PART 6

Imagining Modern Medicine

31 Places and Traces: Selections from Professor Ma Kanwen's 馬堪溫 *Ethnography* of 1955

*Abridged by Penelope Barrett with an Introduction by Vivienne Lo 羅維前**

This chapter presents the ethnographic journey in 1954 of Professor Ma Kanwen, one of the 'Two Mas' who were members of the Institute for the History of Chinese Medicine and Medical Literature at the China Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine (Zhongguo zhongyi yanjiuyuan 國中醫研究院, now China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences (Zhongguo zhongyi kexueyuan 中國中醫科學院), hereafter 'the Academy', during its founding years. The other Ma is, of course, Professor Ma Jixing, to whom this book is dedicated. Professor Ma Kanwen has also been a long-term colleague of ours since the days of the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, where he worked for 23 years. It is fitting that we should begin this section on 'Imagining Modern Chinese Medicine' in celebration of the man who bridges the two institutions that came together in the creation of the book.

His illustrious 60-year career began at the prestigious Yenching University (now Peking University), one of the first modern universities in China, when he wrote his doctoral dissertation on the subject of famous Chinese physicians. He had been influenced by Li Tao 李濤, the father of a college friend. Li Tao was a famous historian of science, and director of Peking Medical College (Beiyi Xueyuan 北醫學院). After graduation, as a promising young researcher, Ma Kanwen was sent out into the field to create a photographic record of the historical sites of some 30 eminent physicians from 3 millennia spanning the pre-Qin era to the Qing period (1644–1911).

His project formed part of a new historical enterprise that came at time when there was a concerted official endorsement of Chinese medicine as a valid medical system. We can identify histories of Chinese medicine and medical figures throughout the imperial period, and notably in biographies of eminent physicians – so the programme was not entirely without precedent. But what was so extraordinary was that the new post-'liberation' 1950s *discipline* of the History of Chinese Medicine meant that the past was being used (and in many senses re-created and re-configured) to serve the present and the future. Whereas the norm elsewhere in constructing 'modern' scientific medical systems was to discard the 'pre-scientific' past, the new revolutionary government intended to incorporate and scientise it. Professor Ma's account, which

Figure 31.1 Professor Ma Kanwen 1927–2016. © Ma Kanwen

follows in part, is redolent with the political tensions that ensued, especially as Chinese medicine encountered the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), with its ruthless re-definition of tradition and drive to purge Chinese society of its superstitious and religious elements.

In 1953–4, the years leading up to the inauguration of the first modern institutions to teach Chinese medicine, in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Nanjing and Beijing, the identity and future of traditional medicine were caught up in the intense ideological debates that heralded the radical economic and social campaigns of the Great Leap Forward (1958–61). The Red vs Expert controversies of early Communist China pitted numerous scientists against those committed to the ideals of the Communist revolution. Many Chinese physicians had trained abroad, and the Chairman of the Communist Party, Mao Zedong, turned against all those who, in his view, harboured untrustworthy political allegiances to hostile imperialist and capitalist regimes and their hierarchies of knowledge. He was also dealing with an impending split with the Soviet Union, and all that this would mean for the withdrawal of

* We are very grateful to Dolly Yang 楊德秀 for editorial help and advice.

Figure 31.2 Ruins of Yuchen Daoist temple, Maoshan, on the site of Tao Hongjing's mountain retreat, Maoshan, Jiangsu province. © Ma Kanwen

Soviet support for medical infrastructure. Self-sufficiency was firmly on his agenda.¹

In the revolutionary years, seeking support for the revolution, Mao had made historical pacts with practitioners of Chinese medicine, promising to support them following any CPC success. All this resulted, in the 1950s, in a sudden investment in traditional medicine in order to bring it to a par with modern medicine. In a classic Mao Zedong move, he turned the status quo on its head, decreeing that practitioners of Western medicine, who constituted a large section of the educated elite, should learn from China's 'national treasure' and that 'Western medicines and Chinese medicines should unite' (*zhong-xi yi* 中西醫). Like everything else, however, Chinese medicine would be subject to continuing revolution. It would be required to professionalise and adopt all the structures of a modern discipline: institutional education, hospitals, and clinical evaluation, and ultimately, to integrate its home-grown cultural genius with a modern, forward-looking scientific approach.²

As famous practitioners of Chinese medicine congregated in Beijing to teach the doctors of Western medicine, Professor Ma Kanwen was also participating in this Chinese medical revolution aimed at renewing the tradition, by undertaking a parallel journey out of town to conduct fieldwork on ancient Chinese physicians, looking for temples, statuary and steles. During this personal voyage of discovery, he not only recorded what the local gazetteers said about the physicians, but personally visited many places in the north, south and west of China including Jiangsu, Hebei, Shaanxi and Zhejiang, where he talked to local residents and wrote down what he saw and heard,

Figure 31.3 'Cinnabar Well' of Tao Hongjing, in front of Dongxu Daoist temple, near Tao village, Jintan county, Jiangsu province. © Ma Kanwen

as well as taking photographs. His record is an intimate account of his own physical encounter with the material culture of healing and healers. His declared purpose was to create a visual, photographic record, but his account is also a sensory history that goes beyond the visual. It documents physical sensations, sounds, qualities of light, and the daily rhythms of the journey.

In such a way, the historians at the Academy set out to create their new discipline not only from written documents, modern histories, and scattered textual references in local and family records, but also by reclaiming and finding ways to reconnect with this material culture: through conserving what was preserved *at that time* in places associated with ancient physicians, and at religious sites associated with festivals and cults. It was clearly important to build up a rich history that could legitimate the new enterprise, but as the following account testifies, the process of making that history was also an intensely personal experience. Professor Ma's aesthetic encounter embodied many of the conflicts inherent in the processes through which practitioners and historians of Chinese medicine were constituting a new collective identity.

