5 Nurturing the Foetus in Medieval China: Illustrating the 10 Months of Pregnancy in the *Ishimpō* 醫心方

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Introduction

This article discusses 10 depictions of the naked female body that are found in the first chapter of *juan* 22 in the *Ishimpō* 醫心方 (*Yixinfang*, Formulary from the Heart of Medicine). This Japanese compilation of medieval Chinese medical texts is one of the most important sources for fragments of otherwise lost early Chinese gynaecological literature.¹ It was completed in 982 by Tamba no Yasuyori 丹波康賴, an acupuncturist at the Japanese court. Based on his research in early Japanese medicine, Mayanagi Makoto proposes that Tamba limited his role to compiling Chinese texts without editing or imposing his own medical ideas on the material.² Apparently, the only elements he added to the texts are punctuation marks and minimal notes on Japanese pronunciation and the meaning of rare characters, which are easily distinguished from the main text because they are written in red ink (see Fig. 1) as opposed to the black writing of the source texts. As a reason for this, Mayanagi suggests that Japanese indigenous medicine was, at that time, still in its infancy, and texts from China were therefore treated with great reverence and transmitted faithfully. This view has also been widely accepted by contemporary Chinese historians and textual researchers who frequently consult the *Ishimpō* as an early source for textual variations

of Chinese medical literature. In the context of formulas for women, found in *juan* 21 to 24, the *Ishimpō* is of the greatest significance, with quotations not only from such well-known received texts as the *Beiji qianjin yaofang* 備急千金要方 (Essential Formulas Worth a Thousand in Gold for Emergencies) and the *Zhubing yuanhou lun* 諸病源候論 (On the Origin and Symptoms of the Various Diseases), but also from several lost texts, including the *Chanjing* 產經 (Classic of Childbirth). Directly concerning the topic of this chapter, the first chapter of *juan* 22, titled 妊婦脈圖月禁法 *renfu maitu yuejin fa* (Charts of the Channels and Method of Monthly Prohibitions During Pregnancy), is marked as a quotation from this text. I shall therefore briefly introduce this text.

The *Chanjing* 產經 (Classic of Childbirth)

The dating of the *Chanjing* is still subject to debate. The *Nihonkoku Genzaisho Mokuroku* 日本國見在書目 (Catalogue of Extant Books in Japan), the oldest Japanese bibliography from the late 9th century, records a 'Chanjing in 12 *juan*, authored by De Zhenchang 德貞常 and with three *juan* of illustrations'. For a variety of reasons, this text is most likely the one referred to by Tamba no Yasuyori. It

Figure 5.1 Table of Contents of *Ishimpō*, vol. 22 (982 CE), Seikido Library Scroll (1145 CE). Photographic facsimile © Vivienne Lo

- 1 For a detailed analysis of the sources for the text, see Ma Jixing 1985.
- 2 Pers. comm.

must therefore have been composed before the end of the Tang dynasty. A *Chanjing* in one *juan* is also recorded in the bibliographic catalogue of the Sui dynasty, the *Suishu jingji zhi* 隋書經籍志. Unfortunately, the author of this text, De Zhenchang, is not found in the historical records and we can therefore not determine the precise date of the composition of the *Chanjing* at this point. However, the citations of this text in the *Ishimpō* contain quotations from the *Geshifang* 葛氏方 (Master Ge's Formulary), a text composed by the illustrious alchemist and Daoist Ge Hong 葛洪. Thus we know at least that the text must have been composed after the lifetime of Ge Hong, namely 261–341. On the collective basis of this evidence, we can conclude with Mayanagi Makoto that 'the drawings in this text constitute the earliest illustrations in the world to systematically portray the development of the foetus during the 10 months of pregnancy'.³

The chapter that is titled 妊婦脈圖月禁法 *renfu maitu yuejingfa* (Charts of the Channels and Method of Monthly Prohibitions During Pregnancy) consists of the above-mentioned 10 drawings of a naked woman during each of the 10 months of pregnancy, as well as an accompanying text that is identified as a *Chanjing* quotation. This text offers an example of literature on nurturing the foetus, *yangtai* 養胎, the roots of which are found in earlier Chinese medical literature.

