

Buddhism, Medicine, and the Affairs of the Heart: Āyurvedic Potency Therapy (*Vājīkarana*) and the Reappraisal of Aphrodisiacs and Love Philters in Medieval Chinese Sources

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Abstract: This article examines how discursive frames modify forms of knowledge and practice. More precisely, it considers the problem of categories in early and medieval Chinese sources through the lens of recipes designed to facilitate intercourse. In pre-Buddhist Chinese sources, such prescriptions traditionally fell either under the rubric of ‘nourishing life’ (*yangsheng* 養生) longevity practices or spellbinding (*zhuzu* 祝詛). While recipes that appear in the former bracket—referred to in this study as ‘aphrodisiacs’—were couched in a discourse of healing and classified as a medical undertaking, those associated with spellbinding—referred to as ‘love philters’—were filed under the heading of mantic arts and divination in bibliographic treatises. With the arrival of Āyurvedic medicine in China via Buddhist sources, this partition grew increasingly blurred. Āyurvedic medical taxonomy in general, and its discipline of potency therapy (*vājīkarana*) in particular, did not distinguish between aphrodisiacs and love philters since both ultimately facilitate intercourse, albeit through different means. The imprint of Āyurvedic categories in China can be ascertained in Buddhist manuscript sources from Dunhuang, but also, more surprisingly, in widely circulated medieval non-Buddhist medical treatises. However, in contrast to the emblematic medical treatises of the middle period and surveyed manuscript Buddhist materials, canonical Buddhist texts appear to have shied away from the topic of aphrodisiacs and upheld the indigenous Chinese understanding of love philters as spellbinding and mantic art.

Introduction

The following pages trace some of the ways in which artificial means of securing sexual or emotional attention were negotiated as separate from, parallel to, or part of medical therapies throughout early and medieval China. The emerging picture stands in contrast to Van Gulik's and Needham's visions of a unified tradition of Chinese sexual practices represented by the how-to treatises of the *fangzhong shu* 房中術 genre, literally, the 'arts of the bedchamber.' More precisely, this study concurrently examines two formats of knowledge and practice: the first, which we refer to as 'aphrodisiacs,' are concoctions devised to remove physiological hindrances to intercourse. The second, which we term 'love philters,' are concoctions devised to remove psychological or emotional barriers to harmonious interpersonal relations and ultimately intercourse. This paper aims to clarify how specific forms of knowledge and practice are modified by discursive frames, and more concretely, how the introduction of Āyurvedic medicine into China through Buddhist sources altered the perception of aphrodisiacs and love philters, redefining indigenous categories of understanding.

In establishing this, the present study considers a number of sources beginning with Chinese materials that predate the spread of Āyurvedic notions, namely second century BCE Mawangdui 馬王堆 manuscripts and bibliographic chapters from official histories. In these sources, aphrodisiacs and love philters are treated as separate genres, but neither is squarely medical nor strictly divorced from medicine. Here, Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) distinction between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* is useful, perhaps in an unexpected way, for underscoring some of the tensions that Chinese bibliographers confronted in categorizing aphrodisiacs and love philters. The second set of materials consists of Buddhist sources that attest to the presence of Āyurvedic notions in medieval China pertaining to interpersonal sexual and emotional welfare. Next, non-medical non-Buddhist manuscripts from Dunhuang 敦煌 are contrasted with medical sources, Buddhist and other, to highlight how South Asian medical taxonomies impacted indigenous Chinese understandings of aphrodisiacs and especially love philters. As familiarity with the Āyurvedic medical discipline of potency therapy (*vājīkarana*) grew in China, both aphrodisiacs and love philters were increasingly understood as medical therapies. Finally, medieval Chinese medical treatises and Chinese Buddhist canonical texts are examined in an effort to gauge the breadth of the Āyurvedic imprint on Chinese materials.

This study builds on the scholarship of Chen Ming and others who have signaled the important contributions of non-indigenous medical systems to

the eclectic landscape of Chinese healing practices.¹ It also expands on many of the themes and questions raised by those who have closely studied the intricate tapestry of aphrodisiacs and love philters, Donald Harper and Li Jianmin, chief among them.² This study contributes new perspectives on Chinese medicine in three respects: 1) it brings Āyurvedic medicine into conversation with indigenous Chinese taxonomies of aphrodisiacs and love philters; 2) it highlights the role of Buddhism in framing Chinese views of aphrodisiacs and love philters; and 3) it introduces unexamined sources from Dunhuang and the Sino-Japanese Buddhist Canon, the Taishō Tripiṭaka.

The Problem of Non-Indigenous Categories

Michel Foucault's landmark three-volume *The History of Sexuality* remains an influential study of sexuality in Western societies more than three decades after it was first published. The French philosopher supplied successive insights into how post-Enlightenment attitudes towards the experience of sex along with their standardization and medicalization contributed to the rise of the individual as subject. When it came to his brief treatment of sexuality in East Asia however, Foucault had to rely on secondary scholarship. As a result, his portrayal of premodern Chinese attitudes towards sexuality was based on the assumptions and misconceptions of other scholars. Relying most notably on Robert Van Gulik's interpretation from *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, Foucault depicted a sensual and pleasure-driven China, the mirror image of a post-enlightenment Europe that was analytical and discursive in its approaches to sexuality.³ While the former allegedly subscribed to the logic of *ars erotica*,

¹ Chen Ming's work almost invariably deals with Indian contributions to Chinese medicine. For a representative sample of his work in Chinese and English, see Chen Ming (2002), Chen Ming (2003), Chen Ming (2005a), Chen Ming (2005b), Chen Ming (2006a), Chen Ming (2006b), and Chen Ming (2007).

² See Harper (2005), Harper (2010), and Li Jianmin (1996); see also Liu Lexian (2005).

³ Van Gulik (2003). Leon Antonio Rocha has provided a detailed account of the genesis and significance of *Sexual Life in Ancient China* in his "Scientia Sexualis versus Ars Erotica: Foucault, Van Gulik, Needham"; see Rocha (2011). See, by the same author, the follow-up article entitled "The Way of Sex: Joseph Needham and Jolan Chang; Rocha (2012). See Heubel (2004) for an appraisal of some of the issues that Rocha deals with from the perspective of philosophy; Heubel focuses on Van Gulik's perception of 'sexual vampirism' in Chinese sexual practices, tracing its contribution to Jean-François Lyotard's notion of libidinal economy, as well as its impact on

the latter, relying on the principles of knowledge and power, constituted itself as a *scientia sexualis*.⁴ In erecting an idealized and timeless 'East' to counterbalance the ills of the modern 'West,' Foucault was able to generate data in support of his larger thesis concerning the role of science (and pathology) in the emergence of the individual as a unit of identity in the West.

Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze's constructs of 'Eastern' traditions. For a text-based analysis of sexual practices in early and medieval China, see Pfister (2012).

⁴ The central passage from *The History of Sexuality* in which Foucault deploys this argumentation is the chapter on "Act, Expenditure, Death"; Foucault (1985), vol. 2, p. 137. There is also an earlier resonant but less-developed passage in Foucault (1978), vol. 1, 57-58. I reproduce Robert Hurley's translation of the more elaborate one here for the sake of convenience:

For example, the documents assembled by Van Gulik, pertaining to ancient Chinese culture, seem to show the presence of this same thematic complex [as in ancient Greek sources]: fear of the irrepressible and costly act, dread of its harmful consequences for the body and health, representation of the man-woman relationship in the form of a contest, preoccupation with obtaining descendants of good quality by means of a well-regulated sexual activity. But the ancient Chinese 'bedroom' treatises responded to that anxiety in a manner completely different from what one finds in classical Greece. The dread one felt when faced with the violence of the act and the fear of losing one's semen were answered by methods of willful retention; the encounter with the other sex was perceived as a way to come into contact with the vital principle the latter held in her possession and, by absorbing it, to internalize it for one's own benefit. So that a well-managed sexual activity not only precluded any danger, it could also result in a strengthening of one's existence and it could be a means of restoring one's youthfulness. Elaboration and exercise in this case concerned the act itself, its unfolding, the play of forces that sustained it, and of course the pleasure with which it was associated; the nullification or indefinite postponement of its completion enabled one both to carry it to its highest degree in the realm of pleasure and to turn it to one's greatest advantage in life. In this 'erotic art,' which sought, with pronounced ethical concerns, to intensify insofar as possible the positive effects of a controlled, deliberate, multifarious, and prolonged sexual activity, time—a time that terminated the act, aged the body, and brought death—was exorcised.

