

# "Classical Chinese Medicine"

BY LIU LIHONG

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*Book Review by John Orsborn AP, DOM*

First of all, this is not a book to read, this is a book to study. The premise of the book is the importance of studying the classics of Chinese medicine and reaching a deeper understanding of the Shang Hun Lun. The author laments how the classics have been relegated to elective courses instead of being main course books in the education of Chinese medicine.

Being a classical acupuncturist myself, I was excited to read this book. The introduction by Heiner Fruehauf gives a detailed history of Chinese medicine in the 20th century and an excellent comparison of Classical Chinese Medicine to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), including a chart detailing the differences between TCM and Classical Chinese Medicine. TCM is a product of the integration of traditional healing arts with Western science over the past 70 years, of which Professor Liu is very critical. He doesn't discount the importance or place of Western science in traditional medicine; however he strongly believes in educating Chinese Medicine practitioners in the classic texts upon which this medicine is based.

Chapter One covers Professor Liu's thoughts on studying and researching Chinese Medicine, broken into three sections: Establishing a Correct Understanding, the Transmission of Knowledge, and Seeking a Method That Works - Relying on the Classics. The most important part of learning Chinese Medicine is understanding the theories behind the medicine, and there is no

better source for this than the classics, especially the Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Internal Classic) and the Nanjing (Classic of Difficulties).

Chapter Two explains the true meaning of the term "cold damage" according to the Nei Jing as well as the Shang Hun Lun, and how "cold damage" can present with heat signs. The principles of Yin and Yang, as they relate to this understanding of cold damage, are discussed at length.

Chapter Three is a further discussion of the function of Yin and Yang and how they relate to the Six Stages and pathology. Professor Liu believes students, as well as practitioners, should have a deep understanding of this principle which lies at the heart of Chinese medicine if they are to be truly effective Chinese medicine practitioners.

Chapter Four is the Essentials for Treating Disease, focused on the difference between the two ranks of physicians: the Lower Physician and the Higher Physician. Liu covers in great detail the techniques of diagnosis involving discovering the trigger of disease, the importance of the Six Qi (the six environmental factors), the Five Dominations (the 5 zang organs relationships), and the qi of the year and season (yunqi). Knowing the qi of the year and season dictates, according to Zhang Zhongjing, not only how, but when the patient should be administered herbal formulas.

Chapters Five through Ten are Professor Liu's detailed explanation of each of the

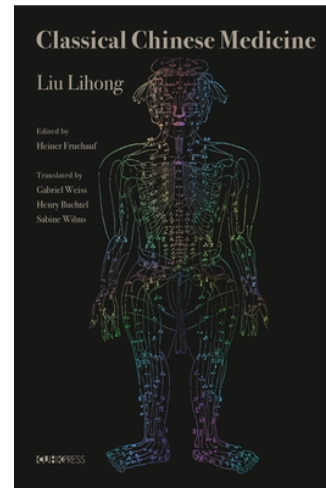
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Six Stages of the Shang Hun Lun (Treatise on Cold Damage) by Zhang Zhongjing, a book Liu considers one of the most important Chinese medicine classics. He begins with a detailed analysis of the importance of time "in relation to the advent and cure of disease," as well as the Five Phase (wuxing) correspondences and how they apply to diagnosis and treatment in the classical sense. Then Liu offers an explanation of the meaning of pulse and syndrome. Finally, each of the Six Stages is discussed at length including their symptoms, how and when they should be treated, and an explanation of Zhang's formula choices in relation to these concepts.

I was a little disappointed, however, to find that this book does not discuss acupuncture at all. Besides the emphasis on studying the theories of Chinese medicine as presented in the classics, the focus of treatment in this book is strictly herbal medicine. However, the detailed explanation of the classical theories presented in this book makes it a valuable study that will enhance the

acupuncturist's knowledge as well as the herbalist. A saying "from the ancients" that Professor Liu quotes is, "Read a book a hundred times and its meaning will be self-evident." That saying sums up this book precisely. It is a fountain of knowledge that must be studied and not just read.



John Orsborn, A.P., D.O.M. owns Tao of Wellbeing Acupuncture Clinic LLC in Bradenton, FL, and is an Adjunct Professor at East West College of Natural Medicine in Sarasota, FL. His undergraduate studies were in Chinese philosophy, which he has studied for over 40 years. Dr. John utilizes his knowledge of Daoist philosophy to enhance and further understand the classical texts of Chinese medicine and increase his understanding of classical acupuncture.

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