Early Chinese Literature on 'Nurturing the Foetus' (*Yangtai* 養胎)

The Mawangdui Taichanshu 胎產書 (Book of Gestation and Birth)

To make sense of the drawings that form the main topic of this chapter, we need to first contextualise the accompanying text. It is composed of several textual layers that can be traced back in surprisingly similar form to earlier Chinese sources on 'nurturing the foetus', a type of literature that discussed the development and nurturance of the foetus; the affected internal organs, channels, and other parts of the mother's body; various prohibitions and recommendations regarding the mother's foods, activities, sights, sounds, and emotions; as well as supplementary, preventative, and curative medicinal prescriptions for symptoms likely to occur at specific times in pregnancy. The earliest extant example of this literature is found in a Mawangdui manuscript that the modern editors have named *Taichanshu* 胎產書 (Book of Gestation and Birth), dated to before 168 BCE. This silk manuscript includes the

earliest preserved core of *yangtai* literature. It is a month-by-month account of gestation with information on the phase associated with each month, features of foetal development characteristic of that month, and related to this, dietary and behavioural prescriptions for the mother. The following is a representative example:

In the fourth month, Water is bestowed on the foetus and blood first forms. Appropriate foods are rice, wheat, and mud eel, which clarify the blood and brighten the eyes.

In the fifth month, fire is bestowed on it, and Qi first forms. Rise late and wash the hair. Wear a thick layer of clothing and remain inside the house... .

After the first three months, the text associates the foetal development in each month with one of the five phases [elsewhere in this volume translated 'agents'] in the order of conquest, with the addition of Stone in the ninth month. Thus, in the fourth month, the formation of blood is related to the bestowal of Water; in the fifth month, the formation of Qi to the bestowal of Fire; in the sixth, the formation of muscle to Metal; in the seventh, the formation of bone to Wood; and in the eighth, the formation of skin to Earth. In the ninth month, finally, the formation of hair is related to Stone, and in the 10th month, 'Qi spreads to form [?]'. Different versions of this text, sometimes in almost verbatim citations, are found in several of the standard medieval medical texts, such as the *Beiji qianjin yaofang* and the *Zhubing yuanhou lun*.

Xu Zhicai Zhuyue Yangtai Fang 徐之才逐月養胎方 (*Xu Zhicai's Month-by-Month Formulas for Nurturing the Foetus*)

For a second example of *yangtai* literature, we can consult Sun Simiao's *Beiji qianjin yaofang* (*Qianjinfang* for short), a medical encyclopaedia with over 5,000 entries in the form of medicinal formulas interspersed with acu-moxa prescriptions, household recipes, ritual instructions, and occasional short essays, composed around 652 CE. An almost literal, but greatly expanded variation of the Mawangdui account of gestation is found in the second scroll, the first of three scrolls on 'women's formulas', in the third chapter on nurturing the foetus. The section is identified as a quotation and is titled *Xu Zhicai zhuyue yangtai fang* 徐之才逐月養胎方 (*Xu Zhicai's Month-by-Month Formulas for Nurturing the Foetus*). It is one of the rare instances where we can trace the information from the *Qianjinfang* back to an earlier source. The alleged author Xu Zhicai is known as a physician of the Northern Qi period (550–77), who supposedly lived from 493 to 572. He is the author of several lost texts, such as the *Duiyao* 對藥 (A Comparison of Medicinals), *Jia chuan mi fang* 家傳

3 Mayanagi 2005.

秘方 (Secret Prescriptions Handed Down in the Family), *Xiao er fang* 小兒方 (Paediatric Prescriptions) and others, none of which have survived except as quotations in other texts. Well versed in the medical arts, he is said to have specialised in medicinal formulas, in particular for women and children. Sun Simiao thus claims to be using a 6th-century source.

