

# Book Reviews

## Jin Gui Yao Lue: Essential Prescriptions of the Golden Cabinet

By Zhang Ji (Zhang Zhong Jing)

with translation and commentary by Nigel Wiseman and Sabine Wilms

Paradigm Publications, 2013

ISBN 9780912111919

A tremendous amount of work, time, and thought goes into a text of this kind and Western readers have been doubly blessed by being presented with two versions of *Jin Gui Yao Lue* in recent years. The first is entitled *Understanding the Jin Gui Yao Lue: A Practical Textbook*, published by PMPH, and authored by Sung Yuk-ming PhD. When I reviewed this for *The Lantern* in 2009 I used a Chinese version for comparison and found it stood up to the test of scholarship very well indeed, and credit goes to the editor, Harry Lardner, for the flow and clarity of the text. Now, hot off the press, another publication has fallen onto my desk seeking a review. This is *Jin Gui Yao Lue: Essential Prescriptions of the Golden Cabinet*, translated and compiled by Nigel Wiseman and Sabine Wilms, and published by Paradigm Publications. I cannot but compare it with the earlier Sung text.

Both texts could be criticised by serious scholars of the classics for not including a fuller commentary: beyond occasionally noting that there have been various interpretations, there is no specific or detailed comparison of the various opinions which inevitably arise. However, in my opinion, for the Western target readership, this can be seen more as a boon than a failure. I say this only because in the West, most graduates have had but a scant introduction to *Jin Gui Yao Lue*, and so the old rule of 'less is more' most definitely applies as the next step in familiarising ourselves with

this classic text at a basic level, before we proceed to attempt scholarly mastery.

The subject matter of both texts is the same. In fact, such is the coincidence of the information covered, that they are clearly based on the same original Chinese text and commentary. There are, however, some important differences, and I will comment on the following aspects: the translation, clarity and readability of comments and explanations, the inclusion of additional material or information, structure, and bibliography.

Both texts present accurate translations. Sung's version presents a very true translation in readable English, and Wiseman and Wilms have chosen to adhere more strictly to the original Chinese syntax, providing additional words in brackets to enhance intelligibility. Thankfully, both achieve excellent translations reflecting the true meaning without resorting to waffle or paraphrase.

In reading both texts, the first thing I observed in regard to the comments and explanations was that the newer text by Wiseman and Wilms strays from the rule of good clear expression, sometimes becoming more complex and convoluted than necessary. This can give the impression to some readers that it must, indeed, be a scholarly work – for it takes some effort to understand it. But it is only the wordiness which makes it appear complex; the complexity does not spring from erudition or complexity

of ideas, but from complexity of expression. When one reads the same commentary in Sung's version, he and his editor have really hit the mark – everything is so clear, so fluid, and all is expressed in fewer words. The lucidity of the Sung text makes the ideas easy to grasp. Succinctness is sometimes hard to achieve. I fall into the trap myself at times and am therefore loath to point the finger at others. That having been said, however, my honest observation is that this is sadly the downfall of the Wiseman and Wilms version.

When I read the comments and explanations in the Wiseman and Wilms text, although they are not wrong, they do not offer as complete an explanation as provided by Sung. To cite an example, the text notes on *jue yang* (厥阳) or 'reversing yang' in Chapter 1, Line 10, p 19 of the Wiseman and Wilms text reads: 'Reversal yang 厥阳 *jue yang*: "Reversing" here means counterflow rising.' On p 21 of his text, Sung offers more information: 'Reversal yang: In this case "reversal" means counterflow due to a relative exuberance of yang qi, also known as solitary yang flow.' As we know, 'counterflow qi' or 'rebellious qi' can be caused by any of a number of things, so it is a useful clarification. Random opening of the two books has shown me that Chapter 10 Line 1 and Chapter 17 Line 19 are but two more of many instances where the Sung text offers clearer and more complete analysis and comment.