Foucault's ideas have made their mark on the humanities and social sciences, to such a degree that merely citing him on a subject is often a sufficient surrogate for a detailed argument. However, in an iconoclastic turn, scholars have increasingly begun to challenge Foucault's standing. His opposition between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* and its imposition onto further binaries such as pre-modern and modern, East and West, China and Europe has not escaped the attention of critics.⁵

Nonetheless, despite overgeneralizations, certain dichotomies in Foucault's model did accurately convey some of the tensions on the ground in early and medieval China. Thinkers and bibliographers did indeed struggle with classifying written materials concerning sexuality, specifically those dealing with how to undertake relations or to elicit interest in another person. 'Methods' or 'techniques' (*fang* 方) providing assistance in managing these affairs of the heart – that is to say in facilitating intercourse between partners – were sometimes classified as 'mantic arts' (*shushu* 數術). This category, redolent of Foucault's *ars erotica*, implied an important level of skill that was not fully graspable to the uninitiated. Yet, relatively similar recipes designed to facilitate sexual intercourse were in other cases labelled 'recipes and techniques' (*fangji* 方技). They were included in (para)medical and therapeutic manuals that espoused a more mechanistic view of the body or of interpersonal relations, and would thus fall under the rubric of *scientia sexualis*. Thus, Foucault's opposition between the etic categories of art and science does find an echo in the emic categories of early and medieval China after all. Nevertheless, such neat distinctions are more often than not the product of a remote scholarly gaze that they are an accurate snapshot of actual practice. The situation on the ground was undoubtedly much messier than in texts, and it was surely influential in shaping new and hybrid bibliographic categories over time. That said, questions of practice have been set aside in the present study in order to solely focus on how the introduction of Buddhism and Āyurvedic medical knowledge contributed to modifying Chinese bibliographic habits over time, particularly with respect to conjugal or sexual aids that were recipe-based.

⁵ Aside from Paul Goldin's (2003) "Introduction" to the most recent edition of Van Gulik's *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, we may also cite Stone (2003). Few of these critiques appear in studies concerning early and medieval China as these fields, in general, have proven quite resistant to the incursions of theoretical and methodological concerns observed elsewhere in the humanities. In adhering to nineteenth century models of philological inquiry, scholars of early and medieval China have ironically found themselves ahead of the curve as a backlash against 'too much' theory has developed. In tangential fields, intelligent challenges to Foucault's orientaling binary model may be found in Pflugfelder (2007) or Doniger and Kakar (2003), for example. More recently, see Zamora's (2014) *Critiquer Foucault*, which ultimately argues for a more nuanced reading of the philosopher.

On Indigenous Chinese Categories: the Arts of the Bedchamber and the Way of Seduction

The arts of the bedchamber (*fangzhong shu* 房中術), an established genre in early and medieval China, concerned sexual relations between consenting partners; although in this type of literature, the relationship was presented as almost invariably asymmetrical, with one participant attempting to extract the other's vital essence (*jing* 精; or *qi* 氣) during encounters.⁶ For this reason, if partners were not forthcoming, there could be a degree of deception involved in the practices described. Nonetheless, these materials were not produced with the intention of eliciting attraction in or seducing others. The arts of the bedchamber were more in line with *yangsheng* 養生, or 'nourishing life' practices, itself a sub-division of 'recipes and techniques' (*fangji*). In fact, they were included in the habitual roster of nourishing life practices, along with calisthenics (*daoyin* 導引), dietetics (*bigu* 辟穀), breathing techniques (such as ingesting *qi*; *fuqi* 服氣), and meditation or visualization (for example circulating *qi*; *xingqi* 行氣). As Catherine Despeux, Donald Harper, and Sakade Yoshinobu have independently shown, nourishing life straddled the borders between self-cultivation, religion and medicine.⁷

Much in the same way that nourishing life practices as a whole resisted classification under a single rubric, the arts of the bedchamber too were intrinsically multidimensional. However, because of their emphasis on longevity, they exhibited a pronounced therapeutic dimension. Another phrase that is sometimes used to convey the notion of *fangzhong shu* is 'sexual hygiene,' a term that underscores the curative or prophylactic health benefits achieved by its practice. Thus, in the manuscripts excavated from tombs in Mawangdui (ca. 168 BCE), one encounters advice on how to address physiological impediments to intercourse. For example, texts supplied directions for curing erectile dysfunction, or as in the following example, guidelines for tightening the vaginal orifice.

For contracting. Take one part each of *gui* 桂 (cinnamon) and dried *jiang* 姜 (ginger); two parts of *fanshi* 番石 (talcum); and three parts of *zaojia* 皂莢 (honey locust). Smith all of them and mix. Wrap in plain silk, making it

⁶ See Li Ling's chapter "Mawangdui fangzhong shu yanjiu" 马王堆房中书研究 [Studies on Mawangdui Bedchamber Manuals], in Li Ling (2000), pp. 382-433. For the relevance of so-called 'sexual vampirism' or 'energetic vampirism' in contemporary philosophy, see Heubel (2004).

⁷ Despeux (1988); Harper (1998), pp. 110-148; Sakade (1983), Sakade (1988), Sakade (1992), Sakade (1993), pp. 93-100.

the size of a finger. Insert into the front [the vagina]. When it takes effect, take it out.⁸

This prescription is taken from a manuscript that contemporary scholars titled 'Recipes for Various Cures' (*Zaliao fang' 雜療方)⁹ and have classified as an arts of the bedchamber text.¹⁰ This and other recipes like it may be considered aphrodisiacs as they set the stage for the ultimate focus of the arts of the bedchamber: attempting to correct whatever underlying condition prevented one of or both of the would be sexual partners from willingly engaging in intercourse.

Traditionally, the arts of the bedchamber were contrasted to the 'way of seduction' (*meidao* 媚道). While the latter rested on consensual relations, the former did not. The 'way of seduction' was a form of spellbinding or bewitchment thought to be overwhelmingly performed by women who aimed to seduce unsuspecting men. Early and medieval Chinese bibliographers drew a coarse taxonomy of sexual aids, according to which the medico-spiritual objective of the arts of the bedchamber was suited to masculine endeavors, and the way of seduction and its enchantments were generally feminine pursuits.¹¹ As a practice assimilated to spellbinding (*zhuzu* 祝詛)—a sub-genre of 'mantic arts' (*shushu*)—or 'black magic' (*wugu* 巫蠱), the way of seduction was unanimously condemned in official accounts.¹² But the arts of bedchamber and their aphrodisiacs too, despite

⁸ *Zaliao fang,' MSIV.9 (CCI 8-19); translation slightly modified from Harper (1998), p. 365.

⁹ In conformity with what is now common practice in the study of Chinese manuscripts, I add an asterisk * to the titles of sources that were assigned by contemporary scholars or editors. For Mawangdui manuscripts, I follow the identifications given in *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* 馬王堆漢墓帛書 vol. 4 (1985).

¹⁰ The '*Yangsheng fang' 養生方 ('Recipes for Nurturing Life'; MSIII) is another similar arts of the bedchamber manuscript that contains various recipes for aphrodisiacs and improving sexual functions; see Harper (1998), pp. 328-362; the manuscripts titled '*He Yin Yang' 合陰陽 ('Conjoining Yin and Yang'; MSVI.B) and '*Tianxi zhidao tan' 天下至道談 ('Discussion of the Culminant Way in Under-Heaven'; MSVII.B) also contain instructions for what may be considered aphrodisiacs; see Harper (1998), pp. 412-422, and pp. 428-438, respectively. For a treatment of Mawangdui arts of the bedchamber literature, see the aforementioned Li Ling (2000), pp. 382-433.