The *Qianjinfang* section on 'Nurturing the Foetus' begins with a short essay on the importance of proper maternal behaviour and environment in the third month of pregnancy when 'the foetus changes and transforms in response to things and its disposition and character are not yet fixed'. This is followed by a list of dietary prohibitions during pregnancy of a decidedly magical flavour. Next, the bulk of this chapter consists of a substantially enlarged version of the account of gestation found in the *Taichanshu*, which quotes this text almost literally but then continues for each month with a second textual layer. The following quotation illustrates Sun's additions with the example of the fifth month of pregnancy:

...In the fifth month of pregnancy, the Foot Greater Yin Vessel nourishes [the foetus], and you must not needle or burn moxa on this channel. The Foot Greater Yin [channel] is associated with the spleen.

During the fifth month, the child's four limbs are all being developed. [The woman] must avoid both great hunger and over-eating; she must not eat dried or parched food; she must not get overheated; and she must not become taxed and fatigued.

Formula

ass hide glue (阿膠 *ejiao*) 4 *liang*
 inula (旋覆花 *xuanfuhua*) 2 *ge*
 ophiopogon (麥門冬 *maimendong*) 1 *sheng*
 ginseng (人參 *renshen*) 1 *liang*
 evodia (吳茱萸 *wuzhuyu*) 7 *ge*
 fresh ginger (生薑 *shengjiang*) 6 *liang*
 Chinese angelica (當歸 *danggui*)
 peony (芍藥 *shaoyao*)
 liquorice (甘草 *gancao*)
 scutellaria (黃芩 *huangqin*) 2 *liang* each

Pound the 10 ingredients above and decoct the drugs in nine *sheng* of water until reduced by half. Add 3 *sheng* of clear liquor as well as the ass hide glue and simmer on a small flame to obtain 3½ *sheng*. Divide into four doses and take before meals, three times during the day and once at night. After this, [she should] recover. If there is no difference [in her condition], take another [preparation].

Another [version of this prescription]: Butcher one black hen, take the blood from its throat, and put it in the liquor. Cook the chicken in the water and then simmer the drugs in

this until reduced by half. Add the liquor and ass hide glue and simmer it to obtain 3½ *sheng*. Divide into four doses.

In cases of any injury to the foetus during the fifth month, [the patient] should take Centre-Quieting Decoction as a precaution.

As this example shows, the information from the *Taichanshu* is elaborated on with several additional features, all of which appear for each of the 10 months of gestation. These textual layers reflect developments in medical knowledge that occurred between the compositions of these two texts, that is, between 168 BCE and the 5th to 6th centuries CE.

First, each month of gestation has become associated with a specific channel, which must not be manipulated by acupuncture or moxibustion during that month since it is responsible for nurturing the foetus. On the basis of acupuncture prohibition texts such as Dunhuang medical manuscripts from the Sui to Tang periods or the 'Method for Avoiding Caution and Needling According to the Waxing and Waning of the Moon' in the *Huangdi hama jing* 黃帝蝦蟆經 (Yellow Emperor's Toad Canon), which will be discussed in greater detail below,⁴ we know that the practice of acupuncture had become so widespread by early medieval times that physicians felt the need to publish entire texts on acupuncture prohibitions, to warn against the reckless practice and abuse of this therapy during specific times and occasions. I will return to this genre in greater detail in the context of acupuncture charts below.

Next, the essay offers an alternative account of foetal development, which must have stemmed from a different and later source, as it occasionally contradicts the earlier account, but reflects standard medical theory as it was canonised during the Han period, particularly in regards to the correlation of specific channels with viscera and physiological functions. For example, the *Taichanshu* version associates the fifth month with the phase Fire and the formation of Qi. The later version in addition associates the fifth month with the Spleen, its associated channel, the Foot Greater Yin, and with the development of the limbs. In standard classical theory, the limbs had by late Han times come to be associated with the Stomach, which was paired with the Spleen. Given the association of the Spleen/Stomach with Earth among the five phases in medical theory, this contradicts the above association of the fifth month with Fire. In early China, the five phases were predominantly arranged in the sequence of conquest: Water conquers Fire, which conquers Metal, which conquers Wood, which conquers Earth, and so on. This is

4 For more information on this text, see Lo 2001.

directly reflected in the sequence of the months of gestation in the *Taichanshu* from the fourth to the eighth month, where Water (the fourth month) conquers Fire (the fifth month), which conquers Metal (sixth month) and so forth. This sequence of gestational development is unrelated to the progression of channels and visceral functions found in the expanded medieval version, which, from the fifth month on, follows the cycle of generation (Fire > Earth > Metal > Water > Wood) through paired Yin and Yang channels, as explained for example in the progression of pulse diagnosis in the *Nanjing* 難經 (Classic of Difficult Issues), a text from the 1st century CE.⁵ Xu Zhicai's version thus combines two alternate yet unrelated sequences, both of which progress in accordance with the five-phase system of correspondences and reflect standard medical theories of their times.

