Paul U. Unschuld (1985) **Medicine in China, a history of ideas**. University of California Press.

2. The Chou Period and Demonic Medicine (pp. 29-50).

2.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The organization of the Shang Empire rested on a central authority concentrated in the capital. Although it appears that the Shang king had granted fiefs to his vassals, he nevertheless maintained control by periodic expeditions through surrounding territories, reinforcing his claims to sovereignty. At the conclusion of such campaigns, the army would either leave behind a few scattered garrisons or the entire force would return to the capital. It is possible that this lack of well-organized, permanent supervision of the outlying regions of political influence was so advantageous to hostile forces that they were ultimately able to invade and destroy the Shang kingdom and establish a new dynasty. Thus the Chou, who inherited the power along the Yellow River, had first appeared in the area of present-day Kansu in northwest China. They then moved to the lower course of the Wei River, finally settling to the west of the Shang in what is today Shensi. Following their arrival, the still semi-nomadic Chou appear to have developed considerable agricultural skills. Of particular importance in this connection is a communally managed irrigation system. The resulting productive advantage achieved over the Shang provided the material basis for arming the Chou peasantry. With the aid of dissident Shang nobles, the even more fertile Shang territories were eventually subdued. The uncertain date of ca. 1100 B.C. is generally regarded as the beginning of the Chou dynasty.[1]

The Chou and their political system are associated with an era in Chinese history that exhibits certain parallels to the European system of feudalism. The first rulers of the new dynasty subdivided their sphere of influence into more than a thousand districts. The new capital was established not in the old Shang metropolis, but in Shensi, whence the Chou conquest had originated. The royal family proceeded to claim crown lands stretching from Shensi along the Yellow River to what is today Honan. Members of the royal family, as well as close allies, were granted fiefs in a semicircle to the east and south of this territory. Still farther to the east, separated from royal lands by this buffer zone of loyal supporters, the Chou assigned property to surviving members of the Shang ruling clan. Such favorable treatment illustrates how deeply the Chou themselves were rooted in ancestor worship; it was a matter of course that the vanquished ruling family be given the means to make the necessary sacrifices to their ancestors in a just and fitting manner. This required landholdings. The encirclement of the Shang, who perhaps considered regaining their former power, was completed with the granting of additional fiefs in the east to members of the Chou royal clan, thereby establishing a feudal system that fulfilled the expectations of its founders until the eighth century B.C. The numerous feudal lords journeyed periodically to the capital to reeffirm their loyalty to the king. They provided troops for the defense of the empire and workers for the cultivation of the royal domains; otherwise, their activities were restricted to their own holdings. A number of foreign invasions were successfully repelled during this period.[2]

The year 771 B.C. marked a turning point in the history of the Chou Empire.[3] During the bloody unrest that surrounded the succession to the throne, a decisive role was played by a foreign power

whose support had been sought by one of the involved parties. After the legitimate prince had been declared successor—the king having been killed during the unrest—these allies refused to return the Chou crown lands they had occupied; for the most part, these territories remained in foreign hands. A new capital was established farther east in Lo-i, but the Chou kings now lacked the extensive landholdings required to maintain control over the entire kingdom and a pre-eminent role in defense against invaders. At their new residence, they gradually became dependent upon the goodwill of their vassals; during subsequent centuries their position deteriorated to such an extent that they were permitted to carry out ancestral sacrifices to the supreme celestial ruler solely for ceremonial reasons.[4]
The establishment of the new capital marks the beginning of a period that Chinese historians have designated the "Eastern Chou." The loss of power experienced by the royal family was already evident in the same century, when the Prince of Ch'u bestowed the title of "king" on his sons. Other feudal lords soon followed this example.

From this point until the unification of the empire in 221 B.C., China was plagued by an almost uninterrupted series of wars and hostilities among individual states already present in the eighth century B.C., newly formed political entities in outlying areas, and foreign peoples who staged occasional invasions. The already chaotic situation was exacerbated by countless cases of patricide, uxoricide, and fratricide within the many ruling families; this moral decay marks the decline of the Chou Empire as one of the bloodiest periods in Chinese history. The initial fragmentation of Chou territory into hundreds of small and minute units was gradually reversed by subsequent annexations and alliances. Ultimately, only a few larger states struggled for supremacy, attempting to achieve the status accorded the former Chou kings. It was only toward the beginning of the third century B.C. that the idea of a centrally unified empire arose.

As a result of a number of factors—including the introduction or invention of new technologies, the production of iron and salt, the creation of a monetary economy, and an increasingly mobile population—first one state, then another, gained prominence and power. At one point, a group of states in central China forged an alliance to oppose a common threat from the north and south. But this alliance soon disintegrated, with each member either continuing the struggle alone or seeking other allies. The center of power shifted from the central states, which between the eighth and sixth centuries had successfully resisted the almost incessant invasions from the north, to three states that had attained importance in the south. But since these aspiring powers, located on the periphery of Chinese culture, were engaged in continual wars among themselves, a balance of power emerged, which none of the states was able to upset until the third century B.C. It was only at this point that the Ch'in state was able to subdue all rivals, thereby initiating the first unification of China under a strong central authority having both administrative and military control over individual regions.[5] The final centuries preceding this event (481-221 B.C.) have been designated the period of the "Warring States" by subsequent Chinese historians, since the intensity of hostilities reached its zenith during this last epoch of the Chou dynasty.