¹¹ This categorization is found in the *Shiji* 史記 (Record of the Historian), the *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Former Han), or the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (History of the Latter Han); see also Qian Zhongshu (1979).

¹² See for example *Shiji* 49.1976. For a separate instance of the 'way of seduction,' see *Hanshu* 97.3984, also related with some differences in *ibid.*, 97.3982. Another instance is described in *Shiji* 49.1979, *Hanshu* 6.164 and *ibid.*, 97.3948; see also *Shiji*

their inclusion under the bibliographic heading of ‘recipes and techniques’ (*fangji*), their pronounced therapeutic designs, and differentiation from the way of seduction, were not included in standard accounts of medicine. Early medical canons such as the *Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經), the *Classic of Difficulties* (*Nanjing* 難經), the *Treatise on Cold Damage* (*Shanghan lun* 傷寒論), or the *Pulse Classic* (*Maijing* 脈經) make no mention of love philters, but more unexpectedly, they are equally mute on the topic of aphrodisiacs. These remained resolutely pigeonholed as an art of the bedchamber, a sub-discipline under the broader heading of nourishing life (*yangsheng*).¹³

Whereas aphrodisiacs were voluntarily and consciously consumed to treat physiological insufficiencies or to increase sex drive (low sex drive was looked upon as a physiological insufficiency), love philters were surreptitiously deployed on unsuspecting and unwilling victims to influence them emotionally.¹⁴ The following prescriptions for love philters are from a spellbinding manuscript found at Mawangdui known as ‘Recipes for Various Charms’ (**Zajin fang*’ 雜禁方):

[1.] Take four nails from the left claw of a male dove and four nails from the left hand of a young girl. Scorch in a saucepan, combine, and smith. Apply it to the person and the person will be obtained.¹⁵

[2.] When you wish to seduce a noble person, daub mud on the left and right sides of the gate in a rectangular band five *chi* long.¹⁶

Secondary ritual activities, such as the use of wooden effigies or puppets, the performance of incantations, or the undertaking of sacrifices often accompanied the concoction or application of love philters, but they were

20.1065, *Hou Hanshu* 10.415, and *ibid.* 55.1799 for more examples. These are notably described and analyzed in Li Jianmin (1996) and Lin Fu-shih (2009).

¹³ Indeed, *Hanshu* 30 distinguishes between ‘medical literature’ (*yijing* 醫經) and arts of the bedchamber as separate branches of ‘recipes and techniques’ (*fangji* 方技); The other two branches of ‘recipes and techniques’ are ‘divine transcendence’ (*shenxian* 神僊) and ‘canonical recipes’ (*jingfang* 經方); see a further discussion of this typology in Harper (1998), pp. 45-54; see also Lo and Li (2010), p. 390.

¹⁴ As Liu Lexian (2005), p. 173, notes, love philter literature is separate from the arts of the bedchamber texts in Mawangdui manuscripts. However, while the aphrodisiac is willingly applied or consumed to facilitate intercourse, the extraction of vital essence from one’s sexual partner in the arts of the bedchamber was not always a disclosed aim, thus linking them, in spirit at least, to love philters.

¹⁵ **Zajin fang*, MSVII.A.5; translation from Harper (1998), p. 424.

¹⁶ Ms. VII.A; translation from Harper (1998), p. 423.

unnecessary when dealing with aphrodisiacs.¹⁷ Moreover, as in the examples above, love philters principally operated on the basis of sympathetic magic. On the other hand, aphrodisiacs generally made use of ingredients that were believed to have some medicinal value.

These discrepancies have not gone unnoticed by contemporary editors and scholars when naming the manuscripts according to emic categories. Thus, the aphrodisiacs from the 'Recipes for Various Cures' were destined for curing (*liao* 療), while the philters in 'Recipes for Various Charms' were geared toward charming (*jin* 禁). Philters, it should be stressed again, were used illicitly, in order to hold sway over a person for a variety of overwhelmingly ulterior motives including political advancement, revenge, or personal gain.

Yet, as signaled in the assigned titles of their respective manuscripts, the aphrodisiacs of the arts of the bedchamber and the love philters of the way of seduction shared the same recipe (*fang* 方) format. Recipes were typically characterized by a) an injunctive tone; b) the processing of human, animal, herbal, or mineral ingredients; and c) the application of the resulting product to oneself, a third-person target, or something closely associated with the target (for instance, the gate of their residence as in the example above).

With the discovery of the Mawangdui manuscripts, some scholars have overturned the early Chinese bibliographic bias to reveal that at least some of the boundaries between the arts of the bedchamber and its aphrodisiacs on one hand, and the way of seduction and its love philters on the other, were less rigid than imagined. The ascription of each of the disciplines to specific genders, for example, has been called into question.¹⁸ Moreover, a number of experts have elected to approach love philter recipes from the vantage point of therapy, thereby classifying them under the rubric of arts of the bedchamber, or more generally, recipes and techniques (*fangji*).¹⁹ Still, others have cautioned against conflating two very different genres of recipe, arguing that despite some overlap, Chinese bibliographers before the arrival of Āyurvedic notions rightly classified the way of seduction as spellbinding (*zhuzu*) under the rubric of mantic arts (*shushu*).²⁰ Aphrodisiacs and love philters were both taxonomically flexible but in relation to each other, they

¹⁷ Lin Fu-Shih (1996), p. 452, and p. 455.

¹⁸ Li Jianmin (1996); Liu Lexian (2005)

¹⁹ See for example Li Jianmin (1997) and Harper (2005). In contrast, in the bibliographic chapter of the *Hanshu* 30, the category of recipes and techniques (*fangji*) is partitioned from that of mantic arts (*shushu*); see n. 13, above, for more on the *Hanshu*'s classification.

²⁰ See Liu Lexian (2005) and Lin Fu-shih (2009); Harper (2010), p. 879, concedes that spellbinding manuscripts such as '*Zajin fang' are different in content from more properly medical manuscripts, including those devoted to the arts of the bedchamber.

exhibited significant differences: to some degree, the way of seduction and the arts of the bedchamber aimed to achieve sensibly similar ends, but they relied on different procedures and a different technical vocabulary to do so. On account of their coercive elements, love philters and the way of seduction were always viewed with some consternation; as one observer concludes, they were “profoundly contrary to the Way.”²¹

Here, the dichotomy from Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* is recognizable, albeit in altered form. Upon consideration of indigenous categories, the arts of the bedchamber, billed as *ars erotica* by contemporary scholars, actually resembled a para-medical and therapeutic Chinese equivalent to *scientia sexualis*. Thus, in actuality, they were the exact opposite of what they were made out to be. The way of seduction however could still be deemed redolent of an *ars erotica*. But because of its more sinister character and relative lack of emphasis on the pleasure principle, the way of seduction would be hypothetically featured on the fringes of Foucault’s *ars erotica* spectrum, constituting something of an ‘*ars magica amatoria*,’ or to preserve the Greek consonance, a ‘*magia erotica*.’ In the end, when applied to classical China the fracture between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* was not completely inaccurate. But instead of opposing the West to its eastern Other, the cleavage was present within the microcosm of Chinese sexuality. As is apparent in the early and medieval bibliographic efforts to classify recipe-based emotional and sexual aids, there was a pronounced tension between medico-therapeutic interpretations and technico-magical interpretations. Such discord signals that sexuality in general, and methods pertaining to conjugal and/or sexual harmony in particular, were not part of a uniform, timeless, and monolithic ‘Chinese tradition.’ Rather, this discord is symptomatic of a diversity of knowledge and plurality of intermingling viewpoints.