Other examples include the simple fact that *Bai He Bing* is thus called because *Bai He* was used to treat the condition – mentioned by Sung but not in the Wiseman and Wilms text; and in regard to the use of *Shu Qi* (Chapter 16 Line 12), often avoided because of its close association with *Chang Shan*, Sung (p 442) appropriately includes some results of modern research validating its use, and also advocates that *Shu Qi* should be prepared in ginger in order to reduce its emetic properties. This important clinical information is absent in the Wiseman and Wilms text. These are but a few examples and, in addition, the Wiseman and Wilms text unfortunately fails to provide material on clinical applications, case studies and modern research, all of which can be found in the Sung text.

In regard to structure, the Wiseman and Wilms text includes a detailed schematic overview following the introduction of each chapter, outlining the contents as a useful guide and preview. But it does not contain tables or the conclusions found at the end of each chapter in the Sung text, which provide a summary of key points,

and which I personally find are wonderful for review and quick reference.

Looking at both texts, of course, is a filipp to linguistic curiosity, particularly as one considers the different explanations given by each text in regard to the word 'ku' (哭) for instance, most commonly translated as 'cry' when studying modern Chinese. This appears in Chapter 25, Line 18. The text note in the Wiseman and Wilms version says: 'Crying 哭 ku' then adds 'Another version of this text has 笑 xiao (laughing) instead.' Sung's text note offers the explanation that 'ku' (哭) may also refer to laughter.

My curiosity thus piqued, I checked a dictionary recording older meanings of Chinese characters and found that 'ku' (哭), rather than specifically meaning weeping, referred to making a hoarse sound like the baying or barking of a dog, thus explaining the 'dog' component in the character 犬. It further explained that the two 口 or 'mouth' components meant that there was increased volume – i.e. a loud 'crying out' in the general sense of the word 'crying' – but not necessarily in the sense of 'weeping'. I have been unable to

find confirmation, and so to what extent this is the correct explanation I am unsure, but it certainly offers an explanation for the interpretation of 'ku' (哭) as 'laughing'. (I hope I will be forgiven the diversion, but this is just one of the fascinations that classic literature holds for me.)

In conclusion, the Wiseman and Wilms version of *Jin Gui Yao Lue* offers accurate translation and is by no means incorrect; unfortunately, however, many explanations lack the lucidity and more complete information one might hope for. Furthermore, it has not included clinical applications, modern research, and case studies, all of which facilitate modern clinical application of this age-old knowledge; nor does it have a herb index, which is a significant omission. The lack of simplicity in many explanations tends to make the subject matter appear more complex than it is, and the lack of flow does not allow for enjoyable osmotic consumption. It was also disappointing to find no reference list or bibliography. It does, however, have a very thorough general index.

*Reviewed by Robin Marchment*

## The Double Aspect of the Heart

By Elisabeth Rochet de la Vallee, translated by Madelaine Moulder

Monkey Press, 2013

ISBN 9781872468129

There are some books that help one fall in love with Chinese medicine all over again, and Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallee has written one of them. Or perhaps I should say 'another one', as her contribution to bringing the insights of our classical literature to non-Chinese readers has been substantial.

This book has two layers of translation: Elisabeth's translation of the classic literature (which helpfully includes the Chinese characters for key terms or concepts) and Madelaine Moulder's translation of Elisabeth's work from

the French to English, which is both accessible and lyrical.

The text aims to explain the 'vital relationship between the Heart and the Heart master' – the double aspect of the Heart. Elisabeth argues against the use of the term 'Pericardium' and throughout uses 'Heart master' *xin zhu*, or, when referring to the meridian, refers to it as *hand jueyin* rather than Pericardium channel. The double aspect of the Heart is represented by these two meridians and the collaborative functions of sovereign fire and minister fire. It counterbalances

the double action of the kidneys, yet is unified in one organ. Elisabeth argues that the classic texts confirm there is only one emperor represented as 'fire' – the ultimate yang: 'It is central because it is the ultimate place where everything converges and from whence everything emanates...it is the centre of the person, and of personal life, as the supreme pole, the centre and origin of the universe.' There are two meridians but only one *zang* or organ.