The nature of the struggle for pre-eminence and, ultimately, sole control changed rapidly from a ritual and bloodless rivalry among the princes, which may have developed from the distribution of worldly prestige among the peasantry, into a murderous enmity that spared no human life when victory or

defeat was at stake. The old conventions became meaningless; the opponent was no longer granted another chance to prove himself in some bloodless contest at a future date. Each side sought total triumph.[6] The ultimate objective was the complete destruction of the enemy, a goal that in earlier times would have been impossible, if only because of the common reverence for ancestors and the resulting acknowledged necessity for the continued existence of the family. Ransom was no longer demanded for the exchange of prisoners—their execution now secured the desired prestige. "The battlefield is no longer a tournament that brings honor to the participants. All that matters is success, which appears to be the result of magical skills, and not the solemn sacrifice of religious merit. The ethics of power gradually displace the old morality of honor and moderation."[7]

This transformation was brought about primarily by the unscrupulous policies of the ultimately victorious Ch'in state. Its ruler, King Cheng, heeded advisers who categorically and brutally rejected the old values of feudalism. All efforts by the legalists in Ch'in (as this school is called) were directed toward achieving economic wealth and military power for the state. To accomplish this objective, the time-honored, unwritten rites that were concerned with the social status of the individual were replaced by a codified system of laws, before which everyone, at least theoretically, was equally accountable. A system of penalties, whose severity was previously unknown, accompanied the reform of social norms. In a similar manner, the massacre of prisoners, massive threats, and misleading gifts and promises now characterized Ch'in's relationships with other states. Ch'in finally defeated the last of its opponents in 221 B.C.; King Cheng had himself proclaimed the first emperor (Shih Huang- ti) of a unified China.[8] This epochal event, however, did not end the unrest.

Although unification of the empire literally meant the destruction of all previous states, the advisers to the first emperor were fully cognizant of the fact that an aggressive program of reforms was necessary to eliminate all vestiges of the particularism that had marked the preceding feudal period. The large fiefs of numerous landowners were expropriated, and their positions were assumed by high officials. In other cases, nobles were forced to live in the capital, thereby separating them from the sources of possible reactionary movements. The entire empire was reorganized into new administrative districts, headed by military governors and civilian officials who could be replaced at any time by the imperial central government. A cultural standardization was pursued by means of a reform of the regionally diverse script; the standardization of weights, measures, and even the track width of vehicles using public roads contributed to an economic integration of the individual regions. One final measure earned the first emperor 2,000 years of contempt by Confucians, replaced only in recent times by the esteem of the Communist leadership under Mao Tse-tung. In 213 B.C., Shih Huang-ti ordered the collection and subsequent burning of all writings, except those dealing with medical care, drugs, oracles, as well as agriculture and forestry. This action was aimed primarily at historical writings that might have nurtured traditions opposing the new political direction. This was also the intention behind the simultaneous prohibition of any criticism of the present that made reference to the past.[9]

The new system was not allowed sufficient time, however, to prove itself; Shih Huang-ti died only eleven years after the founding of the first Chinese imperial dynasty. His two immediate successors had neither the power nor the skill to carry on his work and were unable to suppress opposition from feudalistic circles and revolts by conscripted laborers and state slaves. Two groups established

themselves during the lengthy period of renewed strife that ensued. The first consisted of nobles seeking to reestablish their old privileges; the second was a mixed group composed of bandits, those uprooted by natural disasters in eastern China, and other insurgents, who, despite their diverse motives, were undoubtedly united by a common resistance to the harsh obligations of the peasants to state service. Liu Pang, a former village gendarme, was finally able to defeat the noble faction in 202 B.C.; history knows him as Emperor Kao-tsu, founder of the Han dynasty. Although all Ch'in laws were swiftly repealed under his rule, a return to the old social institutions did not occur. The granting of fiefs to some former allies was unavoidable, but an inheritance law and other measures ensured eventual division of the holdings.[10]

Pragmatism characterized the first decades of Han rule, as the early rulers were not guided by a specific political or social principle. The death of Emperor Kao-tsu in 195 B.C. led to renewed unrest, as the regency of the widowed empress was marked by a bloody and unscrupulous attempt to gain power and influence for her own family, while eliminating the clan of her late husband. After fifteen years of strife, the Liu family was able to regain control, and the following reigns of Wen (180-157 B.C.), Ching (157-141 B.C.), and Wu (141-87 B.C.) brought to China, for the first time in many centuries, a period of internal peace and stability. The political system that was to be characteristic of China during the following 2,000 years evolved during the reign of Emperor Wu.

Nearly 700 years of bitter strife had fundamentally changed almost every social and cultural institution of Chinese civilization. Although at the beginning of the Chou period we frequently encountered groups— ethnically, linguistically, and culturally independent, or at least only distantly related— fighting among themselves, the end of this traumatic epoch, despite the continued existence of regional differences, saw the outlines of a future homogeneous Chinese culture.

The struggles during these centuries were not fought solely on the battlefield between individual states and at court among members of the ruling family or those aspiring to rule; the emergence of Chinese culture was accompanied by diverse, frequently antithetical, philosophies which to the present day have retained a significant cultural influence, even extending beyond China to large segments of East Asia. China never again experienced a similar period of such intellectual richness; even the far-reaching upheavals of the twentieth century, with the twofold revolution from empire to republic and then to people's republic, were, in the final analysis, not really characterized by the creation of a specifically Chinese system of ideas for shaping the future, but rather by the borrowing of Western ideologies and their adaptation to Chinese conditions. The history of the rise, pre-eminence, and decline of certain medical conceptions in China faithfully reflects these developments in the political sphere.

A consideration of the conceptualization of illness during the Chou period therefore cannot ignore the following dichotomy. As early as the period of the Warring States, the medical ideas that gained acceptance among broad segments of the population were those that can be viewed as an immediate consequence of contemporary political conditions and social structures. These are the concepts of demonic medicine, to be discussed below. In addition, however, certain systems of ideas were developed during the Chou period that apparently exerted significant influence only after the ultimate breakdown of Chou feudalism, following the unification of the empire. These include the concepts of

yinyang dualism and the theory of the Five Phases, to be discussed below, as well as the philosophies of Taoism and Confucianism and their impact on healing.

2.2. CONCEPTS OF DEMONOLOGICAL THERAPY

Following the Chou victory over the Shang, the new ruler consulted the tortoise-carapace oracle of his vanquished predecessor to determine the best location for the capital of the new empire. The use of tortoise carapaces is also widely documented for the late Chou period.[11] Nevertheless, an obvious change in the attitude toward the non-living members of the earthly community resulted in a diminished significance of ancestors and a concomitant perception of demons as partially or even completely responsible for everyday misfortune, including illness.