Chinese Buddhism and Āyurvedic Medicine

Āyurvedic perspectives further enriched the heterogeneity of classical Chinese methods for facilitating interpersonal relations. They arrived through the vector of Buddhism, which from its inception on the Indian sub-continent, relied on medical metaphors to convey its message: Saṃsāra is the illness that universally afflicts all sentient beings, its healer is the Buddha, and its remedy is the Buddhist *dharma*. Scriptures such as the

²¹ *Hanshu*, 97.3948; cited in Lin Fu-shih (2009), p. 454. Reinforcing the connection between spellbinding and the way of seduction, the expression ‘profoundly contrary to the Way’ is also used in condemning the practice of ‘sacrificial cursing’ (*ciji zhuzu* 祠祭祝詛) in the *Hou Hanshu*, 10.417; from Lin Fu-shih (2009), p. 452.

Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra (*Daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經; T. 375) and the *Madhyamāgama sūtra* (*Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經; T. 26) presented ignorance and suffering as pathologies, and nirvāṇa as a complete absence of these maladies.²² This discursive equivalence between overcoming spiritual ailments and curing illness ensured that Buddhism, in China and elsewhere, has long had a stake in physical healing as well.²³ An important number of Buddhist texts specifically deal with the eradication of illness.²⁴

A number of these Buddhist therapeutic sources were discovered among the manuscripts of Dunhuang Mogao Cave 17 (敦煌莫高窟 17). Some of them contain prescriptions for remedying ailments that early of medieval Chinese bibliographers would have placed under the purview of the way of seduction:

If a man wishes to obtain the love of a woman,²⁵ then he should take soil from under his sandals and mix it with ale. Then, he should offer this mixture to drink to a woman and there will be mutual love.²⁶

男子欲得婦人愛取男子鞋底土和酒與婦人服即相愛。

There is no indication in the instructions that the target of this recipe, the woman, was cognizant of what she was drinking. Were she actually interested in developing feelings for a man, she would likely not require such aids. Moreover, the ingredients used in preparing the mixture have no discernible medicinal value, and the ‘condition’ is apparently nothing more

²² See Demiéville (1937), pp. 224-270, for a complete discussion of these and other sources in relation to the general theme of illness in Buddhism, especially pp. 229-232.

²³ For various aspects of Buddhist medicine, see Salguero (2016). See also Granoff (2011), where the author examines some of the issues that arise as a result of the Buddha’s identification with the ambivalent figure of the physician in early and medieval India.

²⁴ For a list of these, too long to reproduce here, see Salguero (2010) pp. 335-340. The author usefully divides the texts under a number of headings including ‘Medical Doctrine,’ ‘Healing Deities and Ritual,’ and ‘Healing Meditations,’ among others.

²⁵ *Furen* 婦人 is more commonly understood as ‘wife,’ but in those cases, the term *fu* 夫 or *furen* 夫人 appears opposite to it. In this case, the use of *nanzi* 男子, primarily ‘man,’ ‘male,’ ‘young man,’ appears to imply that there is no matrimonial link between the two. Therefore, I tentatively translate *furen* and *nanzi* as ‘woman’ and ‘man’ respectively. This is by no means a definitive rendering as *nanzi* too can, in some cases, refer to a ‘husband.’

²⁶ P. 2666, section 83 (col. 91); see Harper in Despeux, for a French translation, 879; section 80 (col. 87-88) contains a recipe equally related to matrimonial harmony: by collecting some soil from the hoof a white horse and placing it under the bed of an unfaithful wife, she will reveal the name of her lover during her sleep.

than an absence of affection or attraction. There are no underlying physiological issues hindering sexual functions. Yet, despite having all the hallmarks of a love philter, the recipe is recorded among others remedies dealing with gestation, pediatrics, or managing abscesses – all traditional medical topics. Overall, the tenor of the manuscript in question, P. 2666 v°, is resolutely medical.

What is more, a number of scholars have noted that the source displays elements from Indian Āyurvedic medicine.²⁷ This and other Dunhuang manuscripts notably demonstrate a familiarity with the eight divisions of Ayūrveda (*aṣṭāṅgāyurveda*; *bashu* 八術). In India, the categories that make up this eightfold scheme sometimes shift depending on the text and period, but most accounts agree on the following as the traditional branches of classical Ayūrveda (list 1):

- 1) **internal medicine** (*kāyacikitsā*)
- 2) head and neck disorders; (*śālākya*)
- 3) surgical removal of foreign bodies (*salyāpaharṭṛka*)
- 4) **toxicology** (*viṣaḡaravairodhikapraśamana/ agandatantra*)
- 5) **demonology** (*bhūtavidyā*)
- 6) **pediatrics** (*kaumārabhṛtya*)
- 7) longevity (*rasāyana*)
- 8) potency therapy (*vājīkaraṇa*)²⁸

The final category, potency therapy (*vājīkaraṇa*) concerns sexual and reproductive undertakings. In contrast to early and medieval Chinese sources, coterminous Indian materials that deal with potency therapy do not discriminate between aphrodisiacs and love philters. Physiological impediments to arousal or intercourse were still distinguished from psychological barriers, but both were treated with the same types of recipe and classified under the same rubric.²⁹ Some remedies for impotency addressed anxiety, bashfulness, or repulsion in partners that were *a priori* unprepared or unwilling. For example, the *Compendium of Charaka* (*Caraka Saṃhitā*), dating from around the late second or third century CE, contains

²⁷ See for instance, Despeux (2010a), p. 375.

²⁸ The eight branches or eight divisions of Āyurveda figure in a number of Indian medical sources. They notably inform the structure of the *Suśruta Saṃhitā* and are discussed in detail in the Vāgbhaṭa *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Saṃhitā*. See the translations by Sharma (2000) and Srikantha Murthy (1997), respectively. See also Meulendbeld (1999-2002).

²⁹ See Zysk (2004); texts that are relevant to potency therapy include *Caraka Saṃhitā* and the *Suśruta Saṃhitā*. The *Kamaśāstra* erotic literature and *Ratiśāstra* conjugal love literature further develop the discipline, departing from previously medical directions.

recipes for “lustful men who desire the favor of women” to borrow Kenneth Zysk’s description.³⁰ In other words, love philters designed to make partners more responsive to advances were on equal therapeutic footing with aphrodisiacs that targeted physical impediments to intercourse.

In what is to date the earliest incarnation of the eightfold Āyurvedic model in a Chinese source, a sixth century commentary to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra* partially attributed to Baoliang 寶亮 (444-509)³¹ presents the following configuration (list 2):

- 1) **internal medicine** (*zhi shen* 治身),
- 2) ophthalmology (*zhi yan* 治眼)
- 3) traumatology (*zhi chuang* 治瘡)
- 4) **pediatrics** (*zhi xiaoer* 治小兒)
- 5) **demonology** (*zhi xie* 治邪)
- 6) **toxicology** (*zhi du* 治毒)
- 7) obstetrics (*zhi tai* 治胎)
- 8) astronomical divination (*zhan xingshu* 占星宿)³²

Roughly one century later, Yijing 義淨 (635-713 CE) supplies a different list, identifying the eight branches of Āyurvedic medicine as follows (list 3.1):

- 1) surgical needling (*zhenci* 針刺)
- 2) injuries (*shangpo* 傷破)
- 3) **internal medicine** (*shenji* 身疾)
- 4) **demonology** (*guishen* 鬼神)
- 5) **toxicology** (*yadu* 惡毒)
- 6) **pediatrics** (*haitong* 孩童)
- 7) longevity (*yannian* 延年)
- 8) potency (*qili* 氣力)³³

³⁰ Zysk (2004), p. 108.

³¹ For more on the *Daban niepan jing jijie* 大般涅槃經集解 (Collected Explanations on the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra; T. 1763) and its translators and annotators, see chapter 3 in Kanno (2012), especially pp. 351-428.