Attached to the essays, each month's account contains two medicinal prescriptions, one as a preventative treatment for symptoms likely to occur during that month, and the second as 'a treatment in case of any damage to the foetus during that month'. The list of symptoms in particular illustrates nicely the sophistication and concern with which male physicians studied and observed the course of a woman's pregnancy, in order to alleviate as much of the strain of childbearing as possible. In contrast to earlier prescription literature such as the *Jingui yaolüe*, 金匱要略 (Essential Prescriptions from the Golden Cabinet), the specificity of Sun Simiao's lists of symptoms, and particularly the association of individual symptoms with specific aetiologies, is remarkable. For this development, we can most likely thank Chao Yuanfang 巢元方, the author of the *Zhubing yuanhou lun* 諸病源候論 (On the Origins and Symptoms of the Various Diseases), which was composed around 610 CE, only decades before the *Qianjinfang*. As the title implies, this text discussed medicine from the perspective of aetiology and symptomology, and was the first to attempt a systematic categorisation of specifically female disorders in eight scrolls. This text contains yet another version of the month-by-month description of gestation, very similar to the *Qianjinfang*. By comparison to that text, it lacks the prescriptions, but instead gives advice on pulse diagnosis, beginning with the third month of pregnancy. This merely reflects the nature and intention of each text, the former being a formulary focused on therapy and the latter essentially a symptomology concerned with the classification of disease.

The parallel structure and wording of information for each month in this chapter suggests that these prescrip-

tions were an integral part of the text called 'Xu Zhicai's Month-by-Month Prescriptions for Nurturing the Foetus', but the full extent of Sun Simiao's involvement in shaping this chapter is impossible to reconstruct since we do not have access to the original. Given the fact that the *Qianjinfang* is the only instance where prescriptions are added to the text, it is quite possible that Sun Simiao himself inserted the prescriptions to make the text more fitting for the framework of his book. Since the descriptions of gestation, the association with the channels and viscera, and the behavioural and dietary prohibitions are found in almost identical wording in other texts that precede the *Qianjinfang*, we can at least be certain that these aspects of 'Xu Zhicai's Month-by-Month Prescriptions' were adopted from an earlier source.

The *Renshen Mai Tu Yue Jin Fa* 妊娠脈圖月禁法 (Charts of the Channels and Method of Monthly Prohibitions during Pregnancy)

1. The *Chanjing* Quotation

We are now ready to compare the two texts discussed above, namely the Mawangdui version and the *Qianjinfang* version, to the *Chanjing* quotation that is cited side-by-side with the 10 drawings in the *Ishimpō*: This text again includes the account of gestation from the *Taichanshu*. The differences between these three texts are so small as to be mostly insignificant. For example, the foetus in the fourth month is said, according to the *Taichanshu*, to receive the essence of water and form blood (成氣 *cheng qi*). Both the *Zhubing yuanhou lun* and the *Qianjinfang* add only one character, which however does not affect the meaning of the phrase: 成其氣 *cheng qi qi* (form its Qi). Most likely based on a scribal error, the *Chanjing* states that the foetus 'fills in blood and Qi' (盛血氣). This contradicts the statement in all three texts for the third month, where the foetus is said to 'fill in blood' (盛血 *cheng xue*, in the *Taichanshu*) and to 'fill the blood in the channels' (盛血脈 *cheng xue mai*, in the *Chanjing*, *Qianjinfang*, and *Zhubing yuanhou lun*). For another example of what appears to be a textual corruption in the *Chanjing*, the *Chanjing* states that the bones are completed in the fourth month, while the form is completed in the sixth month. The *Qianjinfang* has these developments in the opposite order, stating that the sinews and bones are established in the sixth month. This accords better with another statement in all texts that the sinews are formed in the sixth month.