The Chou adopted the so-called wu from the Shang, a group of shaman-like practitioners who, according to Eichhorn, were regarded during the Shang period "as leaders or chiefs of their clan, believed to possess magical powers." Those responsible for sacrifices to Ti, the supreme deified ancestor, as well as to other ancestral deities, were undoubtedly members of the royal family. The political significance of these and other functions, especially those concerning claims of legitimacy by the rulers, was much too great to allow just anyone to pursue this occupation.[12] The pictographic core of the character wu indicates a dancer, and it was the most important responsibility of these practitioners to ensure—by means of prolonged and ecstatic dances and cries—the rain so vital in northern China. In addition, the wu were required to reduce violent storms and excessive rain, as well as to purge palace rooms of evil influences, snakes, and other poisonous creatures.[13]

The transformation of the political system that began with the Chou period was inevitably accompanied by a change in the religious system. Shang-ti was gradually displaced as the highest religious authority by T'ien, the celestial deity increasingly perceived in spatial terms. The wu lost their powerful social position and reestablished their occupation among lower segments of the population; their high status was in part assumed by the chu practitioners, the "priests" or "supplicants," who during the period of the Warring States had apparently been accorded a certain primacy in the maintenance of relations between the living and the supranatural.[14]

The prevailing view at this time appears to have been that the once well-ordered relationships and system of communication existing between living beings and the world of deities and spirits had at first fallen into a state of great confusion and, finally, had broken down completely.[15] During the period of the Warring States, these attitudes fostered, in turn, the creation of myths that recognized demons (kuei) as exerting an increasingly harmful influence upon man. Wu practitioners thus found it necessary to utilize their contacts with high-ranking, influential deities to restrain minor spirits and demons harmful to man; exorcism became their chief responsibility.[16] Three times a year the wu played a decisive role in expelling illness-causing demons from human settlements. In addition, they gathered around themselves clients who required individual treatment. Such practices were paralleled by the creation of myths such as the three sons of the legendary Emperor Chuan-hsü, who, after death, transformed themselves into evil, harmful demons.[17] As a result, the medical ideas we term demonic medicine gradually found acceptance and social pre-eminence.

Like ancestor therapy, the system of demonic medicine is based on a belief in the existence of beings, both visible and invisible, that inhabit the universe along with man. Unlike the Shang, however, who believed that every ancestor was associated with a specific living individual, there is no longer any direct connection between individual demons and individual persons. As I have shown, demonic medicine is based on the belief that illness is caused by the actions of evil spirits. Typical views of demonic medicine, present in literature of the first millennium A.D., are expressed in the following conditions defined as illness: "struck by evil" (chung-o), "assaulted by demons" (kuei-chi), "possessed by the hostile influence of demonic guests" (kuei-k'o wu-chi), and "possessed by the hostile" (chu-wu). A possible source for such ideas is the belief—verified for the Chou period, and perhaps even older— that each person has two souls.[18] The so-called corporeal soul (p'o) is present in the body from birth and perishes along with the body following death. The ethereal soul (hun) enters the body only much later after birth; during periods of sleep or unconsciousness it can temporarily leave the body, and after death it wanders alone through space and time. Demonic medicine perceives these unattached souls, spirits, or demons as inherently evil and thus as constantly striving to harm man. Such a view is by no means a necessary consequence of belief in demons; a concept of well-meaning or indifferent spirits is quite possible. The assumption of a permanently malicious character in these beings is fostered by a social climate that prevails in China only after 771 B.C.

At this point, it is necessary to consider another important conceptual difference between ancestor therapy and demonic medicine. According to demonic medicine, adherence to certain social conventions no longer protects an individual from future adversity (hsieh) or enables him to resist misfortune already present. Only when the guardian spirits associated with each individual are powerful enough, or when one is able to secure the assistance of such beings, whose position in the metaphysical hierarchy is higher than that of the attacking force, is one protected from these threats or, in the case of illness or conflict, sufficiently armed for a counter-attack. The social principle reflected in this system of therapy which stands in clear contrast both to the fundamental ideas of ancestor therapy and also, as will be demonstrated below, to the Confucian-backed system of healing, can be summarized simply as "all against all." In politics as well, only the skilled employment of troops and the establishment of alliances with other states, aimed at resisting attack from third parties, ensures survival and eventual "good health." Demonic medicine thus reflects certain central aspects of the political process during the decline of Chou feudalism, including general uncertainty and the existential angst that seems to have marked the relationship among states as well as among individuals.

2.3. THE PRACTICE OF DEMONOLOGICAL THERAPY

The belief that demons could cause illness is widely documented in literature of the later Chou period, as well as during the subsequent Ch'in and Han dynasties. Han Fei (died 233 B.C.) expressed the prevailing attitudes of his age when he concluded: "When a person falls ill, it means he has been injured by a demon.”[19] Available evidence from the Chou era, however, provides little information concerning measures taken by the sufferer himself or by medical exorcists to rid the body or

surrounding environment of these evil spirits. Initially, the procedures and therapeutic techniques may have been passed down orally, or recorded on fragile materials. A remark in the Li-chi, the "Book of Rites " dating from the period of the Warring States, indicates that practitioners attempted to keep their skills secret.[20] During these final centuries of the Chou Empire, attempts were apparently made to combat demons with the same measures that had already proven effective in human conflicts. Several times a year, and also during certain special occasions, such as the funeral of a prince, hordes of exorcists would race shrieking through the city streets, enter the courtyards and homes, thrusting their spears into the air, in an attempt to expel the evil creatures. Prisoners were dismembered outside all gates to the city, to serve both as a deterrent to the demons and as an indication of their fate should they be captured.[21] It may well be that the ancient writing of the Chinese character i used for "healer" and "healing" was formed at that time. Its lower half consists of the character wu ("shaman"); the upper half combines a quiver with an arrow on the left and a spear or lance on the right. The entire character thus depicts exactly the type of practitioner active in the rituals described.