By far the largest part of Professor Ma's account concerns the curious figure of Bian Que, a patron of the Chinese medical arts whose story and legacy is redolent of myth and magic. Ironically, in modern times Bian Que has been hailed as a founding father of scientific Chinese medicine, and is placed in a lineage of practice that distinguished itself from the practitioners of ritual medicine – the *wu* 巫 (variously translated as 'witches', 'shamans' 'spirit mediums' 'ritualists'). Penelope Barrett has translated, abridged and edited extensive sections of this work below. Sadly, the account of the 30 physicians is too long to translate in its entirety here, but we append some photographs of sites associated with the other physicians and those who

1 Taylor 2005, p. 43 *et passim*.

2 Taylor 2005, pp. 3–39.

Figure 31.4 Tomb of Zhu Zhenhong in Dongzhu village, Yiwu, Zhejiang province. © Ma Kanwen

contributed to medical traditions, to give a flavour of the full range of his work: from Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536) to Zhu Zhenheng 朱震亨 (1281–1358).

A full record is archived at the Wellcome Library.

Against the background of all the political turmoil of the 1950s, Professor Ma's travels were a rare opportunity to leave Beijing, and the following excerpts offer fellow scholars a glimpse of the challenges and rewards of his journey. Before his departure, Professor Ma had to make contact with the local authorities and other official bodies, to obtain assistance and accommodation *in situ*. By 1955 his preliminary work was nearing completion. However, for various reasons, including notably a succession of political movements, it was not then possible to pursue the project further to publication. Professor Ma and his fellow historians of Chinese medicine had clearly hoped to preserve a core part of China's cultural heritage through this field trip, but their enterprise was short-lived. Later campaigns against religious practice and superstition destroyed some of the precious remains that Professor Ma and his companions photographed. In the fuller draft of the chapter, the narrative is punctuated by recurrent elegiac descriptions of broken ruins, which acquire additional poignancy when read against the destruction of material culture, and of many people's hopes for new China, that would ensue during the subsequent Cultural Revolution period (1966–76).

Professor Ma retained a nostalgia for the project, so it gives us great satisfaction to reproduce a part of it here, in the hope that others will take advantage of his work and perhaps revive his ambitions to complete the record. His sustained interest in the continuities with the past, in this case in archaeological remains, represents a broader testimony to the survival of many traditional forms in Chinese medicine, which are emerging more widely in contempo-

rary scholarship.³ The radical break with the past, once imagined as a feature of China's communist modernity, did not wholly rupture many aspects of lineage teaching, of religious healing, and oral transmission, especially in communities far from urban centres.⁴

As his postscript shows, in the last decade there has been a significant relaxation of constraints on constructing the historical identity of Chinese medicine, at least in the academic world, and efforts are being made to understand the contributions of religious organisations to the formation of medical practice in China's past. Professor Ma's textual history of Bian Que is as erudite as we would expect from a great scholar. His diary and reflections, but particularly the visual record, bring his journey alive and preserve data from a brief, but crucial moment for Chinese medicine in the mid-20th century.

Professor Ma had worked for Li Tao as an Assistant Editor for *China Bulletin of New Medicine* (*Xin yixue bao* 新醫學報), based at Peking Medical College. In 1954, he became a premier researcher in the department for the History of Medicine at the Central Academy of Health (Zhongyang weisheng yanjiuyuan 中央衛生研究院), before transferring to the new Academy in 1955.

After moving to Britain in 1987, he worked as a Senior Research Fellow at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, Senior Research Fellow of the Joint Department of Human Sciences and Medical Ethics at the London Hospital Medical College, and Guest Professor of the Institute for the History of Medicine, Vienna University. He served as a council member for several professional organisations, including the International Society of Medical History, and the Standing Committee for the Translation and Publication of Joseph Needham's Works, and as a member of editorial committees for several journals, including the *Chinese Journal of Medical History* (*Zhonghua yishi zazhi* 中華醫史雜誌) and *Acupuncture in Medicine*.

He lectured worldwide and at the time of writing he was Honorary Senior Adviser to the Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine (UK), Senior Adviser to the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies, and Adviser to the China National Committee for the Standardisation of English Translation of Chinese Medical Terms. As an author, co-author or co-compiler, he published 12 books and dictionaries and 160 articles on Chinese medicine and the history of Chinese medicine. This list of achievements needs no further elaboration.

Vivienne Lo 羅維前 2016

3 Cf. the work of Volker Scheid, notably Scheid 2007.

4 See also Liao, Chapter 28 in this volume.

Figure 31.5 Tomb relief showing, in the top right-hand corner, Bian Que, the human-headed bird, administering acupuncture to waiting patients, with a child looking on from below. Tomb relief, Eastern Han (25–220 CE) dynasty, from Liangcheng 兩城, Weishan 微山, Shandong province. National Museum of China, image courtesy of Huang Longxiang 黃龍祥

Excerpts from Ma Kanwen's Account

Bian Que 扁鵲 (6th–5th Century BCE)

The main biographical source for Bian Que is *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian), the earliest extant general history of China, compiled by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (traditional dates 145–86 BCE; born 145 or 135 BCE, death unknown).⁵ He is among the earliest and most renowned of the medical figures documented in that work, a distinction he shares with the Han physician Chunyu Yi 淳于意 (3rd century BCE). According to *Shiji*, Bian Que was a native of Bohai 勃海 in the ancient county of Mao 鄆, now Renqiu 任丘 county in Hebei province. He originally bore the name Qin Yueren 秦越人. As a young man, he worked at an inn in the local township, where he was initiated into the healing arts by a guest named Zhang Sangjun 長桑君, an expert healer, who passed on to him his secret remedies. Thereafter, he became an itinerant physician, travelling widely in the States of Qi 齊 (present-day Shandong), Zhao 趙 (which included areas in modern Inner Mongolia, Hebei, Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces) and Yan 燕 (present-day north Hebei and west Liaoning provinces) performing miraculous cures and gathering fame wherever he went.

He is supposed to have become known as Bian Que while practising as an itinerant physician in the state of Zhao. Eventually, this soubriquet eclipsed his personal name. 'Bian Que' is composed of two distinct semantic elements. The graph *bian* 扁 Chinese functioned in early China as a variant of *bian* 遍 (everywhere, ubiquitous), and presumably refers to his itinerant lifestyle. *Que* means magpie (also *xique*, lit. 'lucky magpie'). A lucky portent in China

since antiquity, the magpie is described as an auspicious bird in *Qin jing* 禽經 (Classic of Birds), China's earliest ornithological treatise,⁶ and figures as a symbol of good fortune in tales and poetry. It was supposed, traditionally, to fly from place to place announcing good tidings with its song. Clearly, the fact that Qin Yueren's medical ministry was equated with the flight of the bird of good omen reflects the high esteem in which he was held. But also, it is certainly no coincidence that the name is linked with the people of Zhao, who revered birds as totems.