³² *Daban niepan jing jijie* T. 1763, 23.469a; from Salguero (2010), pp. 83-84. *Daban niepan jing shu* 大般涅槃經疏 (Commentary to the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra; T. 1767) 6.73a presents an identical list: 一治身。三治眼。(sic) 二治胎。四治小兒。五治創。六治毒。七治邪。八知星。As do a number of other sources, including, for example, T. 2128, 25.466c; and T. 5904, 5.100b.

³³ *Jin guangming zui shengwang jing* 金光明最勝王經 (Sūtra of Golden Light; T. 665), 9.448b10-11a; see also *Jin guangming zui shengwang jingshu* 金光明最勝王經疏 (An Exposition of the Sūtra of Golden Light; T. 1788) 6.325c; see also Salguero (2010), *ibid.*

A third list, again from the pen of Yijing, reiterates his previous one, with a few differences (list 3.2):

- 1) traumatology (*suoyou zhuchuang* 所有諸瘡)
- 2) surgical needling for head and neck ailments (*zhenci shouji* 針刺首疾)
- 3) **internal medicine** (*shenhuan* 身患)
- 4) **demonology** (*guizhang* 鬼瘴)
- 5) **toxicology**/ Agada medicine (*Ajietuo yao* 惡揭陀藥)
- 6) **pediatrics** (*tongzi bing* 童子病)
- 7) longevity (*zhangnian fang* 長年方)
- 8) invigorating extremities (*zushen li* 足身力)³⁴

Although the headings differ from source to source, with only a moderate degree of semantic acrobatics, correspondences between the lists become readily apparent. The disciplines that occur in Indian accounts (represented by list 1) and resurface in all three Chinese lists (list 2, 3.1, and 3.2) are marked in bold. The last two Chinese lists (3.1 and 3.2), both by Yijing, are ostensibly the same despite minor alterations in terminology and order. Concerning the disciplines numbered one through six, internal medicine appears in the Indian (list 1) and all Chinese versions (lists 2, 3.1, and 3.2) of the ‘eight disciplines,’ as do demonology, toxicology, and pediatrics. Surgery figures in Indian sources (list 1) and in Chinese ones (lists 3.1 and 3.2) as well, as does surgical needling.³⁵ In Yijing’s second account (list 3.2) surgical needling is restricted to head and neck disorders alone, combining the two categories of surgery and head and neck disorders found in the translated Indian text (list 1). In his first account (list 3.1), it appears that

³⁴ *Nanhai qigui nei fazhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳 (Buddhism in India and the Malay Archipelago; T. 2125) 3.223b-c; Demiéville (1937) p. 260, confirms that the eighth category refers to ‘aphrodisiacs’; in his 1896 translation of the work, Takakusu cites ‘Professor H. H. Wilson’ who believes that the last of the medical disciplines is concerned with ‘the promotion of the increase of the human race.’

³⁵ Taken literally, the term *zhenci* 針刺 can be rendered ‘needle-pricking.’ Beyond manipulating the flow of *qi* in the body through the insertion of needles, acupuncture in China historically included invasive surgery, amputation and other techniques such as bloodletting. See for example *Huangdi neijing Lingshu* 黃帝內經靈樞 (The Inner Classic of Yellow Emperor: the Numinous Pivot) 7. Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (fl. 673; traditional dates 581-682) notably uses the compound *zhenci* throughout his *Beiji qianjin yaofang* 備急千金要方 (Essential Recipes for Urgent Need Worth a Thousand Cash; 652 CE) and *Qianjin yifang* 千金翼方 (Supplemental Recipes [to the Essential Recipes Worth] a Thousand Cash; 682 CE). Sun Simiao’s texts predate both of Yijing’s works. In the context of Yijing’s lists, the *zhen* 針 from *zhenci* would more accurately refer to a lancet or scalpel used in petty surgery, hence the translation ‘surgical needling.’ I am grateful to C. Pierce Salguero for clarification on this issue.

Yijing merely replaces head and neck disorders with injuries/traumatology. This category appears in all three Chinese sources (2, 3.1, and 3.2), but not in Indian ones. Accordingly, Baoliang (list 2) preserves traumatology, but he substitutes head and neck disorders for ophthalmology and makes no mention of any kind of surgery.

As for the last two disciplines, there is complete agreement between Indian sources (list 1) and the two inventories drawn up by Yijing (lists 3.1 and 3.2). Longevity practices (*rasāyana*) together with sexual potency therapies (*vājīkaraṇa*) also euphemistically titled ‘invigorating extremities’ are the last two disciplines of Āyurvedic medicine. In the Indian context, these two were closely related to the point that they were sometimes considered two branches of the same ‘science.’³⁶ In contrast, Baoliang’s inventory (list 2) from his commentary to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra* deviates from the general consensus on medical disciplines by establishing obstetrics, typically a sub-discipline associated with pediatrics, as its own independent category in lieu of longevity; it further substitutes potency therapy for astronomical divination. No rationale is provided for this choice, but Baoliang could have elected to modify the scheme in light of the fact that both longevity and sexual potency practices existed in China before the arrival of Buddhism and Āyurvedic medicine. These fell under the aegis of nourishing life and were para-medical as noted above. Presenting them as full-fledged medical disciplines might have initially struck Chinese readers as odd.

Nevertheless, a few generations after Baoliang’s inventory of classical Indian medical disciplines circulated in China, sexual potency was established as a discipline of medical knowledge and practice in Buddhist manuscript literature. This came part and parcel with the Āyurvedic collapse of aphrodisiacs and love philters into the same category, a development that would considerably alter the landscape of Chinese medicine.

Reasserting Indigenous Categories in Non-Medical Non-Buddhist Sources from Dunhuang

The central question of this article concerns the transmission of Indian Āyurvedic notions to China via Buddhism and their impact on native categories of knowledge and practice. By virtue of Dunhuang’s geographical location at the confluence of multiple cultures and traditions, the materials extracted from its cave-repositories offer a privileged point of entry into the topic. Overall, Chinese language Dunhuang manuscripts reproduce the indigenous taxonomic distinction between love philters and aphrodisiacs,

³⁶ See discussion in Zysk (2004), p. 108.

and they preserve their ambiguous status within Chinese medicine. In accordance with earlier indigenous Chinese attitudes, non-Buddhist non-medical manuscripts found at Dunhuang approach the arts of the bedchamber as potentially therapeutic techniques. A case in point is the ‘Rhapsody on Great Pleasure’ (*Dale fu* 大樂賦; P.2539 r^o) attributed to the writer and poet Bai Xingjian 白行簡 (776-826). As illustrated in the following passage, the ‘Rhapsody’ contains technical details related to topics such as aphrodisiacs and sexual hygiene more broadly:

When using the arts of the bedchamber, execute the nine shallow [thrusts] and then the single deep [thrust]. Wait for the ten signs. [After these occur], the method is completed.³⁷

用房中之術，行九淺而一深，待十候而方畢。

In the same way, many Dunhuang materials considered spellbinding as a mantic art distinct from nourishing life or paramedical considerations. P. 2610 v^o, a manuscript devoted to the topic of divination with a focus on hemerology, includes an extended series of prescriptions under the title ‘Secret Methods for Seizing Women and Wives’ (*Rang nüzi furen shu bifa* 攘女子婦人述祕法).³⁸ That this collection of spellbinding recipes was nestled among divination instructions is not uncommon. As noted earlier, spellbinding and its sub-genre the way of seduction, traditionally fell under the heading of mantic arts (*shushu*). Early medieval sources, most notably Taoist ones, specifically list ‘obtaining’ or alternatively, “seeking young women and wives” (*qiu/de nuzi furen* 得/求女子婦人) as a divination method.³⁹

Below is a pair of representative recipes from the ‘Secret Methods for Seizing Women and Wives’:

If [a wife] wishes to make her husband love her, she should obtain the soil from the paws of the family dog and

³⁷ P.2539 r^o, col. 41-42: reproduced with minor modifications from Harper (2010), p. 885. See also *ibid.*, pp. 889-890. The title ‘*Dale fu*’ (‘Rhapsody on Great Pleasure’ is abbreviated from ‘*Tiandi yinyang jiaohuan dale fu*’ 天地陰陽交歡大樂賦 (‘Rhapsody on Great Pleasure from the Intercourse of Heaven and Earth and Yin and Yang’)

³⁸ This source is analyzed in Liu Lexian (2005); and Harper (2010), pp. 880-882, and pp. 890-891; see also Gao (1989), pp. 216-225; and Liu Ruimin (1997).

