

Book Reviews

An Exposition on the Eight Extraordinary Vessels

By Charles Chase and Mika Shima
Eastland Press, 2010
ISBN 9780939616695

The understanding and use of the extraordinary vessels (EV) in Chinese medicine has always been shrouded in a cloak of mystery and has at times been the subject of ignorance in English-speaking countries. Very little has been published in English concerning their use and function, and where this has occurred it has often been speculative and not based in classical readings. Most acupuncture texts, including Chinese published books, have few pages dedicated to them. They often include several channel diagrams and cursory information associated with their use. The exception is Birch and Matsumoto's *Extraordinary Vessels*, published in 1986, which did attempt to ground the information from reliable classical sources. It is with this in mind that I was keen to read the translation by Chase and Shima of Li Shi-Zhen's *An Exposition on the Eight Extraordinary Vessels*.

This 500-page text not only includes the translation but has a wealth of additional information inserted by the authors to assist the reader and expand on many of the concepts associated with Li Shi-Zhen's understanding and clinical use of the EVs. While the translated text itself focuses on the use of the EVs in herbal medicine, much relevant information associated with their use in acupuncture has also been included by the authors. The text is divided into five main sections. The first section (chapters A–G) places the

text in its historical context and includes information on the role that internal alchemy played in the development of the EVs, as well as pivotal ideas on pulse diagnostics associated with their use. Indeed, the information in these initial chapters is thought provoking and the authors do well to raise many interesting questions which they often attempt to answer and explain. The second section is a translation of the text. Each of the EVs is introduced individually and is followed by a subsequent chapter on the diseases associated with the particular EV. Each chapter includes both the original Chinese (for those interested in contrasting the translation with their own interpretation) and the English translation. The translation also includes the two chapters on 'The Pulses of the Nine Pathways of the Qi Opening' and 'An Explanation of Pronunciation' (chapters 17 and 18). The third section gives the authors' scholarly interpretations and commentaries on each of the translated chapters. In doing so Chase and Shima give the reader an insight into the thinking and ideas underlying the concepts expounded in the text. The authors often compare sections of the text with other classical sources and ideas from other Chinese physicians and scholars. This allows a very rich and detailed understanding which would have been impossible had the translation been published as a stand-alone piece. This section for me is the centrepiece of the text and deserves close reading and reflection by the

reader. Section four, titled 'Legacy of the Exposition on the Eight Extraordinary Vessels', looks at how these writings affected the development of EV concepts in the practice of herbal medicine, acupuncture and internal cultivation. Consisting of six chapters (33–38), this section introduces the reader to the evolution of Li's ideas and how they have been applied. Several clinical case studies have been included to allow readers to see how later physicians such as Ye Tian Shi incorporated Li's concepts into their own theories and practices. The fifth and final section includes several appendices. These include the acupuncture holes of the EVs, EV herbal formulae, single medicinals entering the EVs, Li Shi Zhen's synopsis of EV pulses from the *Pulse Studies of the Lakeside Master*, a listing of editions of the text (in Chinese) and finally a table of the people and texts cited in the original. Add to these copious notes for each chapter and a bibliography and index and you have a highly readable and informative book.

This text is a definitive English translation and will have much to offer both the practitioner and the historian. It makes an important addition to the growing list of professional translations of key Chinese texts available in English and will greatly contribute to a deeper understanding of the EVs by TCM practitioners in the western world.

Reviewed by Chris Zaslawski

Essentials of Chinese Medicine

Edited by Liu Zhanwen and Liu Liang
Springer, 2009 ; 3 volumes
ISBN 978848825895

This three volume set represents a systematic and structured attempt to present the basic concepts of Chinese medicine (CM). Edited by two Chinese researchers and educators – Liu Zhanwen from the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine and Liu Liang from Hong Kong Baptist University – and supported by a large team of international advisors and two English language consultants, the texts survey a large swath of information ranging from basic theory and diagnostics to acupuncture and herbal medicine therapies and their clinical application. The aim of the book project was to produce a set of high-quality text books in English for the study of CM. What makes this set of books unusual is the process used to produce the three volumes. On initiation of the writing project, a consortium of CM institutions, primarily from China but including also one American university (Ohio University), was charged with identifying a key member to write a chapter based on their field of speciality. The author was then required to submit a Chinese and English version of the chapter which was then evaluated and revised by experts who were competent in both Chinese and English language as well as CM. This process took nine years and as noted in the foreword ‘the execution of the entire process was extremely time consuming and tedious. It has proven to be a very meaningful, if not ground breaking move, which makes the text truly different from publications of a similar nature.’ This has meant the production of a detailed and clearly written set of textbooks that can be accessed by English language students.