Among a collection of Han dynasty stone reliefs excavated at Liangchengshan 兩城山 in Weishan 微山 county, Shandong province, is a carving of a figure with a human head and bird's body (Fig. 5). Its mouth resembles a bird's beak, and in its hands it holds needle-like implements, with which it is apparently treating a patient. This figure recalls the assertion in the 'Zhaoshijia' 趙世家 (Biographies of the House of Zhao) chapter of *Shiji* that the first ancestor of the Zhao lineage had a 'human head and bird's beak'.⁷ After examining the evidence, scholars have concluded that the relief shows Bian Que practising medicine.⁸

Bian Que is said to have learnt and applied a range of medical techniques including acupuncture and moxibustion, drug preparation, and therapeutic massage. He is also credited with special expertise in pulse diagnosis. *Shiji* calls him China's first pulse-diagnostician, and presents him as a key figure in the early differentiation of a Chinese medicine, as groups of practitioners distanced themselves from the practice of magic in favour of treatments based on the emerging theories of the Yin and Yang channels and of Qi. In later times, the magical healer Bian Que

5 Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 'Bian Que Can Gong liezhuan' 扁鵲倉公列傳 (Biography of Bian Que and Cang Gong), *juan* 105.

6 *Qin jing*, attr. Shi Kuang, 6th century BCE, *juan* 1.

7 Sima Qian, *Shiji*, *juan* 43.

8 See, for example, Lo in Lu and Needham 2002, p. xxxiii.

would be re-imagined as a master of the classical medical arts, far removed from the worlds of spirit mediums. As Medicine King and tutelary hero of classical medicine, he would be particularly celebrated for his opposition to ritual medicine. Again according to *Shiji*, there were six types of illness that he would not treat, one of these being cases where the patient ‘trusts in the spirit mediums and ritualists instead of medicine’.⁹

Over the centuries, Bian Que’s name recurs constantly in the medical literature and historical records, and successive generations have erected temples, steles and shrines in his honour in many parts of China. His status is illustrated by the story of the Ren Zong 仁宗 emperor of the Song dynasty (r. 1022–63), and the famous acupuncturist Xu Xi 許希. After successfully treating the emperor with acupuncture when he fell ill in 1034 (1st year of the Jing You 景祐 era, 1034–8), Xu Xi had rewards and honours lavished upon him, whereupon he kowtowed to the west. When asked by the emperor why he did this, he replied that he was giving thanks to the ancient sage Bian Que, for it was only due to the teachings of Bian Que that he had been able to cure his sovereign’s illness. Moreover he entreated the emperor to use the money he had been awarded to build a temple to Bian Que. The emperor granted his request and founded a temple to the west of Kaifeng, the Northern Song capital. This is the earliest known temple to Bian Que to have been established by imperial decree. Around 1057 (towards the beginning of the Jia You 嘉祐 era, 1056–63), Emperor Ren Zong fell ill once more, and drug treatment was ineffective. The emperor worshipped at the temple of Bian Que and subsequently recovered; thereupon he issued a decree bestowing upon Bian Que the title of ‘Shen Ying Hou’ 神應侯 (Prince to whom the Spirits Pay Heed), and in 1069 the temple was rebuilt by his order.¹⁰

Fieldwork in Renqiu 任丘 County

According to the Annals of Renqiu county,¹¹ relics of Bian Que in the county once included an ancestral shrine, a temple, his former home, his tomb, and a temple dedicated to his teacher, Zhang Sangjun. During fieldwork based in the Maozhou 鄭州 locality in April 1954, the author discovered the existence of a temple to the ‘Medicine King’, about 2km north of the East Gate of the old county town, and 20km north of present-day Renqiu county. By that

Figure 31.6 Entrance gates (‘Mountain Gates’) of the Three Kings temple complex, Renqiu 任丘 county, Hebei province. On the right, the gateway to the temple of Bian Que.
© Ma Kanwen

time, all that remained of the temple was a monumental archway, constructed mostly of white stone, bearing the five-character inscription ‘*Chijian Yaowang miao*’ 敕建藥王廟 (Temple of the Medicine King, erected by imperial order). To the left of the gateway stood the ruins of two further temples, on a similar scale: an inscription over the gateway of one read ‘*Chijian San Wang dian*’ 敕建三皇殿 (Hall of the Three Kings, erected by imperial order) and the other, ‘*Chijian Wen Chang ge*’ 敕建文昌閣 (Pavilion of the Wen Chang, erected by imperial order) (Fig 6). The ‘Three Kings’ generally referred to Fuxi 伏羲, Suiren 燧人 and Shen Nong 神農, three legendary ancient rulers and ancestral deities of the Chinese people, who were the object of popular cults. *Wenchang* is *Wenchang gong* 文昌宮 or *Wenqu xing* 文曲星 (δ Ursa Majoris), a constellation associated with fame and good fortune. This juxtaposition testifies to Bian Que’s significance as a tutelary hero of medicine, and the reverence in which he was held.

On the date of construction of the temple, Wang Taoyun 王兆雲 (Song period) writes in *Hui chen xin tan* 揮塵新談 (New Discourses on Whirling Dust) that a temple dedicated to Bian Que was in existence at Maozhou prior to the Yuan period.¹² However, there are no surviving records of the date or the precise circumstances of its foundation.

The Qing Annals of Renqiu county state that the ancestral temple (*ci* 祠) of Bian Que is located to the north of the town of Mao, and record several reconstructions. They also tell us that an annual temple fair was held there in the 4th lunar month.¹³

A stele commemorating the reconstruction of the temple (now described as ‘Ying Wang’ 應王 Temple) in 1513 (8th year of the Zhengde era of the Ming dynasty) reads:

The old temple of ‘Shen Ying Wang’ 神應王 (the King to Whom the Spirits Pay Heed) was located to the north of the town of Mao, more than 100 *li* [c. 50km] from the

9 ‘信巫不信醫’. Sima Qian, *Shiji*, ‘Bian Que Can Gong liezhuan’, *juan* 105.