By the late Chou or early Han period (206 B.C.-A.D. 8), more subtle methods to ward off demons or to enlist the help of spirits to cure an ailment appear in medical sources still extant today; they may, of course, have been developed much earlier. Donald Harper's recent brilliant analysis of the Wu-shih-erh ping fang, a fragmentary manual recommending a broad spectrum of (as the title states) "prescriptions against fifty-two ailments," and of other texts unearthed from the Ma-wang-tui graves of 168 B.C. near Ch'ang-sha, Hunan, in 1973, has brought to light a hitherto unknown sophistication of demonological (in conjunction with magical) concepts and practices that must have been a result of intellectual efforts by the best minds of the educated strata of Chinese society. Twenty-seven prescriptions (almost 10 percent of the total number of prescriptions) listed in the Wu-shih-erh ping fang are based on spells. For instance, to treat an affliction that may be identified as "lumping," the unknown compiler of the script suggested the following:

> Wait for lightning in Heaven and then rub both hands together, face the lightning, and chant an incantation to it saying, "Sovereign of the Eastern Quarter, [Sovereign of] the Western Quarter, [. . .] preside over the darkness and darken this person's stars." Do it twice seven times and [ ]. [22]

As Harper pointed out, "it was a general belief in Han times that alimentation under a starry sky caused the growth of small lumps in the flesh. The hard essence of the stars transferred under the skin is yet another process of cosmic replication, similar to the effect of the moon on the growth of the pearl inside an oyster.... Because of the astral etiology of the ailment, the magical act employed to cure it exploits a flash of lightning and the incantation calls upon the Sovereigns of the Eastern and Western Quarters to 'darken the person's stars'; i.e., to remove the skin lumps which the stars have caused to appear."[23]

The incantations and maledictions listed in the Wu-shih-erh ping fang echo various categories of magic applied to demonology. "Several spells are simple summons for divine assistance, others invoke the assistance of spiritual agents and then threaten the spiritual perpetrator of the ailment with extermination."[24] Breath magic, including spitting and spouting, accompanies verbal spells because it was believed that "spitting saliva or spouting substances out of the mouth is like blowing out a stream

of fire," a stream of fire which communicates chanted incantations to the spiritual world just as the burning of talismans transfers the written word to a metaphysical destination.[25]

A number of prescriptions in the Wu-shih-erh ping fang list non-verbal exorcistic techniques, such as the "steps of Yü," which I will discuss below with the first texts providing detailed information on their practice. All these non-verbal techniques combine demonological with magical concepts; they include, in addition to the "steps of Yü," "examples of magical transfer in which the ailment is transferred into an intermediate object, and the object is then safely discarded." "Beating the patient with exorcistic instruments is used in treating inguinal swellings. The list of magical weapons includes the following: thuja pestle, iron hammer, hemp cloth, and rammer."[26] Further examples are exorcistic archery and magical entrapment, as well as the demon-deterring employment of animal feces applied as therapeutic ointment or bath.[27] Finally, concepts of magic correspondence accounted for the specification of certain days, or times of day, as being most suitable for performing various exorcistic rituals.[28]

The use of talismans is documented in the Wu-shih-erh ping fang too; by the early Han period the entire population, from emperor to simple citizen, wore—in part as a fixed component of official dress— flat, rectangular pieces of wood, jade, or gold, secured to the waist, the forearm, or on a hat. Such pieces carried an inscription on both sides announcing that a deified ruler of antiquity had admonished his ministers to transform the object into a spear that could prevent all epidemics and serious illnesses. A word list compiled between 48 and 33 B.C. designated such amulets "projectiles against demons resembling a child" (she-ch'i) and "banishers of evil" (pi-hsieh), that "eliminate all kinds of misfortune."[29] Some 150 years later, the author of the etymological lexicon Shuo-wen (ca. A.D. 100) wrote the following in connection with the term hai-szu, which was also used for amulets: "they are used to drive out [evil] influences and demons."[30] The first written work devoted to amulet medicine may have been compiled at about the same time. This work, which has not survived in its original form, was, according to legend, authored by Chang Tao-ling (34-156), the somewhat shadowy founder and first "pope" of organized Taoism. Around A.D. 200, sources indicate a further development in efforts to combat and destroy demons in the human body; at the time, exorcistic inscriptions on paper or silk were usually burned to ashes and administered in a potion.[31] Amulets, also termed seals (yin) or talismans in Chinese, were now composed like official documents, bringing the world of demons into the administrative hierarchy of imperial bureaucracy. Talismans were already in use during the feudal period. It was customary for a prince who had assigned a task to one of his subjects, to break in two a piece of wood or jade inscribed with an appropriate text, and retain one of the pieces for himself. The remaining half was then presented to the person delegated with the task, to serve as proof of the official nature of his mission. The contractual and official character of charms is also evident in demonic medicine.

Exorcists prepared talismans resembling official documents, in which a command was given by a high official within the demon hierarchy to lowly evil spirits responsible for illness in humans. The inscriptions on these charms were generally in the form of intertwined, vertically arranged signs and symbols. The heading was generally a character signifying "assignment" or "command." Since the prestige of the "issuer" of the command was decisive for its therapeutic or preventive efficacy, the

talismans contain the likeness or name of influential deities believed able to repel evil spirits. Such illustrations frequently included the god of thunder with his lightning bolts, the sun, moon, various stars, and commanders of celestial armies, or renowned magicians. Since demonic medicine was adopted by several groups during the first century A.D., especially by various Taoist sects and by Buddhism (verified in China since A.D. 65), the founders and other personalities associated with these two religions are also named as "issuers." In addition, the talismans contain characters that indicate the nature of the command, such as the admonition "to depart," "to sink," "to come here," and "to kill" another demon. These are followed by a designation of the "curse," "evil," or "misfortune" to be eliminated and, finally, by a phrase generally found in official documents, such as "obey the law" or "respect this command." Taoist charms frequently conclude with the words "quickly, quickly, this is an order" or "as swift as fire!" An additional procedure was also intended to simulate the power structure of human society. Imperial decrees were prepared with vermillion ink on yellow paper, and a seal was then affixed. In place of the imperial seal, Taoist exorcists affixed the seal of Lao-tzu or Chang Tao-ling on similar yellow paper. The talisman achieved its greatest efficacy, however, only when the characters had been written with a genuine cinnabar brush that had been removed from the desk of a secular administrative official.[32]