Elisabeth looks outside the usual classic texts, such as the *Neijing* and

*Nanjing* (while still including them, of course), and offers us quotations from *Huainanzi*, *Liji*, *Zhuangzi* and *Taisu*, which emphasise that the medical literature of the time was not a separate discipline but part of a fertile discussion of the nature of life, and the still-pertinent issue of how one is to lead a good, nourishing and contributing life. The context from which our medicine has emerged is vital to our understanding of how to apply it within our contemporary framework. This book helps us do this.

This text explores the meaning of each function or action attributed to the Heart *zang* and the significance of acupuncture points on the Heart and Heart master channels. The discussion I enjoyed the most was her understanding

of the emotions of the Heart. From the original characters, she teases out the difference between elation and joy, and why elation damages the Heart qi and joy represents the Heart sovereign 'harmony with oneself and harmony with the world and the myriad beings that live there'. Analysing the etymology of the characters, she identifies 'elation' as a hand beating a drum and a mouth singing – the excitement of pleasure that can become frenetic and out of control – while 'joy' is also a drum but is more constrained and organised into harmonious music ('music' and 'joy' share the same character) and contains, by definition, serenity and contentment. Joy rises up from the centre of one's heart; elation bursts forth, scattering and endangering the integrity of the heart.

I cannot recommend this book enough. I know we all struggle with the complexity of what we do: working with a medicine that is marginalised within our health care system, struggling to integrate perspectives from so many different sources, wanting to deliver a treatment to our patients that will strengthen them and transform their suffering, keeping out of the way of the 'scientism' assault and at the same time holding our heads high because of the effectiveness of our interventions. Elisabeth's book and Madelaine Moulder's translation will make your heart sing and confirm that you are in the right place; even if only for a short time, you will feel the resonance and beauty of our tradition.

*Reviewed by Sue Cochrane*

### *Hunyuan Xinfa: The Lost Heart of Medicine* (special edition)

By Yaron Seidman and Teja A Jaensch  
Hunyuan Group Inc., 2013  
ISBN 9780989167918

This collaborative book, written by both Australian (Teja Jaensch) and American (Yaron Seidman) practitioners, explores the philosophy and medical thought of Liu Yuan, an eminent Chinese thinker. Liu was an educator, religious thinker and medical philosopher who lived and taught in the Sichuan region between 1767 and 1855 and founded a stream of philosophy known as *Huai Xuan*. The book commences with a story, *Shi Yin Fu and the Ledger of Good and Evil*, which relates the tale of Mr Shi Yin Fu and his development of personal virtue and compassion and its effect on those around him. This story sets the standard for the following nine chapters of the book which explore medicine, philosophy, ethics, morality and psychology amongst other things in pursuit of the Chinese heart. The authors weave a philosophical journey exploring Liu Yuan's writings which are supplemented by their own thoughts

and interpretations. Interwoven are quotes, proverbs, poems and short stories drawn from both modern and ancient literature which explore various aspects of the human condition and how the concepts of Chinese medicine and the compassionate concern of the physician can affect the human heart. Some sections delve into concepts of emotion and sensory perception while others focus on the *taiji* and the five phases all the while concentrating on the explication of the Chinese notion of the heart. It argues for the primacy of the relationship between the practitioner and the patient and the need for compassion and understanding in the therapeutic encounter based on the cultivation of heart/mind from a Chinese philosophical perspective.

This is an unusual book, in that has no comparisons to other modern Chinese medicine texts and does not offer

immediate treatment strategies and lists of herbs and acupoint prescriptions. What it does offer is guiding principles based on Chinese medical philosophy in how to develop and maintain a therapeutic relationship with your patient and fellow humans. The text is supplemented by several appendices which contain the original Chinese language version of many of the key references to Liu Yuan's writings as well as the Shi Yin Fu story. If you are interested in exploring the concept of heart (*xin*) and its relationship to Chinese medicine this is the book for you. Hard cover and 391 pages in length, it is easy to read and will lead the reader on a moral and ethical journey to re-establish the heart of Chinese medicine back to its rightful position. We can all benefit from reading and reflecting on such a book.

*Reviewed by Chris Zaslawski*