Despeux, Catherine (ed.) 2010, *Médecine, religion, et société dans la Chine médiévale: Étude de manuscrits chinois de Dunhuang et de Turfan* (Medicine, Religion, and Society in Medieval China: A Study of the Chinese Manuscripts from Dunhuang and Turfan), Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises. Pp. 1386. ISBN 978-2-85757-068-6. French

This three-volume *tour de force* makes a vital contribution to the history of Chinese medicine. The period between the emergence of the classical medical tradition in the Han and its revival under state sponsorship in the Song was a dynamic time of great efflorescence. Nowhere is the richness and diversity of medieval healing culture more striking than in the manuscripts that were recovered from the Silk Road oases of Dunhuang and Turfan. The discovery of these texts containing syncretic mixtures of religious, magical, and medical knowledge has revolutionized the study of the history of Chinese religion in the past few decades, and has now begun to have a similar effect on the historiography of Chinese medicine.

The study of Silk Road manuscripts has now become an established endeavour in our field, with three groundbreaking publications appearing in Western languages over the past ten years. A 2003 French-language volume edited by Marc Kalinowski, while not exclusively medical in its focus, provided a starting point by introducing a selection of Dunhuang texts on mantic practices related to understanding and curing disease. A 2005 publication edited by Vivienne Lo and Christopher Cullen introduced English readers to the variety of medical manuscripts from Dunhuang, as well as to the work of some of the leading Chinese and European researchers involved in their study. Finally, this 2010 publication led by Despeux has resulted in the publication of the most comprehensive resource on the Dunhuang and Turfan medical manuscripts in a Western language to date.

Médecine, religion, et société dans la Chine médiévale comprises three volumes. The chapter titles (in English translation) and contributors of the first two volumes are worth listing here in order to give a sense of the overall project:

Volume I

Introduction (containing background information on the current state of the manuscripts and their historical context), Catherine Despeux

1. Medical and therapeutic institutions at Dunhuang and Turfan, Catherine Despeux
2. Summary of medical knowledge: The *Shanghan lun* and *Wuzang lun*, Donald Harper
3. Pulse diagnosis in medieval China according to the Dunhuang manuscripts, Elisabeth Hsu
4. Pharmacopeias of Dunhuang and Turfan, Ute Engelhardt
5. Manuscripts on moxibustion from Dunhuang and Khotan, Vivienne Lo
6. Medical activities and hemerological methods in the Dunhuang calendars of the ninth to tenth centuries: *Renshen* and *riyou*, Alain Arrault
7. Medicinal recipes of Dunhuang, Catherine Despeux

Volume II

8. Medicine in the Turfan region in the medieval epoch: Interactions between the Chinese and the Hu, Chen Ming
9. Medicinal products, aromatics, and tinctures on the market in Turfan in 743, Éric Trombert
10. Personal hygiene and longevity at Dunhuang, Catherine Despeux
11. Sexological literature at Dunhuang, Donald Harper
12. Buddhist magico-religious practices, Catherine Despeux
13. Disease and apocryphal sūtras, Fang Ling

14. Infant diseases and Buddhist demonology: Local and exotic knowledge in the Dunhuang manuscripts, Chen Ming

Supplementing these essays, the third volume consists of just under 240 pages of bibliographies and reference materials. In addition to indices of dates, places, personal names, and text titles, readers wishing to ascertain the relevance of these manuscripts for various medical topics will greatly appreciate the inclusion of indices of calendrical units, pulse terminology, moxibustion points, and dietary prohibitions. There are also extensive lists of symptoms and medical formulae, as well as a Chinese-French glossary that includes Latin names for plants. These specialized tools providing multiple entry-points into the manuscripts must have been truly laborious to compile, but they are features that guarantee this work will be valued as a reference long into the future.

The contributors are also to be commended for their comprehensive treatment of the relevant texts. Rather than focusing narrowly on individual manuscripts, most of the authors have written synthetic overviews of their chosen themes that bring together a wide range of sources, provide important historical context, and remain accessible to non-specialists. This is one of the ways in which the current project differs from the previous Lo and Cullen volume, which contains a number of highly focused reports on individual texts that are geared toward specialists. Therefore, the two studies complement one another well.

The long-term effect of Silk Road manuscript studies on the broader historiography of Chinese medicine remains to be seen. The good news is that, with this string of recent publications focusing on these fascinating manuscripts, the medieval period is bound to receive much more attention from historians of Chinese medicine in years to come. The more we become interested in exploring the great dynamism and innovation of the period, the more this work will be recognised as required reading in our field.

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