10 Toqtohan *et al.* (eds) *Song shi, juan* 462, ‘Fangji’ 方技 (Recipes and techniques).

11 Compiled by Liu Tong 劉統 (Qing period), edition engraved in 1762 (27th year of the Qianlong era of the Qing dynasty).

12 See Lü Chaoru 1948.

13 Annals of Renqiu county, *juan* 2, ‘Jianzhi’ 建置.

seat of the prefectural government. The inscription no longer survives, so it is not known when it was originally constructed.

From the above we learn that by the Ming period, Bian Que had become known in Renqiu as 'the King to Whom the Spirits Pay Heed' (presumably a development of the name 'Shen ying hou' 神應侯 – the Prince to Whom the Spirits Pay Heed – which was conferred on him in the Song), and that he was worshipped in a temple situated to the north of the old town of Mao. The change of name from Bian Que miao 扁鵲廟 (Temple of Bian Que) to Yaowang miao 藥王廟 (Temple of the Medicine King) is explained by the fact that, in the Zhizheng 至正 era of the Yuan dynasty (1264–1294), the government had a temple to the Medicine King erected in every county of China. This is borne out by another stele commemorating the refurbishment of the Temple to the Medicine King at Maozhou by official order in 1584 (12th year of the Wanli era of the Ming dynasty). That stele also states that there has been a temple of the Medicine King at Maozhou for many years; according to tradition it was once a temple for the cult of Bian Que; when the local people fell ill they would go there to pray to him, and their prayers would quickly be answered; however the building collapsed because the foundations were insubstantial, whereupon the Wanli emperor gave orders for it to be rebuilt.

The reconstruction, possibly the most significant that this temple underwent in the Ming period, began in the third month of that year, and was completed in five months. According to the Annals of Renqiu county, the reconstructed temple was sited three *li* (c. 1.5km) north of the town of Maozhou. It was approached via a ceremonial gateway with three arches, beyond which a path flanked by incense burners and steles led to the entrance of the temple itself. Bian Que was worshipped in the imposing main hall; to east and west of this stood side halls, containing devotional statues of the 10 illustrious physicians of past ages – Wang Shuhe 王叔和, Zhang Zhongjing 張仲景, Taiyi Lei Gong 太乙雷公 (Lei Gong the Great, the Thunder Duke), Chunyu Yi 淳于意 and Hua Tuo 華佗 in the east hall; and Sun Simiao 孫思邈, Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐, Han Kang 韓康, Ge Hong 葛洪 and Liu Shouzheng 劉守真 in the West Hall.

A second phase of rebuilding took place from 1591 to 1593 (19th to 21st years of the Wanli era of the Ming dynasty). The occasion for this was a severe bout of illness suffered by the Wanli emperor, during which the empress dowager had incense lit and prayers said for his recovery in Medicine King temples throughout the land. By then, the temple buildings at Maozhou had grown dilapidated,

although the foundations still stood firm. In view of this, orders were issued for a temple hall dedicated to the 'Three Kings' to be added to the west of the temple of the Medicine King itself, and at the same time the existing temple halls and statues were renovated and beautified. On this occasion, the building work took two years, being completed in 1593 (21st year of the Wanli era of the Ming dynasty). A stele engraved at that time states that the Three Kings worshipped in the new temple hall were Pao Xi 庖羲 (i.e. Fu Xi 伏羲), Shen Nong 神農 – the Divine Farmer, and Huangdi 黃帝 – the Yellow Emperor. The temple was refurbished once more in the Qing period (there is a stele commemorating this, dated 1861 [11th year of the Xianfeng era of the Qing dynasty]).

According to the Annals of Renqiu county, corroborated by local informants, the anniversary of Bian Que's birth fell on the 28th day of the fourth lunar month. During the whole of that month, pilgrims flocked from far and wide to the Temple of the Medicine King at Maozhou to worship and offer incense. At its height, the Temple Fair with its constant stream of pilgrims was a famous sight, and one of the most important events of the traditional year in the area. The temple itself was said to be one of the 'great temples under heaven'; a drawing in *juan 1* of the Annals gives some idea of its size and magnificence in its heyday. Very sadly, the temple was completely destroyed by fire in the Japanese invasion of 1937. By the time of the author's visit, nothing remained to be seen but some ruined arches, amid a blank expanse of open fields.

The original home of Bian Que was located, according to local informants, some 20km north of the county town, in a village called Yaowang zhuang 藥王莊 (Medicine King hamlet or mansion), outside the eastern gate of Maozhou town.¹⁴ The county Annals¹⁵ preserve poems on the home and burial place of Bian Que by writers including the famous Ming scholar Yang Shiqi 楊士奇 (1364–1444) and other *literati*, demonstrating that both sites had become significant destinations for *literati* by the early modern period. When the author went to Yaowang zhuang to investigate, the eponymous village was still in existence; however any trace of Bian Que's dwelling had long since vanished. Local people also reported that the village had been named in honour of Bian Que after his lifetime. As to Bian Que's burial place, according to the Annals of Renqiu county, it was located approximately 3 *li* (c. 1.5 km) north-east of Maozhou town, or 3 *li* north of Yaowang zhuang.¹⁶

14 See also Annals of Renqiu county, *juan 1*, 'Zhai' 宅.

15 Annals of Renqiu county, *juan 11*, 'Yiwen xia' 藝文下.

16 Annals of Renqiu county, *juan 1*, 'Yu di muzhong' 輿地墓冢.

The author duly went in search of it, but could find no vestige of that either.