Table 1 illustrates the variations in the account of gestation from the fourth to the ninth month between the texts, juxtaposing them with standard correlative theory

5 *Nanjing* 18. See the translation and commentaries in Unschuld, 1986, pp. 243–58, especially the table on p. 256.

Table 5.1 Variations in the Account of Gestation between the Texts

Month 月	Phase 五行	Standard theory: - Viscus - Body part	<i>Taichanshu</i> 胎產書	<i>Qianjinfang</i> 千金方	<i>Chanjing</i> 產經
4	Water	- Kidney - Bone	Blood	Blood/channels - Hand lesser Yang - Triple burner	Blood/channels - Hand lesser Yang - Upper burner
5	Fire	- Heart - Channels	Qi	Qi - Foot greater Yin - Spleen	Blood and Qi - Foot greater Yin - Spleen
6	Metal	- Lung - Skin and hair	Sinews	Sinews - Foot Yang brilliance - Stomach	Sinews and bone - Foot Yang brilliance - Stomach
7	Wood	- Liver - Sinews	Bones	Bones - Hand greater Yin - Lung	Bones and marrow - Hand greater Yin - Lung
8	Earth	- Spleen - Flesh	Skin and hide	Skin and hide - Hand Yang brilliance - Large intestine	Skin and hide - Hand Yang brilliance - Large intestine
9	Stone		Filament hair	Hair on the skin - Foot lesser Yin - Kidney	Hair on skin - Foot lesser Yin - Kidney

as it was settled in the *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經 around the turn of the Common Era.⁶

From this comparison, we can deduce several facts. First, the information is largely consistent within the three citations of the account of gestation that is first found in the *Taichanshu*, down to an almost exact wording. This suggests that all three of them were based on a source that was transmitted in writing and therefore quoted literally. The minor deviations appear to be scribal errors of the type frequently found when comparing several versions of the same text in medieval medical literature. Second, the inclusion of the standard five phases (Water, Fire, Metal, Wood, and Earth) in this account shows that it was influenced by the theory of systematic correspondences. Moreover, the progression of phases follows the standard order according to the cycle of conquest (*xiang ke* 相克). Nevertheless, the significance of the five-phase system of correspondences remains superficial; the associations between phase, body constituent, and dietary and behavioural prohibitions do not yet accord with standard classical theory.

By contrast, the information on the channels prohibited for acu-moxa treatment in each month must be a later textual layer and is therefore not found in the *Taichanshu* quotation. The channel names and organ associations of this later layer are identical in the *Qianjinfang* and *Chanjing* versions and moreover accord directly with standard medical theory. They must therefore stem from a source that

postdates the composition of the *Huangdi nei jing*. This coincides with the fact that both the *Qianjinfang* and the *Ishimpō* credit a post-Han text as their source. As we do not know the exact dates of composition for their source texts, it is impossible at this point to determine the original author of this textual layer on acu-moxa prohibitions. We only know that between the 4th and 6th centuries this text must have circulated widely enough to be quoted with slight variations by two different authors, both of whose source texts are now lost. Both the *Qianjinfang* and the *Ishimpō* quotations contain textual elements in the sections on acu-moxa prohibitions that are not found in the other source. This could mean an even earlier date for the composition of yet another original source, predating both Xu Zhicai 徐之才 (said to have lived from 493 to 572) and De Zhenchang (between 341 and 589, the beginning of the Sui dynasty). It could also indicate that the two sources came from different textual traditions, namely that Sun Simiao's source was a formulary and Tamba no Yasuyori's source an acu-moxa manual. However, given the fact that Tamba was the official acupuncturist at the imperial court and therefore had a personal interest in acupuncture over medicinal prescriptions, it is also possible that the additional acu-moxa-related information was inserted by him, whether it originated from his own hands or from yet another Chinese source.

