

The *Tansūqnāma*: Chinese-Persian Medical Poetry

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Funded by JHU Woodrow Wilson Research Program



Introduction

This research aims to contextualize a selection of a Chinese-to-Persian translations from the 1313 *Tānsūqnāma-yi Ilkhān dar Funūn-i 'Ulūm-i Khitā'i* (Treasure Book of the Ilkhan on the Chinese Arts and Science) into the tradition of Islamic medical poetry. I situate the compilation of the *Tānsūqnāma* as an effort to incorporate Chinese didactic medical poetry into the Persian corpus, as led by the Mongol court physician and vizier Rashīd al-Dīn (1247–1318). Scholars have primarily focused on situating Rashīd al-Dīn's project within the political and cultural aspects of the overall exchange of medical knowledge between the East and West – here I present my own original contribution.

Translation

[The Spleen and its diseases from the right hand as it should be from the center of the finger position, and its implied interpretation][Poem]
["Meaning, in the right hand second finger position, the pulse is dependent on the spleen. Whenever forty-five cycles move uniformly this is an indication of the healthiness of the spleen's temperament.
But if it was fast, this is an indication of a foreign heat by which the temperament of the spleen became overcome (excess of hot humor); and it was a symptom of overabundance of appetite and decreased digestion.
But if the pulse was sluggish and intermittent this indicates the overcoming of the spleen's temperament with cold (excess of cold humor), and symptoms...."]

Transliteration

βiy	lin.	ḥiy	tiy ri	šiw	yuw.	
yyiy	ḥuw.	βuw	tunḡ.	wuw	βiy šiy	
kiy	rih	βiy	w.yi	min	tunḡ.	kiy
yyaḏ	ssiy	tin.	siyw	fuw	hḏ	ššiy
wiy	link	zuw	tjffaḏ	ḥiy	yuw	ḥiy
ḥiy	kiy	man.	ḥiy	šin	hḏ	ḥiw
ḡinḡ.	šuw	βi e	bbw	yitin	tuw	ḥyʔ.
šiy	ḡiy	tiy	ḥunḡ.	ḥim	kiy	wuyiy

Methods

In conducting this analysis, I focus on how the poetic dimensions of the text fit into this cultural exchange, considering how a specific selection of verses that pertain to the Galenic-Arabic Humoral system serve to mitigate tensions between the need to integrate new cultures. I utilized a phonological system designed by Yoichi Isahaya to account for linguistic inventions in Chinese-Persian texts to transliterate phonetic Chinese characters written in the Arabic alphabet to English.

The Spleen and its Disease

This is the page from the *Tansuqnama* that corresponds to “Right Hand Middle Finger Pulse” Poem from chapter four of the *Maijue*.



Phonological System

From Yoichi Isahaya, “Sino-Iranica.” Phonetic equivalents to linguistic inventions

Table 1: Correspondence of Letters⁷⁹

Letters	Endo's assumption	Miya's assumption	Assumed Syriac equivalents	Phonetic alphabet ⁸⁰
Ⲁ	Hebrew: Ⲁ	Syriac	Ⲁ	β
Ⲁ		Syriac	Ⲁ	n
Ⲁ	Hebrew: Ⲁ/Ⲁ	Syriac	Ⲁ	dz
Ⲁ		Syriac	Ⲁ	ts
Ⲁ		Syriac	Ⲁ	s
Ⲁ		Syriac	Ⲁ	f

References

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Conclusion

The poetic verses found in the text have been identified as a version of the *Maijue* (Pulse Rhymes) text compiled under the Song dynasty (960-1279). The chapter of the *Tānsūqnāma* translated as “The Spleen and its Diseases” was found to correspond to the “Right Hand Middle Finger Spleen Pulse” poem contained in chapter four of the *Maijue*. Foreign letters are introduced in the text derived from Syriac/Hebrew in order to better represent the sounds of the Chinese text, to preserve the integrity of the poetic sound for mnemonic purposes. As the splitting of the red verses makes it clear that the compilers of the text heard the poetic rhythm of passages in terms of “Bayt” Arabic and Persian poetic system, and they wrote it that way purposefully for students to read it as a Persian poem despite sounding Chinese. This passage is posited to have received special emphasis from compilers due to its relevance to familiar principles of Islamic Medicine. These details serve to familiarize certain aspects of Chinese medicine to Persian medical students and emphasize its similarity to Persian medicine, and finally to aid them in Chinese poems read as Persian.