³⁹ For instance, there are two methods for ‘obtaining women’ among the 72 divination techniques listed in the *Huangdi longshou jing* 黃帝龍首經 (The Yellow Emperor’s Dragon Head Scripture; DZ 283), 2.10ab (the ‘Divination Method for Seeking Wives or Women’ 占求婦女法 and the ‘Divination Method for Seeking Wives or Women and if there are Many to Decide which of these Women Should be Taken as Most Suitable’ 占求婦女有兩三處此婦女可取誰者為良相宜法.)

administer it under her husband's navel. He will then love his wife.

凡令夫愛，取家狗足土，夫臍處下者，即愛婦。

When a man seeks a woman for illicit relations, he should write her full name on a *gengzi* day and then burn it to ashes. He must mix the ashes with ale, and drink the concoction. The [philter] is effective immediately.⁴⁰

凡男子欲求女私通，以庚子日書女姓名，燒作灰，和酒，服之，立即效驗。

The first recipe is devoted to conjugal harmony, which would normally imply that both husband and wife are complicit in its undertaking. However, the recipe's format, which reads like a love philter from the way of seduction, and its inclusion in a collection on 'captivating' or 'seizing' (*rang* 攘) partners, indicates that the user would be attempting to rekindle an aloof husband's interest without him knowing. The second recipe, as indicated by the stated objective of 'illicit relations' (*sitong* 私通),⁴¹ is more immediately identifiable as a love philter than the first, but both remain unambiguous representatives of the early Chinese spellbinding methods associated with the way of seduction.⁴² It is intriguing that a collection whose title implies a male readership, also contained instructions for women.⁴³ But more significant is the confirmation that there were way of seduction recipes addressed primarily to men, despite the bibliographic and scholarly perception that such methods were the exclusive purview of women.

Nonetheless, taking P. 2610 v^o and the 'Rhapsody on Great Pleasure' as sample sources, we may observe that, gender associations notwithstanding, Chinese classificatory habits were by and large respected in Dunhuang manuscripts that were not explicitly medical in scope and had no Buddhist content: aphrodisiacs were considered products of the arts of the bedchamber or nourishing life, while love philters were substances tied to spellbinding.

⁴⁰ P. 2610 v^o col. 103 and 111, respectively. See Liu Lexian (2005), pp. 167-168, for a slightly different translation. For the second phrase, I have amended the character *chi* 赤 (red; crimson) from Liu Lexian's transcription of 取赤狗足土 to *jia* 家 (family).

⁴¹ *Sitong* could also be rendered as 'adultery' or 'relations out of wedlock.' In any case, the term in this context implies that a man coveting an unmarried woman or another's wife may, by means of this recipe, illegitimately seduce her for the purpose of engaging in intercourse.

⁴² This collection notably contains a recipe that makes use of a wooden figurine, one of the hallmarks of early Chinese 'black magic' (*wugu*); for other examples, see Lin Fu-shih (2009), pp. 452-455.

⁴³ On this topic, see the comments in Harper (2010), pp. 881-882.

Challenging Native Categories in Medical Non-Buddhist and Buddhist Sources from Dunhuang

With the gradual dissemination of Āyurvedic categories of medical knowledge and practice through, among other channels, the accounts of Baoliang and Yijing, Chinese Buddhists offered an alternative view of aphrodisiacs and love philters. From the late seventh or early eighth century onward, Āyurvedic medicine made its imprint on notions of conjugal harmony and sex beyond the context of Buddhism, opening the door to their reformulation as subjects of medical concern. This is sufficiently clear from even relatively small data samples such as Dunhuang manuscripts. In addition to their occurrence in arts of the bedchamber or spellbinding texts examined above, both aphrodisiac and love philter recipes were featured in Dunhuang Buddhist therapeutic manuscripts. They also appeared in non-Buddhist manuscripts that address healing methods.

In Mawangdui literature, the arts of the bedchamber and more generally nourishing life were already para-medical, so the medicalization of aphrodisiacs in the medieval Dunhuang materials is not an unexpected development. S. 4433, a short medical text on reproductive matters contains the following recipe for an aphrodisiac:

To delight women and invigorate men, [take] five flavor berry (*schisandra chinensis*), thinleaf milkwort (*Polygala tenuifolia*) and Monnier's snowparsley (*Cnidium monnieri*) and reduce these three ingredients into a powder that is to be applied on the head of the [male] organ. Thrusts should be deep. After a little while, trembling will occur.⁴⁴

女人快樂男子強好，五味子，遠志，蛇床子，三物等分，
未著陰頭，內子道中令深良久乃搖[搖]動。

In addition to the medicalization of aphrodisiacs, one of the most remarkable impacts of Āyurvedic typology on Chinese medicine concerned love philters. In Indian sources, these concoctions were understood as taxonomically identical to aphrodisiacs, both of them subsumed under the category of potency therapy. This discipline was primarily involved with improving male sexual functions, acting either directly upon the male subject, or indirectly, by increasing the receptivity of female partners.

⁴⁴ S. 4433 v^o col. 26-28. See Harper (2010), p. 877 for a French translation. P. 3690 v^o, a correlate of S. 4433 v^o, displays similarities and in some cases correspondences with medical treatises such as the *Beiji qianjin yaofang* (Essential Recipes Worth a Thousand Cash for Urgent Need) and the *Ishinpō* 醫心方 (Recipes from the Heart of Medicine); see Harper (2010), pp. 893-895. Content that would have been associated with the arts of the bedchamber in early China is decidedly medical in later medieval times.

Among Dunhuang manuscripts, we find the following recipe for a love philter in P. 3914, a Buddhist manual entitled ‘Vajrakumāra’s Dhāraṇī [for Realizing] One’s Wishes’ (*Jingang tongzi suixin zhou* 金剛童子隨心咒):

If you love someone, take two *cun* of the wood of siris (*albizia lebeck*), cut it into 108 pieces, reciting the spell every time you divide it. When roasting the pieces in a fire, call out the other person’s name. Proceed likewise one [double] hour per day for 3 days, and this person will immediately love another [you] to death.⁴⁵

若愛彼者，取合歡木而[二]寸，截一百八段，一遍一咒。火中燒之〔云〕，稱彼名字。如是三日一日一時，彼即愛人求自死。

Vajrakumāra, a transformation body of Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Longevity (Wuliang shou fo 無量壽佛) is closely tied to love philters in Dunhuang materials.⁴⁶ He is also associated with magical medicine and more specifically, panacea-like *dhāraṇīs* or talismanic seals (*yin* 印) that heal all illness.⁴⁷ In sources such as S. 2498, Vajrakumāra’s love philters are placed side by side with recipes for treating dyspepsia (*pibing* 癖病) for instance.⁴⁸ These examples reflect the trend that methods classified under the way of seduction in non-Buddhist materials began to be accepted as an integral part of the medical toolkit in manuscript Buddhist sources in China after Indic scriptures containing Āyurvedic elements were translated into Chinese.

Most eloquent in gauging the impact of Āyurvedic classificatory schemes is the medicalization of love philters beyond Buddhist manuscripts.⁴⁹ We may cite examples from both received and manuscript literature, but the following passage, taken from a non-Buddhist Dunhuang manuscript dated to the Tang, will suffice for illustrative purposes. P.2666 v^o offers a variety of curative recipes for a wide spectrum of afflictions, especially obstetric and

⁴⁵ P. 3914, 13a (col. 1-2); see Despeux (2010a), p. 940.

⁴⁶ Including the example translated above, P. 3914 presents four love philter recipes under the aegis of Vajrakumāra. See also S. 2498 (a correlate of the former), which reproduces one of these, with some variation.

