PART THREE

CHOICE: MEDIA AND INTEROPERABILITY IN THE PRODUCTION OF TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE
I. Introduction

The Northern Song (960–1126) court and regional officials produced and distributed medical texts to augment medical relief and to enhance the state’s role in nurturing the people. They also deployed medical texts for imperial moral education, to reform what they deemed the ‘demonic’ and ‘shamanic’ healing customs and mores of southerners. These text projects also inscribed and disseminated visions that integrated cosmos, body, society, and empire. Print played a key role, not only in expressing and actualizing ambitions of extending the reach of the state, but in transforming the nature of governance.

While in some cases they do specify printing, the sources do not always make clear what they mean by ‘distribution.’ When they do, very often this does not include the step of making imprints, but simply engraving texts on stone or on wooden blocks, and posting these in public places. Further production (printing), consumption (reading), and application (healing) were sometimes carried out by state organs, but were often left to private initiative. Thus, print did not displace the more venerable practice of engraving texts on stelae, something which had already twice been applied to formularies by the Tang government. Print was, however, a critical component in the expanding...