Volume 1 consists of 11 chapters separated into two sections, one on basic theories and the other on the diagnostics and

treatment principles of CM. As a textbook for students, each chapter identifies the aim and objectives for study for that chapter as well as exercises for student review. Covered are yin/yang theory, five phases, the vital substances, concepts of illness and the *zangfu* manifestation theory. Supported by line drawings, theoretical concepts are exemplified and presented visually. The second section focuses on the diagnostic methods, as presented through the four methods and the eight principles. The different *zangfu* patterns are then highlighted and herbal medicine treatment principles applicable for common eight principle methods are detailed.

Volume 2 consists of three sections. Section 1 concerns the theory and application of acupuncture. Both meridian theory and point location for all the major acupoints are listed. Specific properties of acupoints are discussed as are the different applications of electroacupuncture, scalp and auricular acupuncture and moxibustion and cupping. Section 2 introduces the Chinese herbal materia medica and gives a detailed description of 174 herbs commonly used in clinical practice. Both pharmaceutical and Chinese name are given as are the Chinese characters. Listed for each herb are the flavour/nature, meridian affinity, actions, indications, dosage, and cautions and contraindications. Section 3 introduces the principles of constructing a herbal prescription and a detailed analysis of 84 frequently used herbal formulae are presented. Good use is made of case histories drawn from Chinese medical journals for many of the herbal formulae.

Volume 3 revolves around the clinical application of acupuncture and herbal medicine for 69 common diseases.

Grouped under the six CM speciality categories of internal medicine, gynaecology, paediatrics, dermatology, ear-eyes-nose-throat, and emergency conditions, each of the 69 diseases are differentiated according to CM principles and treatments using both herbal medicine prescriptions and acupuncture methods are presented. The clinical manifestations and key points of differentiation are documented and each disease also has one or more case studies which facilitates student understanding of the clinical application of the prescriptions. There are several appendices to this volume, including a listing of the acupoints and herbal substances. This allows cross referencing between the Latin, pinyin, English and Chinese names of herbs as well as the alphanumerical listing and Chinese names for the acupoints. Also included as an appendix are glossy colour photographs of the plant and processed herb for many major herbal substances.

The three volumes are well laid out and easy to read. The hardcovers will ensure longevity of use and an index in each volume allows searching within each text. These three volumes are well suited for the student and cover all the essential information for student learning, from introductory concepts to later stage clinical application. While focusing on the undergraduate student, the texts would also suit the beginning practitioner, especially volume three, which is suitable for self-directed study. The editors have done a skilful job in covering a large amount of information in a systematic and clear manner that will facilitate student learning and set the standard for English language CM textbooks in the future.

Reviewed by Chris Zaslowski

Acupuncture in the Treatment of Pain: An Integrative Approach

Edited by Marcus Bäcker and Michael G Hammes

Translated by Velia Wortman

Churchill Livingstone Elsevier, 2010

ISBN 9780443068690

First published in 2005 in German under the title *Akupunktur in der Schmerztherapie: Ein integrativer Ansatz* this new English text is an excellent introduction to the area of integrative medicine and the treatment of pain. Suitable for both the student and the experienced practitioner, the layout of the text makes it easy to use, with clear diagrams, table summaries and ample referencing throughout the text.

The text is divided into two main sections. Part 1 contains chapters on the basic concepts and gives a good explanation of pain from the western medicinal (WM) perspective. Those interested in gaining a good understanding of the different types of pain and their neural and physiological mechanisms underlying pain modulation will appreciate this section. Following this are chapters on the understanding of pain within the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) paradigm, while subsequent chapters contain information on TCM

differential diagnosis, guidelines for TCM treatment, acupuncture, channels and important acupuncture points and further treatment options in TCM (Chinese herbal medicine, dietetics, tuina, qigong). Part 2 contains chapters on clinical pain syndromes and included content areas such as head and face pain, locomotor system pain, fibromyalgia, visceral, neuropathic, vascular disease, palliative care, psycho-vegetative complaints and psychosomatic aspects of pain.

Each chapter begins with a very clear statement on general principles or guidelines and a definition or introduction to the pain syndrome. This is followed by the editors' or contributing authors' personal opinion on the value of acupuncture for the treatment of the condition. Further information is then given concerning WM epidemiology, clinical presentation, pathophysiology, differential diagnosis, potential treatment options and prognosis. Finally

the authors document the treatment protocols with acupuncture, TCM pattern differentiation and additional TCM treatment options.

What I found useful about this book is the integration of WM and TCM. You never hear a patient in pain present at the clinic saying I have 'damp obstructing the channels'. Rather they present with a diagnosis in WM terms. This book is good for updating clinical knowledge about pain conditions, the potential range of treatments (e.g. counselling, physiotherapy, medication), while at the same time offering the TCM perspective and treatment principles of acupuncture, Chinese herbs, tuina and qigong. Overall, an excellent book, worthy of a place on your desk, and one that I do not think will be left to gather dust on the bookshelf!

Reviewed by John Deare