MEDICINE AND HEALING
IN ANCIENT EAST ASIA

A View from Excavated Texts

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Abstract: This Element first discusses the creation of transmitted medical canons that are generally dated from early imperial times through to the medieval era and then, by way of contrast, provides translations and analyses of non-transmitted texts from the pre-imperial late Shang and Zhou eras and the early imperial Qin and Han eras, as well as a brief discussion covering the period through the eleventh-century CE. The Element focuses on the evolution of concepts, categories of illness, and diagnostic and treatment methodologies evident in the newly discovered material and reveals a side of medical practice not reflected in the canons. It is both traditions of healing – the canons and the currents of local practice revealed by these texts – that influenced the development of East Asian medicine more broadly. The local practices show there was no real evolution from magical to non-magical medicine. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Keywords: ancient, China, medicine, magical, cosmic
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