6 See Unschuld, 2003, pp. 99–123.

Figure 5.2 Drawings of the pregnant female body, here displaying foetal development during months 6–8 of the 10 months of pregnancy. *Ishimpō* 231 (982 CE). Seikido Library Scroll (1145 CE). Photographic facsimile © Vivienne Lo

2. The 10 Drawings

In addition to the text found in the other sources, the *Ishimpō* citation of the *Chanjing* contains two further elements: an exact, point-by-point description of each channel's location and, more importantly for the context of this publication, 10 line drawings. These depict the naked female body with the foetus inside the abdomen, prohibited acu-moxa points, and certain physiological features that are considered significant in each month of pregnancy. These drawings are the earliest extant visual representations of the naked female body in Chinese medicine, and of the development of the foetus worldwide. In addition to the acu-moxa point locations, the sparse line drawings also show the overall changes in the pregnant woman's body and anatomical features significant in any particular month, such as the corresponding internal organ, as described in the accompanying text. They also depict in detail the changes in the development of the foetus, from a small round lump to an increasingly humanlike form with gradually differentiated limbs, by the seventh month with distinct extremities, by the eighth month with tiny dots presumably representing the orifices in the skin that are said, in the accompanying text, to develop during this month, and finally to a fully developed monkey-like figure in the 10th month, drawn sitting up because it is too big to fit in the abdomen lengthwise. By the 10th month, the mother is depicted as a markedly voluptuous figure, drawn in curvy lines from the side, with partially visible but clearly enlarged breasts, a spinal cord sagging from the weight of the foetus, bulging thighs, and an abdomen that is protruding so far outward and downward as to be clearly at an uncomfortable and temporary stage, to be succeeded shortly by delivery (Fig. 3).

Several points can be noted from these drawings. First, the information conveyed in the pictures offers far more

than a mere depiction of prohibited acu-moxa point locations, as one might expect the purpose of these drawings to be. They also provide a visual account of the changes in a woman's body and in the development of the foetus during the 10 months of gestation, complementing the medical advice found in the text. The illustrations can therefore be considered as yet another layer of information on prenatal care that was based on the account first found in the *Taichanshu*. They testify to the interest with which male physicians treated and investigated the female body in its reproductive functions.

Second, the drawings are executed with such attention to anatomical detail, while still in accordance with the accompanying text, that they must have been based on clinical experience and continued observation of the naked female body as it passed through the 10 months of pregnancy.

Third, for each month the artist depicted the entire female body, the foetus, the most important points to be avoided, as well as different anatomical features that play a special role in the nurturance of the foetus during that month. Furthermore, the points are connected through red lines that have been the subject of continuing scholarly debate. They have been interpreted as acupuncture channels by many scholars especially in Japan, which is strongly suggested by their shape and form. Nevertheless, they are not identical with the standard course of the channels that are identified in the accompanying text as responsible for nurturing the foetus during that month. By the Tang period, which is the likely date of composition for the *Chanjing*, the position of these channels was certainly agreed upon generally. Thus, these lines must be depicting something besides the course of the channels mentioned in the text. What exactly that might be remains unknown. In addition, it is possible that the red lines might not even

Figure 5.3 Drawing of the pregnant female body in the 10th month of pregnancy. *Ishimpō* 23: (982 CE) Seikido Library Scroll (1145 CE). Photographic facsimile © Vivienne Lo

have been part of the original drawing. We will return to this question below. In any case, the drawings in general and the red lines in particular suggest a notion of pregnancy as affecting the female body as a whole, in ever-changing constellations of supply and demand of vital substances from the entire body to the foetus, rather than just being limited to the provision of blood and Qi from the kidneys to the uterus. In any given month, the foetus is shown as surrounded, suspended, held in place, or even cradled by the red lines and physiological features. This visually reinforces the idea that these are nurturing and protecting the foetus in that month and may not therefore be manipulated with acupuncture or moxibustion. Before the

days of ultrasound, these pictures must have been highly suggestive and formative in the reader's mind.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, the absence of any clothing or drapes to partially conceal the body is striking, given the general modesty in early and medieval Chinese art. The stark nudity of these images is reinforced by the posture of the woman, depicted from the front in an upright position that reveals the full details of her figure (except for the last two pictures which show her from the back and side).