Da Qing yitongzhi 大淸一統志 (Comprehensive Geography of the Great Qing Dynasty) states:

The ancestral temple (*ci* 祠) of Zhang Sangjun [Bian Que's teacher] lies three *li* north of Maozhou town. To the west of the temple is the Temple of the Medicine King, where Bian Que is worshipped.¹⁷

However, according to the Qing Annals of Renqiu county, though there was at one time a shrine to Zhang Sangjun to the north-east of Maozhou town, it had ceased to exist by the Qianlong era (1736–95).¹⁸

It should be said that temples and mausolea of Bian Que are or have been alleged to exist in many parts of China, tombs being particularly numerous. For instance, the Annals of Xianyang 咸陽 county in Shaanxi place the tomb of Bian Que in Xianyang. A mausoleum to Bian Que is found in Fudaocun 伏道村, in Tangyin 湯陰 county, Henan province; and according to the local gazetteer, it was there in Fudaocun (a village 20 *li* [c. 10km] north of the county town) that Bian Que was assassinated by an envious imperial physician. *Zhenjiu dacheng* 針灸大成 (The Great Compendium of Acupuncture and Moxibustion) explains that the village is called *fu dao* (lit. prostrate on the road) because he died by the roadside.¹⁹ In *Bian Que mucitang ji* 扁鵲墓祠堂記 (Notes on the Mausoleum of Bian Que), published in 1248 on the cusp of the Jin and Yuan dynasties, Zhang Dou 張都 writes that the tomb of Bian Que at Fudao was destroyed in a violent uprising in the Zhenyou 貞佑 era of the Jin dynasty (1213–16). There was also a tomb of Bian Que, known as 'Lu yi zhong' 盧醫塚 (grave of physician Lu), in Lilicun 孝裡村 village in Qing 請 county, Shandong province. In the northern outskirts of Jinan city, there was one called Lu yi muzang 盧醫墓葬. Both of those were tombs only, without any temple buildings. Other putative tomb sites were found in the village of Nanchencun 南陳村 in Ma'e zhen 馬額鎮 township, 30 *li* (c. 15km) north of Lintong 臨潼 county,²⁰ and east of the county town of Jixian 濟縣 in Shandong province. There is little evidence to support any of these claims, and it is probable that many so-called tombs were actually memorials. It goes without saying that it would be very hard to establish which of them, if any, is the true burial place of Bian Que. The one thing that can be affirmed with certainty is that all these traditions reflect a widespread cult of the figure of Bian Que.

Fieldwork in Neiqiu 內丘

According to the county Annals,²¹ the village of Shentoucun 神頭村, at the foot of Queshan 鵲山 mountain in Neiqiu county, contained many relics associated with the figure of Bian Que, including a temple dedicated to him. The writer therefore undertook a field trip to the village, in search of traces of Bian Que.²² Neiqiu is an area in the south-west of Henan province, near to Bian Que's birthplace in Renqiu county in the adjoining province of Hebei. In the Warring States period (475–221 BCE), it was known as Xing 邢, and formed part of the Zhao kingdom. It acquired its present name during the Sui period (581–618). The village itself nestles among mountains. Looking westward from the county town, one sees an unbroken chain of lofty peaks: this is Pengshan 蓬山 mountain, a continuation of the Taixingshan 太行山 range. Tradition has it that Bian Que practised in these mountains as an itinerant physician, and one of the peaks bears the name Queshan 鵲山 (Bian Que or Magpie mountain). Another peak has been renamed Taizi yan 太子岩 (Prince's crag) in accordance with a tradition that the Prince of Guo 號 retired to Pengshan after being revived from a death-like coma by Bian Que.²³

Shentoucun is located some 63 *li* (c. 31.5km) from the county town of Neiqiu. On 10 November 1954, with the assistance of the head of Neiqiu Health Department, the author and his colleague Ding Jiantang 丁鑑塘 set out on an eight-day bicycle journey up winding mountain paths to the village. Because of the steepness of the mountains and the rugged terrain, we often had to dismount and push and drag our bicycles, and we finally arrived in Shentoucun after several hours on foot. The village was completely surrounded by mountains, which formed a natural fortification with only one way in. On entering, one saw a flowing brook with dry-stone constructions on both banks, made from many-coloured mountain rocks. Interspersed with clumps of persimmon trees weighed down with vermilion fruit, they gave the village an extremely picturesque air. At the far end of the village, we came upon the temple to Bian Que mentioned in the Annals. Built on a hillside connected with Queshan, it rose against the backdrop of Pengshan mountain and the adjoining peaks of Queshan and Taizi yan. If one stood on the mountain slope to the south of the village and looked north, one saw tier upon tier of temple buildings amid the dense green of ancient

17 *Da Qing yitongzhi*, juan 16.

18 Annals of Renqiu county, juan 2, 'Jianzhi' 建置.

19 Yang Jizhou, *Zhenjiu dacheng*, juan 11.

20 See the Annals of Lintong county.

21 *Neiqiu xian zhi* 內丘縣志 (Annals of Neiqiu county), compiled by Qiao Zhonghe 喬中和, edition engraved in 1642 (15th year of the Chongzhen era of the Ming dynasty).

22 10–17 November 1954.

23 *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集 The Historical Atlas of China), Tan Qixiang 譚其驤 (ed.) 1982, vol. 4.

Figure 31.7 Temple of Bian Que, Shentou village 神頭村, Neiqiu 內丘 county, Hebei province. © Ma Kanwen

conifers, and towering in the distance beyond them, the mighty mountain-range of Pengshan, creating a vista of solemn, primordial beauty (Fig. 7).

In front of the temple was an imposing stone bridge. According to an inscribed stele in the temple, dating from 1543 (*gui-mao* year of the Jiajing era of the Ming dynasty), this bridge was constructed to commemorate Bian Que's transcendent medical skill. Originally called Huisheng qiao 回生橋 (Bridge of Reanimation), it was twice renamed, first as Longdeng qiao 龍登橋 (Soaring Dragon bridge), and then in 1539 (*ji-hai* year of the Jiajing era), as Jiulong qiao 九龍橋, (Nine Dragon bridge). The latter name alluded to the nine ravines of Queshan, which were transformed into torrents and waterfalls when it rained in the mountains. The bridge was rebuilt and extended in 1543 using dressed blocks of locally quarried white jade: it had a single arch, and was 1 *zhang* 7 *chi* high, 2 *zhang* 6 *chi* wide, and 2 *zhang* 8 *chi* long (approximately 5.6m high x 8.6m wide x 9.2m long according to today's equivalents). The external faces of the bridge were clad with square slabs carved in relief and the apex of each of the 16 piers was ornamented with carvings of lion cubs. Most of the reliefs depicted motifs from Chinese popular history, including Grand Duke Jiang 姜 catching fish, Su Wu 蘇武 herding sheep, and Wu Song 蘇武 killing the tiger, as well as auspicious creatures and rare birds and flowers, in a lively, realistic style. Beneath it rushed the babbling brook, so clear and limpid that you could see right to the bottom.