The use of medicinal drugs to expel or destroy demons in the body appears to be as old as demonological therapy itself. Here, too, magic concepts appear to have guided the application of such substances in a demonological context. The Wu-shih-erh ping fang offers numerous instances of attempts to cure demon-caused illnesses by means of natural or man-made drugs. They include aromatics, prepared animals or parts of animals, herbs, a woman's menstrual cloth, and others.[33] The Sou-shen hou-chi of the third or fourth century A.D. contains the following depiction of a "hitherto unused" method in the struggle against evil spirits; the story related reminds us of a similar event recorded in the Tso-chuan for the sixth century B.C.[34] and may well refer to a time when the use of drugs against demons was a novelty:

> Li Tsze-yü, though still young, was an able medical expert, whose perspicacity and spirit his contemporaries extolled. Hü Yung was governor of Yü-cheu, and resided at Lih-yang when his younger brother fell ill; his heart and his belly ached severely for more than ten years, and he was almost dead, when one evening he overheard a specter from behind the screen accosting the demon within his belly. "Why do you not kill him immediately?" it said; "if you do not, Li Tsze-yü when passing along here will strike you with something hitherto unused, and this will cost you your life." On which the specter in the belly said: "I do not fear him." Next morning Hü Yung sent somebody for Tsze-yü; he came, and no sooner did he pass through the gate than the patient heard within himself a plaintive voice. The doctor entered, saw the sufferer, and said: "this is a demoniacal disease." Taking a red ball, compounded of eight poisonous substances, out of his linen box, he gave it to the sick man to swallow, and through his belly immediately rolled a thundering noise; several times he had a copious discharge of diarrhea, and then he was quite well.[35]

The use of medicinal substances for the treatment of demon-related illnesses was continually refined in subsequent centuries. In approximately A.D. 600, Chen Ch'üan compiled the Ku-chin lu-yen fang, a collection of prescriptions containing the following recommendations for possession:

> Pills for the five kinds of possession.

> Additional names: spirit and mountain recluse pills; pills worth a thousand times their weight in gold; pills that bring about a turning point in suffering caused by possession; pills that control fate; pills that kill demons.
> They cure ten thousand illnesses, [drive out] and [eliminate] illnesses caused by possession, as well as abdominal pain and belching. In addition, the prescription is effective against the harmful effects of cold, seasonal illnesses, and epidemics;
> Cinnabar—pulverize
> Arsenopyrite—burned for a half-day in earth
> Realgar—pulverize
> Croton seed—discard the skins, roast
> Hellebone—roast
> Aconite root—subject to dry heat
> use 2 fen of each of the above ingredients
> Centipede—broil, remove the feet
> Press these seven ingredients through a sieve and combine with honey to form pills the size of small beans. The correct dose is one pill daily. This will result in a cure. If the suffering is not relieved, an additional pill should be taken at midnight. This will certainly end all complaints. One pill should be carried on one's person at all times to ward off future misfortune. Pork, cold water, fresh-bloody things, and fox meat are to be avoided [during the treatment].[36]

Empirical evidence supported the assumption that certain drugs were effective against spirits. This was especially true for poisons, which could harm man, or whose destructive effects had at least been observed in insects. They were worn as charms or burned as a fumigant. One of the earliest prescriptions pertaining to the fumigation of demons was recorded by Sun Ssu-miao (581-682?) in his treatise on alchemy, Tan-ching yao-chüeh.[37] It contains, in addition to such toxic ingredients as realgar (As_2S_2) and arsenic trisulfide (As_2S_3), substances that, when burned, produced acrid fumes, such as sulfur, and those that already possessed a penetrating odor, such as musk. Another group of the nineteen ingredients in the prescription is composed of drugs that on the basis of their external appearance or medicinal effect were compared with weapons in the war against demons and given appropriate names. Sun Ssu-miao refers to the "demon arrow" (kuei-chien), which is also known as "divine arrow" (shen-chien) and "protective spear" (wei-mao). The myrtle flag plant was used in demonic medicine possibly because its ideogram was composed of two sun symbols, and it was therefore assumed the substance contained the concentrated power of the sun. Because of their fragrance, orchids found use in exorcistic rites, as did numerous tree resins, which were seen as the coagulated blood of the plant. When such resins were taken medicinally, the vital spirit of the tree, which was also coagulated in this blood, destroyed the demons in the body of the patient.[38]
The Ch'ien-chin i-fang, a compendium prepared late in life by Sun Ssu-miao, contains thirty-two drugs effective against demons.[39] In his various medical and alchemistic treatises, Sun Ssu-miao not only recorded instructions for the medicinal treatment of demon-caused ailments but the twenty-ninth and thirtieth chapters of the Ch'ien-chin i-fang also comprise the oldest collection of demonic medicine spells continuously handed down through the centuries until our present time, under the title "Classic of Interdictions" (Chin-ching). Sun Ssu-miao had had a comprehensive education that induded both the natural sciences and medicine, and he was influenced by both Taoist and Buddhist traditions. In the preface to the "Classic of Interdictions" he wrote:

> It is said that, when the clear had not yet been separated from the turbid, when night and day were still one, and the division [of the universe] into heaven and earth had just taken place, it was possible to distinguish warm and cool, the four seasons were separated, cold and heat were sent