⁴⁷ See S. 2498 col. 355-359 and 417-444 for a sample of therapeutic methods belonging to Vajrakumāra.

⁴⁸ It also contains a sizable passage devoted to extolling therapeutic prowess of Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin pusa 觀音菩薩)—a bodhisattva associated with healing in Buddhist canonical sources from the Taishō Tripiṭaka.

⁴⁹ Reflecting on the similarities between the philters contained in the aforementioned P. 2610v^o text on ‘Captivating Women’ and in P. 2666 v^o, Harper (2010), p. 881, notes: “In Dunhuang manuscripts, philters appear in texts on medical recipes—manuscript P. 2666 V^o for example—just as readily as in collections of magico-religious or divinatory techniques.”

pediatric issues.⁵⁰ In between prescriptions for the treatment of hemorrhoids and malaria, readers encounter another type of concern:

If a husband hates his wife, take a rat's tail and incinerate it so that it is reduced to ashes. Then take these ashes and mix them with ale. Present this to the husband for ingestion and he will immediately love his wife.⁵¹

夫增婦取鼠尾燒作灰和酒與夫服之即憐婦。

In the relatively microcosmic context of Dunhuang materials, the imprint of Āyurvedic potency therapy is palpable. The strong Buddhist presence in the oasis town and the influx of medical notions from South Asia undoubtedly contributed to a shift in local understandings of illness along with its prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. But the impact of Āyurvedic notions pertaining to conjugal harmony or sexual intercourse can also be measured beyond the Silk Road outpost.

Challenging Native Categories in Medical Non-Buddhist Sources Beyond Dunhuang

Early medical treatises such as the *Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor* (Huangdi neijing) were generally silent on aphrodisiacs and love philters. Their medieval counterparts were comparatively more loquacious, but overall, they were still rather laconic about the affairs of the heart. Practices belonging to the arts of the bedchamber sometimes surfaced in the context of obstetrics and fertility rather than that of extending one's years, but they were not featured prominently. Chao Yuanfang's 巢元方 (550-630 CE) *Treatise on the Origins and Symptoms of Diseases* (*Zhubing yuanhou lun* 諸病源候論; 610 CE) merely skirts the subject. A few decades later Sun Simiao's 孫思邈 (fl. 673) *Essential Recipes for Urgent Need Worth a Thousand Cash* (Beiji qianjin yaofang 備急千金要方; 652 CE) includes a few aphrodisiacs in the chapters on 'Ladies' Recipes' ('*Furen fang*' 婦人方) among indications pertaining to obstetrics and gynecology. While some of them address infertility, most are treatments for genital sores (*yinchuang* 陰瘡), genital pain (*yintong* 陰痛), or vaginal dryness (*yumen leng* 玉門冷); in other words, conditions that hamper or make intercourse impossible but can also be considered as medical afflictions independent of sexual functions. The treatise also boasts a section on the arts of the bedchamber in the 'Nourishing Life' ('*Yangsheng*' 養生) chapter, but there is no mention of aphrodisiacs.

⁵⁰ See Despeux (2010a), pp. 427-441 for a thorough description of its contents.

⁵¹ P. 2666, section 82 (col. 90); see Despeux (2010a), p. 427.

Thus, from the fifth to the mid seventh centuries, as Āyurvedic typologies of medical practice slowly made headway into China, perspectives on aphrodisiacs and love philters began to gradually change. Recipes that were once the exclusive purview of the arts of the bedchamber started to appear in medical treatises alongside prescriptions dealing with anomalies in the menstrual cycle or issues related to pregnancy and childbirth. Whereas other sub-categories of nourishing life were medicalized while maintaining taxonomic independence, aphrodisiacs were fully incorporated into the pre-existing medical disciplines with which they were most consonant. Nonetheless, although these changes were noticeable in certain medical sources from the early medieval period, they were far from the norm.

In later medieval sources that were compiled after the eightfold scheme of Āyurvedic medical disciplines made sufficient inroads, the impact is more glaring. Thus, Chen Cangqi's 陳藏器 (681-757 CE) *Addenda to Materia Medica* (*Bencao shiyi* 本草拾遺; eighth cent.) for example, supplies a number of recipes for love philters or 'seduction drugs' (*meiyao* 媚藥)—as they were conventionally known from the Tang onwards after being recognized as medical therapies.⁵² Evidence of this taxonomic re-shuffling in China is also preserved in Japanese sources. The tenth century *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine* (*Ishinpō* 醫心方), one of the earliest and most fundamental medical treatises of Japan, is largely composed of snippets and citations from 204 Chinese medical sources dating to the medieval period, many of which are no longer extant. It was notably inspired by Chao Yuanfang's aforementioned Sui dynasty (581-618 CE) *Treatise on the Origins and Symptoms of Diseases*. Reflecting the trend from Sun Simiao's *Essential Recipes for Urgent Need Worth a Thousand Cash*, recipes that would have previously belonged to the arts of the bedchamber/nourishing life were included in chapters of the *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine* that deal with 'Women's diseases,' ('*Furen zhubing pian*' 婦人諸病篇) 'Embryology' ('*Taijiao pian*' 胎教篇), 'Obstetrics and Parturition, and their Etiquette' ('*Chanke zhiliao yili pian*' 產科治療儀禮篇), and 'Physiognomic Divination' ('*Zhanxiang pian*' 占相篇).⁵³ Nonetheless, although aphrodisiacs were fully integrated with traditional medical disciplines by this time, they did not lose all ties to their earlier categories. A case in point, the following prescription, presented as an art of the bedchamber, is found in Chapter 28, aptly titled 'Within the Bedchamber' ('*Fangnei pian*' 房內篇). It is taken from a section on 'Small Jade Stems' ('*Yujing xiao*' 玉莖小; § 27):

⁵² See Harper (2010), p. 878.

⁵³ These are Chapters 21 to 24 in the *Ishinpō*. See for instance *Ishinpō*, 23.39 and 24.1. Chapter 21, on 'Women's diseases' is especially rich in aphrodisiacs: see sections 21.29, 21.30 and 21.15, which provides a recipe to remedy 'large genitals' (*yinda* 陰大) and provide more 'pleasure' (*kuai* 快) during intercourse.

The *Secret Instructions from the Jade Chamber* says: “A method for those who wish to make male genitals larger: [Take] Shu pepper (*xanthoxylum piperitum*), Chinese Wild Ginger (*asarum*), and ‘Meat of Indulgence’ (*orobanche ammophylla*). Powder and strain all three of them and place them inside a dog’s bladder to hang [and dry] in one’s house for thirty days. Polish the member with [the ingredients], and it will grow by one *liang*.”⁵⁴

《玉房秘訣》云：欲令男子陰大方。蜀椒 細辛 肉縱容凡三味分等治下篩，以內狗膽中懸所居屋大卅日，以磨陰，長一兩。

Comparable methods for the proper functioning of the ‘jade stem’ (*yujing* 玉莖) are also encountered in the chapters on ‘Venereal Disease, Hemorrhoids, and Parasites’ (*Xingbing, zhuzhi, ji sheng chong pian* 性病諸痔寄生虫篇), ‘Women’s Diseases,’ and ‘Pediatrics’ (*Xiao'er pian* 小兒篇).⁵⁵ Likewise, a variety of sections from ‘Within the Bedchamber’ cover topics that deal only indirectly with intercourse and are addressed in other chapters of the text.⁵⁶ It is apparent that in the *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine* and the medieval Chinese sources on which it is based, the merging of the arts of the bedchamber – aphrodisiacs in particular – and medicine is complete.⁵⁷

Love philters too appeared in the *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine*, in the section on ‘Recipes for Mutual Affection’ (*Xiang'ai fang* 相愛方; § 5) from Chapter 26, ‘The Way of Immortals’ (*Xiandao* 仙道). While the arts of the bedchamber are afforded their own chapter, love philters are lumped

⁵⁴ *Ishinpō* 28.27. Medical aphrodisiacs similar in tenor and format are found in the same chapter in sections titled ‘On the Use of Medicines to Stay Young’ (*Yongyao hou* 用藥後; § 26), ‘The Big Jade Gate’ (*Yumen da* 玉門大; §28), ‘The Pains of Young Maidens’ (*Shaonü tong* 少女痛; § 29) and ‘The Injuries of Older Women’ (*Changfu shang* 長婦傷; § 30).

