NAN JING
Classic of Difficult Issues

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YELLOW EMPEROR’S CANON
OF MEDICINE
SPIRITUAL PIVOT

III
NAN JING

6 SECTIONS

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2. THE CHANNELS (Chapters 23-29)

3. THE ZANGFU (Chapters 30-47)

4. ON DISEASES (Chapters 48-61)

5. SHU POINTS (Chapters 62-68)

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Chapter 2: subdivision of pulse into *cun, guan chi*

Chapter 3: pathological pulse pictures

Chapter 4: Yin-Yang applied to pulse, three levels of depth

Chapter 5: 5 levels of depth

Chapter 6: abundance and depletion of Yin or Yang

Chapter 7: 3 Yin and 3 Yang qualities related to 6 periods in year

Chapter 8: the pulse in prognosis

Chapter 9: diseases of the Zangfu

Chapter 10: ten variations of the pulse

Chapter 11: rhythm irregularities and significance
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Chapter 14: differences in pulse strength between *cun* and *chi*
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Chapter 20: hidden movements in the vessels
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Chapter 61: diagnosis by hearing, smelling, asking

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Chapter 63: Jing points as beginning of channels

Chapter 64: the 5 Shu points assignment to 5 Elements

Chapter 65: the concept of entry and exit of Jing and He points

Chapter 66: *Yuan* points of 12 channels

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Chapter 81: wrong treatments (reducing Deficiency and tonifying Fullness)
ORIGINS AND HISTORY

The Nan Jing was written probably during the first or second century AD (Unschuld). It marks the conclusion and apex of the development of the medicine of systematic correspondences that started during the Warring States Period (476-221 BC).

The Nan Jing is only about acupuncture and not herbal medicine. According to Unschuld, the theory of systematic correspondences (Yin-Yang and 5 Elements) was not applied to herbal medicine until the Song dynasty (960-1279).

The Nan Jing also lacks elements of demonic medicine (based on invasion of gui spirits) that are found scattered in the Nei Jing. Unlike the Nei Jing, the Nan Jing is surprisingly systematic. In my opinion, this is probably due to it being written by one person (unlike the Nei Jing).

One of the most brilliant intuitions of the Nan Jing is that of a continuous flow of Qi in a closed circle: this idea led to pulse diagnosis from the wrist and to the use of the 5 Shu points.
MEANING OF “NAN” 難 难

1) “Question and answer” by Xu Da Chun (Unschuld)

2) Difficult issue

3) “Nan” as “shuo” 说, i.e. “to instruct”, “to persuade”
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NEI JING AND NAN JING

1) Nan Jing systematic. The Nan Jing is quite systematic in its organization of chapters within 6 Sections. The Nei Jing is much less so.

2) The Nei Jing has a lot of philosophy (Heaven, Tian Ming, sages, etc.) and clearly shows the influence of five major philosophies, i.e. Confucianism, Legalism, Daoism, Naturalist (Yin-Yang School) and Huang-Lao School. The Nan Jing does not have any trace of any of these philosophies.

3) The Nan Jing is clearly written by one person while the Nei Jing is equally clearly written by many different people.

4) The Nei Jing places huge emphasis on the 5 Elements and establishes the 5-Element correspondences as we know them (Liver-eyes-sinews-rancid-green-Spring-Hun). The Nan Jing deals with the 5 Elements mostly in relation to the 5 Shu points.
5) The Nei Jing contains occasional references to “demonic” medicine, i.e. the role of gui [鬼] in the aetiology, pathology and treatment of diseases. These references are sometimes supportive and sometimes critical of demonic medicine. These are completely absent in the Nan Jing.

6) Large parts of the Nei Jing are dedicated to the aetiology of disease and to yang sheng: there is nothing about that in the Nan Jing.

7) The Nei Jing is very much part of yang sheng [养 生], i.e. the rules of conduct in life-style, diet and sex to ensure health and long life. The Nan Jing not so.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

If the Nan Jing was written between 100 and 200 AD, it would place it in the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 AD). The Han dynasty went from 206 BC to 220 AD and it represented the consolidation of the Chinese empire started by Qin Shi Huang Di of the Qin dynasty (221-206 BC). The Han dynasty also saw the consolidation of the Confucian philosophy as the official state ideology.