> down to earth and created, the three sources of light shone forth; light and shadow alternately grew and died out. The five characteristics were given to man, and the surface of the body was given the ability ro absorb and obstruct. Thus Lao-tzu spoke: "I must suffer greatly because of the fact that I have a body. If I did not have a body, how could there possibly be any cause for suffering?" From this it can be seen that form and matter are conducive to illness. If one contemplates this in peace, it can be seen that only formlessness can avoid suffering. If not even the holy men on this earth are able to free themselves from suffering, how can it be done by the candle in the wind?[40]

With these words, Sun Ssu-miao touched upon a central thesis of demonic medicine that is not without sociopolitical significance. He has expressed here the conviction that illness and suffering are natural and unavoidable. Such a view ran counter to the already existing medicine of systematic correspondence, which was based on the belief that illness could be avoided by means of an appropriate way of life. But the conduct advocated by the medicine of systematic correspondences for the preservation of good health conformed, as I will demonstrate in chapter 3, to a large degree with the norms of Confucian political philosophy for the maintenance of harmony and order in society. By emphasizing the inevitability of illness and the need for a healing system devoted to the treatment of existing suffering, Sun Ssu-miao implicitly questioned the necessity of following certain moral dictums recommended for the preservation of good health by Confucian doctrine, as well as by certain Taoist sects.

The spells in the "Classic of Interdictions" resemble the structure of the talismans. The exorcist, or the sufferer himself, seeks an alliance with supranatural authorities, whose assistance, it is hoped, will expel or destroy the demons. In an opening chapter, Sun Ssu-miao explains in great detail various methods that are first needed to acquire the skill of reciting effective spells. These include ritual fasting and cleansing that served to purify the body and mind, as well as breathing techniques needed to absorb the vigorous influences of the sun, moon, and stars. The "Step of Yü" played an important role in the magical conveyance of internal and external forces. In order to avert a drought, Yü, a legendary ruler of antiquity, had offered himself as a sacrifice to God. But the god had accepted only half of his body, leaving Yü paralyzed on one side. To achieve his real objective—the founding of the Chinese Empire and the prevention of an imminent world flood— Yü had to perform a magical-ritual dance, which alone radiated sufficient power for the successful realization of such a momentous ambition. Because of his paralysis, Yü could only dance on one leg and had to drag the other behind him.[41] His success is documented in the literature of the first millennium B.C., where the "Step of Yü" appears as an essential component of rites designed to secure the assistance of a supra-human power (see appendix 4.1).

Only someone who had successfully performed all these preparatory ceremonies, which were also associated with particularly favorable times of the day and year, was able to heal diverse afflictions by means of spells. A selection of the diseases and illness-causing agents listed in the "Classic of Interdictions," for which Sun Ssu-miao was able to offer useful spells, illustrates the spectrum of indications:

> Hostile influences of demons; seasonal epidemics caused by heat; alternating attacks of heat and cold [yao afflictions]; boils and swellings; numbness of the larynx; toothache, eyeache; danger of suffocating by choking; difficult childbirth; hemostasis; possession; harassment by evil animals, tigers, wolves; snake venom; scorpions and wasps; robbers and thieves.

Two representative incantations are presented here in their entirety:

> Interdiction of the hostile influence of demonic guests.
> I am responsible for the wine sacrifice of the celestial master [i.e., Chang Tao-ling]; Heaven and earth have sent me. On my body I transport [the authority over] the celestial soldiers: 100 times 1,000 times 10,000 times 100,000 [of them] stand before and behind me, are lined up to my left and right. Which spirit would dare to alight here! Which demon would dare be present! Only a legitimate spirit should appear here! Evil demons—depart quickly! Quickly, quickly, this is an order![42]

> Interdiction of intermittent fevers [i.e., the yao illness].
> I ascend a high mountain. I look down into the water of the sea. A dragon with three heads and nine tails lives in the water. He subsists on nothing but yao demons. In the morning he devours 3,000 of them; at night 800. If his hunger is not yet stilled, he dispatches emissaries to drag in more demons. Amulets and drugs penetrate the five granaries of the body; the yao demons should retreat. Those who do not submit will be put in chains and delivered to the lord of the river. Quickly, quickly, this is an order![43]

One additional weapon in the arsenal utilized by Chinese physicians against demons cannot be ignored—acupuncture. In his Ch'ien-chin i-fang, Sun Ssu-miao cited the physician Pien Ch'io, purportedly active in the fifth century B.C., and indicated the exact location of thirteen puncture points for the needle treatment of demon-related illnesses that Pien allegedly had recommended.[44] The thirteen puncture points bear such revealing names as "demon camp," "demon hearts," "demon path," "demon bed," or also "demon hall." The needles used to penetrate a "demon heart" in the treatment of an individual were analogous to the spears used by exorcists at the time of Confucius (551-479 B.C.), when they ran through the streets gesturing in the air, in order to free the inhabitants from the threat of evil spirits. Surviving sources do not indicate with certainty whether demonic medicine actually utilized acupuncture during the late Chou or Ch'in periods, as Sun Ssu-miao's reference to Pien Ch'io would imply; in fact, no reference to therapeutic needling at all has been found in any Chinese text prior to 90 B.C. But the possibility that acupuncture originally had purely demonic medicine functions should not be excluded. I will return to this issue in a discussion of the possible sources of needle therapy (see below pp. 92-99).

We have now seen the wide range of therapeutic measures developed in the fight against illness-causing demons. All of these methods for the prevention and treatment of illnesses subsequently became a permanent part of medical care in China and continue to be practiced today, both outside of the People's Republic and, as recent mainland press reports indicate, in the People's Republic (although it is impossible to determine the extent of such practices). The longevity of these concepts should not be sought so much in their roots in popular Taoism and Buddhism, but rather in the general prevailing social atmosphere of existential uncertainty which made such concepts attractive to the great rural population until the present century.