To the south of the bridge rose a hillside; to the east there stood a huge rock with the two characters *yao shi* 藥石 (Medicine Stone) engraved on it. The inscription was dated 'Wanli era, *gui-mo* year', i.e. 1583. The Medicine Stone was flanked by two steles. One, dated 1355 (15th year of the Zhizheng era of the Yuan dynasty) was inscribed 'Record of prayers for rain answered at Queshan'. The text was worn away and only partially legible, but the

gist was clear: In the summer of that year there had been a severe drought, and for three months on end, there were no fish to be had and the crops dried up and withered in the fields. Officials from Shunde lu 順德路 set off to the temple of Bian Que to pray to him for rain, but when they were only halfway there, they saw dark clouds billowing up from Queshan mountain, and then without warning the rain fell in torrents. The stele was erected as a record and thank-offering. The second stele was inscribed: 'Record of the prince heeded by the spirits at Queshan'. Sadly the surface of the stele had crumbled away making the rest of the inscription illegible. However, the style and dimensions suggested that it formed a pair with the former stele, and it could also be dated to the Yuan period.

On the hillside beyond the southern end of the bridge stood nine, mighty, century-old cypresses. Their trunks were so thick that two men could not join hands around them, their colossal roots reached deep into the cracks and crevices in the stone, and their tall, spreading branches formed a dense green canopy. Also on the hillside stood another large rock with five characters '*Jiu long qiao shi bai*' (Nine dragon bridge stone cypress[es]) engraved on it. It was too thickly overgrown with moss to make out the date of the inscription. At all events it appeared that the planting and naming of the nine cypresses had a close connection with the Nine Dragon bridge.

Up on the slope to the north of the 'Nine Dragon bridge' stood Que lo – Bian Que tower. The tower, which was approximately 5 *zhang* tall (about 16.5m), contained various stone steles dating from the Qing period. Built into two of the walls were small stone tablets from the Yanyou era of the Yuan dynasty (1314–20), mostly containing poems celebrating the feats of Bian Que or praising the beauties of the temple and its surroundings. Beyond the tower was a ceremonial gateway, only slightly less tall than the pagoda. In front of the gate, on the right-hand side, were two steles; one of them, erected in 1069 (2nd year of the Xining era of the Song dynasty), commemorated the restoration of 'Shenyng hou miao' (the Temple of the Prince to Whom the Spirits Pay Heed); the other, erected in 1283 (*gui-mo* year of the Yuan dynasty), recorded the restoration of 'Shen ying miao' (the Temple of [the One] to Whom the Spirits Pay He) at Queshan. Both steles were over 8 *chi* (c. 2.6m) tall.

On the left-hand side stood the Hall of Steles, a three-storey building which was even taller than Que lo. Each storey had carved reliefs on all four walls; those on the middle storey appeared to represent the Four Heavenly Guardians of Buddhist iconography. The storeys got progressively narrower from bottom to top, like a pagoda. The upper part of the building was covered in yellow and green glazed tiles. The overall effect was tasteful and artistic. Even

though it had become dilapidated over time, and the tiles had fallen away in many places, while wilting grass and weeds sprouted from it here and there, the building still retained a unique style.

The hall contained a stele dated 1268 (5th year of the Zhiyuan era), which commemorated the restoration of 'Que wang shen ying wang miao' (The temple of King Que, Prince to Whom the Spirits Pay Heed). The stele, which was made from bluish-green stone, was 6m tall, 0.94m wide and 0.3m thick. The top of the stele had an arched shape and was ornamented with sinuous dragons, and the base was in the shape of a turtle. The older inhabitants recalled the scenes at the annual temple fair held in the third lunar month, when a constant stream of pilgrims and other visitors would flock here, jostling one another to touch the stele – which was said to cure illness – with their hands or with a coin. In places, the surface of the stele had been rubbed as smooth as a mirror, and the inscription was all but erased. From the traces of lettering that could still be made out, it was possible to gather that the text had been composed by Wang E 王鶚 (1190–1273), a high-ranking scholar in the imperial Hanlin academy. It was written out in *kaishu* regular script by Liu Bingzhong 劉秉忠 from Xingtai 邢臺 (in present-day Hebei province), a senior official at the Yuan court, who held the post of imperial tutor. The heading at the top of the stele, written in seal characters, was contributed by Liu Yu 劉鬱, former office administrator at the Imperial Metropolitan Secretariat (Zhong shusheng dushi 省中書省都事).

The stele summarised the life history of Bian Que as recounted in *Shiji* and gave dates for construction and restoration work at the temple of Bian Que up until the Yuan period. It stated that a temple to Bian Que had existed here from the Han (206 BCE–220 CE) to the Tang dynasty (618–907), but was destroyed in fighting during the turbulent Five Dynasties period (907–60). When peace was restored in the Xiande era (954–9) of the Later Zhou, the last of the Five Dynasties, the military governor Chen Sirang 陳思讓 had the temple rebuilt. By this time, there was already a stone tablet in place describing Bian Que as 'Wang' (King), but it was not known when that appellation first became current. The stele also recounted that at the beginning of the Jiaoyou era (1056–63), the Emperor Renzong fell ill, and all attempts to cure him were in vain, until he went to the temple of Bian Que to pray for recovery and his prayers were answered. This was the origin of the title 'Shen ying hou' (Prince to whom the Spirits Pay Heed). Also, when crops failed in 1069 (the 2nd year of the Xining era of the Northern Song dynasty), the district magistrate of Xingzhou 邢州, Li Guanglu 李光祿, prayed at the temple of Bian Que, whereupon the harvest became

abundant. In gratitude, physicians and the general public contributed money to have the temple refurbished. It was renovated again in 1190 (1st year of the Mingchang era of the Jin dynasty), under the auspices of the Neiqiu county administration, but it subsequently burnt down, and was not rebuilt until the Yuan.

