledge	128
6 Teaching from TCM texts	168
Discussion: styles of knowing	225
<i>Appendix: Curriculum for TCM regular students and acumoxa and massage specialists</i>	241
<i>Glossary of medical and philosophical terms</i>	247
<i>References</i>	270
<i>Indexes</i>	287

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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.