2.4. THE CONCEPT OF KU

During its 2,500-year history, demonic medicine was developed and differentiated in a multitude of ways. Universal belief in the existence of evil forces that occupied transcendental sphere was transformed by numerous regional and supraregional attitudes and adapted to the specific empirical experiences of individual groups.[45] An informative example is provided by the concept ku, which is

described throughout the medical literature of the first and second millennia as one of the many causes of illness, and which also found both preventive and therapeutic consideration. The ku, a worm spirit, deserves special attention because it is a possible example of how the universal encounter of a region or epoch with actual parasite infestation, transformed by demonological concepts and the influence of social experiences, developed into an explanatory model that was able to convince both the educated and uneducated for many centuries.

Ku appears in several variations in Chinese literature, but the basic concept is as follows. A human "host" fills a container with various poisonous insects, worms, or snakes, which after a period of time, generally 100 days, destroy or devour one another until only one animal remains. It is assumed that the survivor contains the concentrated poison of all the original beasts. The human host then places this last animal, along with another, into a vessel containing water, where the two mate. The seed of the male floats on the surface and constitutes the so-called ku poison. The host picks up the seed with the eye of a needle and must now locate, on the same day, a person to whom he can administer the ku seed in food or drink. As soon as the recipient has swallowed the ku seeds, they develop into worms that resemble their parents. The worms gnaw on the viscera of the victim, producing pain, a swollen abdomen, progressive emaciation, and, ultimately, death. The proof of ku poisoning is visible following the demise of the victim, when worms crawl out from orifices in the corpse. As a reward for providing the ku parents, which are merely manifestations of a spirit that can only reproduce in this manner, with a secondary host, in which the seeds can mature, the ku spirit presents the primary host with all possessions of the deceased victim. If the primary host is unable to find a secondary host the same day, or he permits some sort of harm to befall the ku worm, he is killed by the ku spirit. For this reason the primary host may even find himself forced to select a relative from his own household as the victim, if no stranger appears on the day the ku seed was produced. There is only one way for a primary host to rid himself of the obligation to the ku spirit. He must gather together in a basket a large amount of valuable objects, such as silk, silver, and gold, and the ku worm, leaving it in a field or at an intersection. The person who finds this treasure and is unable to resist taking it home, is considered the new primary host by the ku spirit. If someone notices too late what an unfortunate burden he has acquired, he can free himself from the resulting obligation only by returning the basket with its original contents, plus about 30 percent interest, to the place it was found, or to a similar location.[46]

Medical literature considered the ku spirit, which could also appear in the form of a dog, frog, or other animals, to be the cause of various illnesses. As a result, there are numerous preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic measures designed to protect against this danger.

A simple method of prevention, when eating outside of the home, was to have the host first sample the proffered meals. Another technique was to stir the food with bronze chopsticks. If the meal had been poisoned, the chopsticks turned black. Innkeepers had daily contact with numerous strangers and were continually suspected of being in league with a ku specter. To ensure that entering an inn did not entail any risk, it was advisable first to clean the soles of the shoes on an inner wall of the establishment or to spit on the floor. If the dirt produced in this manner disappeared immediately, or if

the place seemed suspiciously clean, one could be certain that a ku spirit was at work, and it was a good idea to look for different lodging.
To diagnose whether someone was suffering from ku poisoning, the patient was asked to spit into water; if the spittle sank, the result was positive. Another method was for the victim to place a pea into his mouth. If it became soft and lost its skin, ku poison was present.
Prescription literature was filled with antidotes. All known Chinese conceptual systems of healing dealt with the ku phenomenon and developed therapeutic strategies that were in accord with their basic principles. The Buddhists recommended prayers and conjurations, thus utilizing the same methods as practitioners of demonic medicine. In pharmaceutical literature, drugs of a plant, animal, or mineral origin were described as effective against ku poisoning. Adherents of homeopathic magic recommended the taking of centipedes, since it was known that centipedes consume worms.
The familiar character for ku, a vessel with two (three since the Ch'in period) snakes or worms, appears, as I indicated in the previous chapter, as early as the Shang period on oracle bones and tortoise carapaces inscribed in the fourteenth century B.C. From the second century until the last imperial dynasty, laws prohibited, under severe penalties, the production and use of ku poison.
It appears that the attitudes toward ku outlined above are rooted in the observation of certain symptoms of human illness—swollen abdomen, emaciation, and the presence of worms in the body orifices of the dead or living. Such symptoms allow a great number of possible explanations and interpretations; in my view, very specific social conditions are necessary for the rise and general acceptance of the ideas encompassed by the concept ku. Particularly striking is the constant fear of one's fellow man, an omnipresent suspicion that is reflected in the view that some people are constantly striving to take over the possessions of others. This is, of course, the social atmosphere of envy that one can still see today in societies whose organization and economic structure can be equated in principle with the corresponding structures of the Shang. But the concept of ku is unknown outside of China. Instead, one finds what may be its conceptual equivalent, the "evil eye," present in all "envy societies." From the Shang texts themselves, one learns little more about contemporary views on ku than that it was a cause of illness. Sources from the Chou period are only slightly more informative. The Tso-chuan contains two different examples of illness resulting from the effects of ku, and it is significant that in both cases, the victims had been guilty of "excesses."[47] A text from the fourth century A.D. is the first to describe the preparation of ku as a means to obtain the wealth of others; the oldest surviving description of the production process itself dates from the sixth century.[48] The lack of early evidence tells us little about the actual age of attitudes toward ku, but it does seem certain, as Feng and Shryock recognized, that

> the practice of ku extended at one time over the whole area included in China proper ... even in the medieval period [third to seventh centuries], Chinese observers remarked on the prevalence of the practice in southern China, and from the T'ang period on, the practice appears to have been more and more confined to aboriginal tribes of the south.[49]

The nature of ku poisoning thus changed over the course of centuries from an internal threat to a conflict between the Chinese and their less civilized neighbors, a relationship under constant strain. In the south, non-Chinese peoples suffered continually under the incessant expansion of the Chinese

Empire. The cultural gulf between the southern tribes and the approaching Chinese was obvious. The conquered territories were administered by Chinese officials, and the original inhabitants either exterminated or driven out, or tolerated in enclaves under Chinese suzerainty. Whether consciously or subconsciously, there were sufficient grounds for the Chinese to expect some kind of resentment and retaliation from their disadvantaged neighbors, and it is not surprising that these fears eventually took the form of etiological concepts.