Passing through the gateway, one came to the sacrificial hall of 'King Que' (Que wang xiandian 鵠王獻殿). In front of the hall was an open courtyard, with tall, ancient cypress trees growing in it. The whole area was overgrown with weeds, now dry and withered, and littered with remnants of steles. Some of them lay toppled on the ground, some of them had been smashed to pieces so that the top of the stele with the epigraph was disconnected from the body of the inscription, and of others only the base remained. The scene was one of utter chaos. Among the best preserved was a row of four steles, over a metre tall, still upright and relatively intact. One, erected in 1543 (*gui-mao* year of the Jiajing era of the Ming dynasty) was headed *Queshan dingjian Jiulongqiao ji* 鵠山鼎建九龍橋記 (Record of the construction by the state of the Nine Dragon bridge at Queshan). The remaining three, erected in 1570 (4th year of the Longqing era), contained texts relating to the consecration of the temple. One of the latter was inscribed in the hand of Gui Youguang 歸有光 (1507–71), a famous essayist of the Ming period and graduate of the highest metropolitan *jinshi* examination. At this time, Gui Youguang was a leading literary figure in the classicising 'Tang and Song movement', so the fact that he could have been induced to write a dedication indicates that the temple of Bian Que at Neiqiu enjoyed a high profile.

Behind the Sacrificial Hall was Que wang dian 鵠王獻殿 (the Hall of King Que). This was the main hall of the temple, and the largest building in the complex. With its roof of dazzling yellow and green glazed tiles, glistening in the sun, it was a magnificent and arresting sight. To its right stood an enormous cypress, even taller than the trees to the south of the Nine Dragon bridge, its trunk more than three arm-spans in circumference. According to the village elders, it was planted in the Tang, a claim which is plausible in light of the evidence for the construction date of the temple seen by the author. Behind the Hall of King Que was Que wang houdian 鵠王後殿 (the Rear Hall of King Que) and various other buildings that bore no direct relevance to Bian Que, including Qian Nainai dian 前奶奶殿 (the Front Hall of the Temple of the Grandmother Goddess), Xilou 戲樓 (a traditional opera theatre), Shuifo dian 睡佛殿 (Hall of the Reclining Buddha) and Yuhuang ge 玉皇閣 (Pavilion of the Jade Emperor). At the time of our visit, those buildings were in use by the local primary school as classrooms and offices, and nothing remained

of the devotional statuary or sacrificial altars. They had vanished into the past, along with the pomp and festivities of the annual temple fair, which once drew worshippers and tourists from as far afield as 1,000 *li* (500km).

A curious tale about the construction of the temple at Bian Que still survived in local tradition: the project was superintended by Yuchi Jingde 尉遲敬德, a high-ranking general of the early Tang period. On being invited by the local authorities to view the finished temple, the stern general was so impressed that he could not forbear from smiling with delight. However, rumour had it that the general only ever smiled when he was killing his enemies. That smile struck such terror into the county official that he hanged himself the very next day. Yuchi Jingde, who had intended to reward the official, and was quite unaware of the reason for his suicide, had a small temple erected in his memory alongside the main temple building. Whether or not this tale has any basis in fact, it suggests the former glory of the temple of Bian Que. The Annals of Neiqiu refer to a stele which read:

Constructed for the third time by Jingde of the great Tang empire in the first year of the Zhenguan era of Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty (627).

However, this stele no longer exists.

It should be particularly noted here that, in addition to the steles described above, the writer saw many other stone inscriptions during his fieldwork in the area. Unfortunately however, most of them were damaged and fragmentary. According to local informants, the interior and exterior of the temple of Bian Que had once been a veritable forest of steles. However, the area fell victim to successive waves of fighting and violence, and each time, large numbers of steles were knocked down and smashed. Many of them were removed by local people and used in walls and foundations, as stairs and table-tops. In all the sources identified by the author, there is no record of any further reconstruction work after the close of the Qing period. Of the steles that I saw during fieldwork, about 30 were relatively intact or partially legible, most of them dating from the Yuan to the Qing periods.

Having heard local people talk of the numerous engraved stones once to be found in and around the temple, I carried out a search in the vicinity for any inscribed records that might still exist. To my excitement, among the stones on the riverbank close to the Nine Dragons bridge, I found a fragment of a stele, used at one time by the villagers for treading their laundry. When I took it down to the water's edge and rinsed it, I was able to ascertain, to my surprise and delight, that it dated from the Xiande era (954–9) of the later Zhou dynasty, in the Five Dynasties period. The fragment consisted of the very top of the stele and one of

Figure 31.8 Fragment of a stele of the Xiande era of the Later Zhou dynasty (954–60), at the temple of Bian Que, Shentou village 神頭村, Neiqiu 內丘 county, Hebei province.
© Ma Kanwen

the upper corners, and measured about 1 *chi* (c. 0.3m) in height and a little more than ½ *chi* in breadth. From the epigraph, one edge of the characters ‘Wang bei’ 王碑 (King stele) and Que 鵠 ([Bian] Que) was preserved (see Fig. 8). What remained of the body of the inscription was largely illegible, but it evidently recorded a major rebuilding of the temple. One of the better preserved passages read:

The temple of the Great King, much dilapidated by the passage of time, the rain leaking into it and the wind blowing through it, the rafters... the columns collapsed... Mount Queshan is a place of delightful seclusion, where the mandarin duck and crane abound, and deep caverns... In the time of the Xiande era of the great Zhou dynasty.

From the Xiande stele, it can be gathered that the temple was founded in the Tang dynasty at the latest, and that it was a splendid building. We also learn that Pengshan had changed its name to Queshan by the time the inscription was composed, and that there were statues and inscribed tablets in the temple. This information was corroborated by another stele in the Hall of the Steles to the left of the temple gateway, which also confirmed the date of the restoration and gave the full name of the official responsible for it.

The latter stele carried the epigraph ‘Guochao chongxiu Que wang shen ying wang miao bei’ 國朝重修鵠王神應王廟碑 (Stele on the imperial reconstruction of the temple of King Que, the King to Whom the Spirits Pay Heed). The inscription was written by Wang E 王鶚 in 1268 (5th year

of the Zhiyuan era of the Yuan dynasty). It contained the words:

Since the Han and Tang dynasties, people have made offerings to the statues of old. In the Xiande era of the [later] Zhou, when peace was brought to the country, the military governor Chen Sirang 陳恩讓 had it rebuilt. At that time, there was already a stele calling [Bian Que] 'King', but it is not known in what period this name was conferred.

In addition to providing supporting evidence for the Xiande stele fragment, this passage attests to the antiquity of the temple foundation.

The Xiande stele was the most ancient artefact associated with Bian Que and his temples that was observed during this fieldwork exercise, and it was one of the most significant finds.

