



H.C. Lu
A Complete Translation of
The Yellow Emperor's Classics



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outstanding scholars around the 3rd century B.C. This invaluable and first Chinese medical classic stood for an excellent presentation of past experiences that had been accumulated from the days Chinese medicine began to be practised in ancient China.

The Chinese believe that the practice of Chinese medicine in China dates back to the time of Yellow Emperor around 2,600 B.C., primarily on the ground that this gigantic classic was attributed to Yellow Emperor himself. This implies that Chinese medicine had already been practiced in China for over two thousand years before Nei-Jing was first published.

The position of Nei-Jing in Chinese medicine may be compared to that of Plato's Republic in Western philosophy and that of Shakespeare in English literature, for the good reason that the classic in question had, since its first publication, become the most authoritative guidance for the practice of Chinese medicine. It had become the foundations of Chinese medicine in the same way as the thought of Confucius had become the foundations of Chinese philosophy. Very few, if any, Chinese physicians of traditional Chinese medicine would challenge the basic contents of this celebrated classic to this day.

A Chinese historical document made mention of eighteen books contained in the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine and thirty-seven books in the Yellow Emperor's Classic of External Medicine, namely, eighteen books in Nei-Jing and thirty-seven books in Wai-Jing. However, the Wai-Jing or the Yellow Emperor's Classic of External Medicine had been completely lost in the course of history. The ancient Chinese always attributed the theory of yin and yang to Yellow Emperor. A Chinese philosopher in the past explained, "Most Chinese people are in the habit of respecting the past and despising the present, which is why most fundamental theories are attributed to ancient kings." Another Chinese historical document contains this statement, "There are more than ten schools of thought dealing with yin and yang theory all of which attribute their origins to Yellow Emperor."

To be on the safe side, it may be maintained that Nei-Jing was published not earlier than the Xi Zhou dynasty (770 - 256 BC) and not later than the Dong Han dynasty (AD 25 - 220), but judging from the language and style of Nei-Jing, most Chinese historians are of the opinion that it was most probably written around the 3rd century BC. A distinguished historian in ancient China who had written commentary on acupuncture classics said, "There is convincing evidence to assert that Nei-Jing was written during the Warring periods (478 - 221 BC). And although the contents of Su-Wen take the form of

a dialogue between Yellow Emperor and Qi-Bo, some Chinese historians pointed out different styles of writing in different chapters and concluded that they must have been written by different authors. For example, some chapters of Su-Wen make mention of midnight, dawn, sunset, sunrise, etc. without mentioning the twelve terrestrial branches. The chapters that discuss midnight and sunset and sunrise, etc. were most probably written by the authors in the Qin dynasty (221 - 206 BC), and the chapters that discuss ten stems and twelve branches were most probably written by the authors in the Han dynasty (AD 206 - 220).

In addition, there are chapters dealing with energy circulation, which were presumably written by Wang Bing in the Tang dynasty (AD 618 - 907), which include chapters 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 74. The above chapters of Su-Wen were written in the style very visibly different from other chapters.

Was Ling-Shu originally part of Nei-Jing? Was Ling-Shu written before or after Su-Wen? Was Ling-Shu an authentic work or was it a fake work? Such are the questions frequently raised by Chinese historians. In spite of the fact that different historians have presented different answers to the above questions, one thing is certain: all Chinese physicians have taken Ling-Shu very seriously and regarded it as the fundamental guidance in the practice of Chinese herbalism and acupuncture.

1-2 Revisions of Nei-Jing.

1-2-1 How Nei-Jing was handed down since its publication.

It is generally believed that Nei-Jing contains over 140,000 Chinese ideograms altogether. Many subsequent Chinese classics contain numerous quotations from Nei-Jing and also contain numerous footnotes on the contents of Nei-Jing. For example, Nan-Jing was basically an elaboration on Nei-Jing with many important new developments for sure.

Wang Bing (王冰) was the most important physician in compiling and revising the text of Nei-Jing. The consensus among Chinese historians is that the seven chapters dealing with the theory of energy circulation and the portion that deals with the same theory in Chapter 9 of Su-Wen were actually written by Wang Bing (王冰) himself, as judged from the writing styles in those chapters. After Wang Bing (王冰) added the seven chapters to Su-Wen, two more chapters were still missing with only the titles remaining, which include Chapter 72 On the methods of needle insertion (刺法論) and Chapter 73 On the origins of diseases (本病論). The two missing

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