The early history of medical illustrations in China is full of question marks and has yet to be written. The Mawangdui manuscripts offer the earliest traces of medical

Figure 5.4 *Huangdi hama jing*, sect. 1 'Huangdi hama tu sui yue shenghui bi jiupan fa 黃帝蝦蟆圖隨月生毀避灸判法' (Yellow Emperor's Toad Chart: method for avoiding cautery and pain according to the waxing and waning of the moon'), Beijing: Zhongyi guji, 1984

drawings of the human body in China: first, we find pictures of different body postures that complement textual information on physical cultivation by depicting exercise positions (*Daoyin tu* 導引圖). Second, the Mawangdui manuscript on sexual cultivation called *He yinyang* (合陰陽 Conjoining Yin and Yang) contains a poorly preserved stylised depiction of the vagina that aims at providing the male reader with technical information on female anatomy to maximise his ability to stimulate the female body during sexual intercourse and thereby obtain optimal health benefits. Lastly, we find a similarly damaged picture of two figures for prognosticating the newborn child's future, in the above-mentioned manuscript titled *Taichanshu*, which also contains the information on nurturing the foetus discussed above. For the following centuries, evidence is too fragmentary to reconstruct a pictorial tradition. The bibliographic catalogue of the Sui dynasty is the first to contain references to illustrations, none of which have unfortunately survived to the present. The titles suggest primarily illustrations for depicting acu-moxa point locations, known generally under the title *Mingtang tu* 明堂圖 (Charts of the Hall of Brightness) and mentioned in such received classics as the *Qianjinfang* and *Waitai miyao* as intended to provide additional information to the textual descriptions.

For the closest stylistic relatives to the 10 *Chanjing* charts of the pregnant body, we have to turn to depictions of the naked male body, of which several have survived in manu-

scripts.⁷ The earliest extant Chinese moxibustion charts, titled *Jiufa tu* 灸法圖 (Charts of Moxibustion Methods, S.6168 and S.6262), were found among the medical manuscripts at Dunhuang. Similar to the *Chanjing* charts, the bodies are depicted with simple line drawings that reveal such anatomical structures as the nipples, sternum, and ribs, show the typical medieval hairstyle of topknots on each side of the head, and mark the important acu-moxa points for treatment with dots on the figure and lines extending to the side of the image where the points are named. While the genitals in these figures are covered with tiny loincloths, another moxibustion chart (P.3589, titled *Xinji beiji jiujiing* 新集備急灸經, 'Classic of Emergency Moxibustion, Newly Collected') depicts an elderly male figure in the nude, in the context of a treatise on physiognomy. All images from Dunhuang share a distinctive style of depicting the body reminiscent of images of meditating Buddhas.

For a last, even more closely related image of the naked human body in a Chinese medical text, let us turn to the *Huangdi hama jing* 黃帝蝦蟆經 (Yellow Emperor's Toad Classic), which exists in a single surviving copy as a Japanese woodblock print from 1823 (Fig. 4). Sharing not only pictorial, but also textual similarities with the *Chanjing* quotation as another example of medical prohibition literature, this text discusses the days and times during which acu-moxa treatment is contra-indicated due

7 For a more detailed description of these images, see Lo 2001, pp. 75–81.

Figure 5.5 Drawings of the female body in the 3rd and 10th months of pregnancy, with the foetus and prohibited acu-moxa channels. *Ishimpō* 23:1 (982 CE). Cabinet Library Scroll (1791 CE)

to astrological prohibitions. Like the Dunhuang drawings discussed here, it marks acu-moxa points on the human body and connects these with lines to names on the side, thus clearly being intended for practical application. Unlike the *Chanjing* charts, none of these images depict channels, if that is what the red lines are, nor do they reflect any association with vessel and visceral theory. It is therefore possible that they originated in a more popular context of medical practice than the scholarly elite tradition of texts like the *Qianjinfang*.

A last question concerns the authenticity of the images in the *Chanjing*, given the fact that the text was not printed on woodblock until 1859. The earliest version of this text currently extant is the Seikido Library Scroll 成實堂文庫本. This is based on a reconstruction that was made with the help of several manuscript copies after the original was destroyed in a palace fire in 1145. In this version (depicted in the images above of the pregnant woman during months six to eight and in the 10th month), the pregnant woman is drawn in a Chinese style, with a chignon typical for the period of its composition in China. This would suggest that the copiers of the charts made every effort to remain faithful to the Chinese original. By contrast, another version of the images, found in the so-called Cabinet Library Scrolls 桂仙堂文庫本, based on a copy made in 1791 from yet another manuscript, depicts a woman with long flowing hair and pubic hair in a style clearly reminiscent of contemporaneous Japanese art.