Another early record that came to light was 'Record of the rebuilding of the temple of the Prince to Whom the Spirits Pay Heed' (Congxiu shen ying hou miao ji 重修神應侯廟記), dated 1069 (2nd year of the Xining era of the Song). It recounted the exploits of Bian Que, the renaming of mount Pengshan as Queshan in memory of Bian Que, and the story of how, at the beginning of the Jiayou era of the Song, the Emperor Renzong contracted a disease that would not respond to medication, and was miraculously cured by praying to Bian Que, upon which Bian Que was granted the title of 'Shen ying hou' – the prince to whom the spirits pay heed.

According to the Annals of Neiqiu county, and the author's own research and observations during fieldwork, besides the stele inscriptions, a large body of poetry was composed from the Tang to the Qing (1644–1911) celebrating Bian Que, the Great Temple, and the scenery of Pengshan and Queshan. The earliest known example is a poem by Yu Gu 於鵠 (*fl.* Dali–Zhenyuan eras of the Tang dynasty, 766–805) on the mountain cave where Bian Que is supposed to have made his home: 'Qin Yueren dongzhong yin' 秦越人洞中吟 (Qin Yueren chants in the cavern). This provides further confirmation that, by the Tang, the temple of Bian Que already existed and had moreover become a famous landmark in its own right.

As to the date of the original foundation of the temple, the Annals of Neiqiu county state: 'It already existed in the Han and Tang, but the original date of construction is unknown'.²⁴ The inscriptions described above and other written sources support the idea that it is a foundation of great antiquity.

Ma Kanwen – Conclusions and Epilogue

Field research in sites associated with famous Chinese physicians of antiquity can deepen and round out our understanding of their lives and times, and provide new source material for medical historians, offering insights not available from the written records. Many findings are of ethnographic and archaeological interest, and shed light on the lingering resonances of famous physicians from Bian Que onward. The figures discussed above were all aligned, to a greater or lesser extent, with the three major belief systems of China – Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism – and thus reflect the diverse and complex cultural background of Chinese medicine. Some of them were deified and became the subject of institutionalised cults, although the intentions of the ruling classes in supporting these cults no doubt diverged from the concerns of ordinary worshippers, rooted in folk religion.

The fieldwork described here was conducted more than half a century ago, and it has proved impossible to ascertain the current state of many of the sites mentioned. Some monuments, like the Temple of Bian Que in Neiqiu and the Temple of the Medicine King in Yaoxian 耀縣, with its inscribed steles and stone caves, have been restored, but only after suffering further damage during the 10 years of the 'Cultural Revolution'. It should be noted that a number of local authorities have recently been active in restoring monuments with medical associations. Thus for example extensive restoration work has been carried out on the Temple and other historic relics in Neiqiu.

From 24–25 October 2005, I was invited to Shentoucun, Hebei province, to advise on the restoration of the Temple of Bian Que. It was a delight to return to my old haunts of half a century ago, and to see for myself the transformation of both temple and village. According to those in charge, the restoration was actually based on the photographs and fieldwork reports from my visit in 1954. Sadly the original Nine Dragon bridge had been swept away by floods, and it had not been feasible to replace it with an exact replica. Moreover, the Yuan (Mongol) period (1271–1368) steles that once stood to the south of the bridge, on either side of the 'Medicine Stone', had both disappeared. However, with those exceptions, the temple area had by and large been faithfully restored to its former appearance. Some dozen stone steles dating from the Song period onward had been preserved inside the temple, and most of these were now inset into a new eastern wall to ensure their continued survival. To my disappointment, however, the mid-10th-century-stele from the Xiande era of the Later Zhou dynasty (954–60) that I discovered in the village in 1954 seemed to have vanished without a trace. By the time

24 '漢唐已有之,始建不詳'.

the restoration work got underway, the Bian Que Tower that had stood beside the temple was in a state of ruin and had been despoiled of its polychrome glass tiles, so that it proved impossible to salvage any of the original materials to use in restoration.

On 29 October of the same year, I attended the 'Bian Que Cultural Festival and Temple Fair', which was organised by the county government and presided over by city- and county-level officials. As of old, it attracted visitors from far and wide, as well as thousands of local residents, who lined the entrance to the temple and thronged the hillsides round about, dressed in their holiday best. The entire village was lit up by lanterns and festooned with colourful decorations. In the limpid light of a bright, clear northern autumn, the newly restored buildings, set amid tall pines and cypresses, looked especially magnificent against the backdrop of the thickly wooded Queshan and Pengshan mountains, resplendent in their autumnal colours.

On 30 October, I chaired a colloquium on 'Bian Que and his culture', convened by the local authorities, which brought together more than 100 participants, including scholars from the fields of cultural studies, history, ethnography and history of medicine from across the country, as well as city and county officials from the Xingtai area, for in-depth discussions of the figure of Bian Que, his significance, the events of his life, and sites and artefacts associated with Bian Que in Neiqiu county. This must surely have been the most remarkable commemorative event that the temple has witnessed in its long history. It was very gratifying to hear from local officials that the temple buildings and artefacts in Shentoucun had been accorded protected status as national cultural heritage. I was also informed that the great temple at Maozhou was under reconstruction under the auspices of Renqiu county government.

Besides these projects, according to the modern redaction of the Annals of Yiwu 義烏 county,²⁵ the local Bureau of Health, Bureau of Culture, and Science and Technology Commission had jointly funded the reconstruction of the Temple of Zhu Zhenheng 朱震亨, with a dedicatory inscription by the famous calligrapher Sha Menghai 沙孟海 (1900–92). This last restoration project entailed one major change in layout: the tombs of Zhu Zhenheng's two sons and heirs to his medical lineage were relocated from their former position on either side of their father's tomb to a new spot behind it.

To the best of this author's knowledge, no other place on earth possesses such a rich, extensive and ancient heritage of historic sites related to medical culture as does China.

When I embarked on the fieldwork described here, I was a young man with my life before me. The conviction that I was achieving something concrete with my work was enough to sustain me and spur me on, during the long, hard treks on foot through the mountains and remote rural areas, exposed to the elements and extreme weather. Today, as a much older man with the wisdom of hindsight, I look back on that time with mixed emotions. I only hope that from now on China will protect and cherish her medical sites and other historic monuments so that they will never again suffer wanton destruction, and this precious inheritance and the cultural continuity they represent can be carried forward into the future.

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