The transformations of Chinese medicine during the Northern Song dynasty (A.D. 960--1127): The integration of three past medical approaches into a comprehensive medical system following a wave of epidemics

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Abstract
The subject of this dissertation is the history of Chinese medicine during the Northern Song dynasty and how changes in medical doctrines and practices mirrored corresponding transformations in state, society, and economy. More specifically, the dissertation traces and compares the doctrinal and clinical changes in three prevalent contemporary medical approaches, each a descendant from similar approaches that originated in the Han dynasty. The overarching thesis of this study is that by the end of the Northern Song dynasty the three medical approaches converged into one comprehensive medical system. A combination of several factors converged to bring about this integration: An unprecedented government activism resulting in part from emperors' interest in medicine, advancements in printing, a demographic shift southward resulting in a corresponding movement of the center of Chinese culture and economy, expansion in volume and characteristics of trade, and a wave of epidemics.

The argument of the dissertation develops along three parallel lines in accordance with the three medical approaches. Part I, Chapters One and Two, concentrates on the approach of cold damage disorders, roughly corresponding to contagious diseases, and how its revival facilitated the transformations in medicine. The revival of this approach was not incidental. In a reaction to a wave of epidemics that ravaged the empire, the government, searching for solutions, ordered a comprehensive revision of ancient medical texts and established an imperial pharmacy. Imperial officials revised and published a variety of medical books belonging to the three medical approaches including three versions of an ancient text discussing cold damage disorders. These government's actions triggered a cascade of events leading to the integration of the approaches.

Parts II and III follow the changes in the two other medical approaches. Part II, Chapter Three, traces the changes in the eclectic practice and its drug therapy showing that physicians slowly integrated the two genres of drug literature—materia medica and formularies. Part II, Chapters Four and Five, shows that due to certain government initiatives, such as systematizing medical education and standardizing the location of the acu-points by casting a bronze model, classical medicine was revived along with its acumoxa therapy.

Subject Area
History, Asia, Australia and Oceania|Health Sciences, Medicine and Surgery|History of Science

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