Chinese children were the preferred victims for ku poisoning by members of non-Chinese tribes, as the following remarks from the nineteenth century indicate:

> During the fall, the Miao women carry pears in cloth bags, selling the pears to children. Many children are poisoned by ku in this way.[50]

Reports about the purported poisoning of Chinese administrative officials by local inhabitants may also reflect the subliminal expectations of retaliation:

> The chiefs of Yüan-chiang have handed down the method of producing ku. This medicine is not beneficent, but is poisonous. An astonishing fact is that when a new magistrate arrives, the people must prepare a feast to welcome him, and they poison him then. The poison does not become effective during his term of office, but the pupils of his eyes turn from black to blue, and his face becomes pale and swollen. Then some months after he leaves office, his whole family dies.[51]

Reports of ku poisoning in China often contain the implied desire of the disadvantaged to live under the same conditions as those who are better off. However, the ku concept contains suspicion of clean and wealthy households. In this manner, a stigma was gradually attached to those who were wealthy and clean, since they had possibly achieved their position only with the aid of criminal methods, such as the use of ku. These kinds of attitudes lead to precautionary methods similar to those found in societies where the "evil eye" is prevalent, such as the concealment of possessions and a preference for neglected external appearance.

As the legal measures of individual dynasties demonstrate, administrative officials viewed ku as a reality, as late as the nineteenth century. The primary host was considered a criminal; a person guilty of the despicable act of preparing and administrating ku poison was executed, occasionally with his entire family, in a gruesome manner. In addition to the obvious desire to punish severely criminal practices that could result in the death of the victim, it is possible that Confucian distaste for the accumulation of material goods, and above all for the resulting social mobility, contributed to this attitude. Indeed, the penalties for the use of ku poison appear to have been more severe than those for other forms of murder.

In contrast to the obvious attitude of the authorities toward the primary host, some reports depict the criminal as a victim much like the secondary host. The desire for wealth, symbolized by the picking up of the filled basket from the road, and the envy of others that induces someone actually to produce a ku worm, are viewed here as the real "disease." The healing of this suffering is only possible through the dissolution of the voluntary or involuntary pact with the ku spirit— a costly undertaking since one has to give away more than was received in the first place. Thus, envy and greed, which are supposed to result in gain, are ultimately punished by death or, in the case of a successful treatment, by the loss of possessions.

Unschuld's Footnotes (from Unschuld, 1985, p. 368-369).

1. Levenson and Schurmann 1969, pp. 28-30; Franke and Trauzettel 1968, p. 38.
2. Levenson and Schurmann 1969, pp. 31-33; Franke and Trauzettel 1968, p. 40.
3. Franke 1930, 1:153.
4. Franke and Trauzettel 1968, p. 40.
5. Ibid., pp. 70-73.
6. Granet 1976, p. 86.
7. Ibid., p. 146.
8. Franke and Tranzettel 1968, pp. 66-73.
9. Ibid., pp. 74-76.
10. Ibid., pp. 78-79.
11. For an example of the application of the tortoise oracle in a therapeutic context see Legge 1960, 3:351-356.
12. Eichhorn 1976, p. 17.
13. Ibid., pp. 17-19.
14. Ibid., pp. 34-35.
15. Ibid., pp. 23-25.
16. Ibid., p. 27.
17. Ibid., p. 22.
18. Wilhelm 1930, pp. 32-33.
19. Han Fei-tzu, 1966, chap. 6, p. 6b.
20. Eichhorn 1976, p. 34; Wilhelm 1930, p. 34.
21. De Groot 1892-1910, 6:973-974.
22. Wu-shih-erh ping fang, 1979, p. 129. Harper 1982, pp. 226-228. In an earlier publication I had tentatively accepted an interpretation of the ailment concerned here (ch'ao) that had been offered by the Chinese editors of the Wu-shih-erh ping fang, namely, "body odor." (Unschuld 1982a, p. 17) Harper's analysis is convincing.
23. Harper 1982, p. 227.
24. Ibid., p. 80.
25. Ibid., pp. 85-86.
26. Ibid., pp. 104-105.
27. Ibid., pp. 105-106.
28. Ibid., p. 103.
29. Dubs 1955, pp. 537-539.
30. Ibid.
31. Eichhorn 1955, p. 310.
32. Doré 1966, vols. III/I-XXII.
33. Harper 1982, pp. 30-33.
34. Cf. Tso-chuan, Bk 8, 10th year.

35. De Groot 1892-1910, 5:679-680.
36. Wai-t'ai pi-yao, 1964, p. 362.
37. Sivin 1968, pp. 208-209.
38. De Groot 1892 -1910, 6:1078-1082.
39. Ch'ien-chin i-fang, 1965, p. 8.
40. Ibid., p. 341.
41. Granet 1976, pp. 54-57; Eberhard 1942, pp. 50-60; Harper 1982, pp. 98-101.
42. Ch'ien-chin i-fang, 1965, p. 347.
43. Ibid., p. 348.
44. Ibid.. p. 327.
45. Cf. Keupers 1977 and Hou 1979 for detailed accounts of specific demonological concepts and their respective application in actual contemporary exorcistic therapy.
46. Feng and Shryock 1935; De Groot 1892-1910, 5:826-869; Pei-k'ao shih-wu pen-ts'ao kang mu, "Chih ku lun fang" appendix to chap. 22 (cf. Medicine in China: A History of Pharmaceutscs, p.228).
47. Legge 1960, 5:164, 574.
48. Feng and Shryock 1935, pp. 7-8.
49. Ibid., p. 9-10.
50. Ibid., p. 23.
51. Ibid., p. 16.