The images we are looking at are therefore Japanese copies, multiple times removed from the early medieval Chinese original. We also need to take into account that the Chinese original of the *Ishimpō* version, that is, the *Chanjing* quotation, was already a composite of at least three textual layers that we have identified above, namely the account of gestation found in the *Taichanshu*, the information on the channels that is found both in the *Qianjinfang* and the *Ishimpō*, and lastly the additional information on acu-moxa point locations and the drawings, which are found exclusively in the *Ishimpō*. Considering the nudity of the images and the fact that the compiler of the *Ishimpō*, Tamba no Yasuyori, was personally invested in the practice of acupuncture, it might be tempting to dismiss the images as Japanese insertions into a Chinese original source. However, the Dunhuang charts of acu-moxa locations discussed above prove not only that an indigenous Chinese tradition of depicting nudity in a medical context existed, but also that acupuncture texts were indeed used and applied in conjunction with charts very similar in style to the images in the *Ishimpō*, which is also confirmed by references to *Mingtang tu* in the received literature. In addition, numerous studies of the relationship between the *Ishimpō* and its Chinese sources have shown that Tamba no Yasuyori did indeed merely compile his Chinese sources without inserting additional material, with the exception of punctuation marks and short notes on pronunciation and meaning, which are clearly marked off from the main text by their red colour. It is indeed suspicious that the mysterious red lines in the drawings are also drawn in this colour. In any case, whether the red lines are a Japanese insertion, stem from yet another Chinese text, or were an integral part of the original *Chanjing* source, the information gained from these pregnancy charts cannot be dismissed in any discussion of medieval Chinese gynaecology.

Conclusion

In spite of the lack of primary sources, the continuity of content between the accounts of gestation and month-by-month prohibitions during pregnancy in the *Taichanshu*, the *Qianjinfang*, and the *Chanjing* suggests an uninterrupted literary tradition of increasing complexity, reflecting male interest and involvement in women's reproductive processes. The context, purpose, and audience of this literature changed over the centuries, influencing the focus of a particular text, but the similarities and at times literary equivalence stand out. The *Chanjing* quotation in the *Ishimpō* adds significant information by including

pictures of the changes in the pregnant female body, the development of the foetus, prohibited acu-moxa point locations – connected possibly by channels or simple lines – and significant physiological features in the 10 months of pregnancy, as well as more complete descriptions of the channel course in the accompanying text. The drawings mark this text as intended for direct clinical application, possibly addressing a more professionalised readership than the Dunhuang manuscripts, which were directed at popular consumption in a remote military outpost. By contrast, the readership of the *Ishimpō* consisted of Japanese physicians who were intent on learning the more advanced arts of Chinese medical practice, of which acupuncture was considered the most dramatic expression. The female body in these charts is depicted in stark nudity, which could certainly have been avoided with modest drapes, accessories, or positions without interfering with the purpose of the illustrations. However, it can be argued on the basis of archaeological evidence that the depiction of a nude body in the context of acu-moxa charts might not have been as rare or atypical as we might believe from the received literature. In addition, the revealing posture and lack of clothing offered interested readers a comprehensive impression not only of the prohibited acu-moxa points, but also of the general development of the female body and the foetus during the 10 months of pregnancy, certainly a topic of great relevance for a practising physician. The inclusion of elements of channel and visceral theory might mark this text as addressing an educated professional readership that was familiar with advanced medical theory, in contrast to the more popular manuals of acu-moxa therapy found at Dunhuang and in the *Huangdi hama jing*. In conclusion, the development of *yangtai* literature represents the confluence of cosmological and Yin-Yang theory, rudimentary gynaecological notions, formulary literature, acu-moxa charts, and vessel theory, all of which express a growing awareness of the special needs of women's bodies, especially in the context of reproduction.

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