⁵⁵ See *Ishinpō* 7.4, 21.29, and 25.78, respectively. Chapter 7, on ‘Venereal Disease, Hemorrhoids, and Parasites,’ holds a few recipes that could be read as aphrodisiacs because they treat conditions afflicting the genitals and enable one to resume sexual activity.

⁵⁶ See *Ishinpō* 28.22, 23, and 27-30.

⁵⁷ *Ishinpō* 28.26 preserves a Buddhist recipe attributed to the Medicine Buddha (*Yaoshi rulai* 藥師如來). The recipe is associated with a medieval Buddhist alchemical current that developed around the figures of Nāgārjuna (*Longshu pusa* 龍樹菩薩) and Aśvagoṣha/Bodhisattva Horseneigh (*Maming pusa* 馬鳴菩薩); it prescribes rubbing the ashes of beehives onto the male organ to achieve an increase of up to three inches in length and a considerable improvement in girth as well. This method also affords protection against demonic malady-causing pathogens. Additionally, it results in fragrant excretions, keen senses and quietude, all hallmarks of Buddhist attainment. On Nāgārjuna’s relation to love philters, see n. 67.

together with other practices that would have been considered spellbinding by earlier standards. They figure among a grab bag of methods pertaining to longevity and exorcism/apotropeia, but are distinctly billed as medical treatments for remedying an absence of affection or intimacy.⁵⁸ For example:

Nāgārjuna's Recipes says: 'Take the heart of a mandarin duck and dry it in the shade for hundred days. Tie it to your arm and do not let anyone know about it. There will be mutual affection [between you and the object of your intentions].'

Another [method] relates: 'If, in your heart, you love a girl but cannot obtain her by any means, write her name on fourteen sheets [of paper] and drink [its ashes] with fragrant well water while facing east at the *richu* time [sunrise]. It will surely be effective. Keep this method secret and do not transmit it.'⁵⁹

《龍樹方》云：取鴛鴦心陰乾百日，系在臂，勿令人知，即相愛。

又云：心中愛女無得由者，書其姓名二七枚，以井花水東向正視，日出時服之，必驗。密不傳。

Here, the sympathetic magic that is characteristic of the way of seduction is readily discernible, but the recipes were nevertheless collected in medical treatise.

As in the sample above, it is significant that a substantial proportion of love philters in the *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine* are gleaned from religious sources. This can be attributed to the close association between Taoism and Buddhism on one hand and spellbinding or divination on the other. Taoist texts additionally enjoyed a reputation of authority in the matter of nourishing life, which lead to them being copiously quoted in the *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine* chapter on the arts of the bedchamber; but they were also a principal source of citations for the love philters in the 'Recipes for Mutual Affection.'⁶⁰ Buddhist titles with a medical consonance

⁵⁸ The chapter also opens with a section on 'Beautification Recipes' ('*Meise fang*' 美色方) that improve one's appearance. These could be understood as a parallel discipline to longevity and love philters; most prescriptions aim to reduce the appearance of one's years or to render one's countenance smooth and skin white, traits that were seen to enhance one's sexual attractiveness.

⁵⁹ *Ishinpō* 26.5. The second method is translated in Liu Lexian, p. 171, with some variations.

⁶⁰ For instance, *Ishinpō* 26 quotes the *Zhenzhong fang* 枕中方 (Recipes [Hidden] Inside the Pillow), *Tao Qian fang* 陶潛方 (Tao Qian's Recipes), *延齡經* *Yanling jing* (The Scripture on Extending Years), and the *靈奇方* *Lingqi fang* (Recipes of Numinous Wonder). Taoist scriptures normally preserved the early to early-medieval Chinese

feature prominently as well. In addition to *Nāgārjuna's Recipes* (*Longshu fang* 龍樹方), we may cite the *As-You-Wish Recipes* (*Ruyi fang* 如意方) or the *Thousand Arm Thousand Eye Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's Scripture on Curing Illness and Applying of Medicines* (*Qianshou qianyan Guanshiyin pusa zhibing heyao jing* 千手千眼觀世音菩薩治病合藥經; T. 1059). While Āyurvedic elements may not have been present in the specific Buddhist sources cited in the *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine*, Buddhism's role as a vector of Āyurvedic knowledge in China surely contributed to bridging the gap between healing illness and eliciting emotions or sexual interest in another person. The underlying association between potency therapy and Buddhism was a decisive factor undergirding the medicalization of love philters.

Aphrodisiacs and Love Philters in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Canonical Texts

Buddhism, with its elaborate web of transmission networks, proved an effective conduit for the dissemination of Āyurvedic medical knowledge. We can find evidence of this in the handful of examples from Dunhuang Buddhist manuscripts that have been examined above. In those materials, the focus appears to have been on love philters, that is, recipes to elicit emotional or sexual interest in others, and their medicalization. To my knowledge, there are no clear examples of Buddhist aphrodisiacs in Dunhuang manuscripts. The market for aphrodisiacs in early and medieval China was cornered by indigenous traditions such as the arts of the bedchamber, which did not however, preclude their recipes from being brought into the medical fold along with love philters. With the growing porousness between Āyurvedic potency therapy, the way of seduction, and the arts of the bedchamber, these disciplines became increasingly imbricated in the medieval period. Both aphrodisiacs and love philters were afforded their own sections in exhaustive medical treatises, and what is more,

bifurcation between nourishing life and mantic arts (spellbinding, divination, and others) with aphrodisiacs classified under former and love philters under the latter. For instance, a text on visionary divination, the *Tongling bashi shengwen zhenxing tu* 通靈八史聖文真形圖 (Image of the Saintly Writ and True Form of the Eight Archivists for the Spiritual Communication with the Most High; DZ 767) 12b, describes a talismanic rite that results in the officiant instigating feelings of love and attraction in others. A few lines below, in another rite, if a male partner experiences difficulties in undertaking sexual union with a female, a celestial spouse in the form of a Jade maiden can be summoned to substitute for the female; see also Andersen (1994), pp. 21-22. However, some Taoist elements are harder to categorize: the *lingzhi* 靈芝 'mushroom' sometimes functions as both an aphrodisiac and a love philter; see Strickmann (1966), especially pp. 2-7.

individual recipes surfaced side by side with prescriptions concerning childbirth, women's health, and venereal diseases, achieving dissemination across specializations or fields within Chinese medicine.

Buddhist canonical literature however, was less dynamic. Despite the fact that the eight disciplines of Āyurveda were discussed in sources from the Taishō Tripiṭaka, the Buddhist attitude towards aphrodisiacs and love philters in canonical texts from the early medieval and medieval periods mirrors earlier Chinese indigenous attitudes. Descriptions of recipes that overcome physiological impairments to intercourse, in other words aphrodisiacs, are exceedingly rare. When they do occur, they are derivative, more typically consisting of prescriptions for conditions related to gynecology and obstetrics than they are to intercourse.⁶¹ This may appear to lend weight to the argument that aphrodisiacs were also medicalized in Buddhist canonical sources, but the recipes were stripped of sexual connotations to such a degree that the term 'aphrodisiac' as defined at the outset of this study can hardly apply to them. Buddhism perceived the desire that drives sexual activity as pernicious to spiritual development; giving birth and reproduction more broadly were understood as the cause and origin of suffering, the fire that animated the cycle of *saṃsāra*.⁶² Thus, while manuscripts often escaped official editorial review, canonical sources were subjected to stringent oversight in order to ensure that standards of Buddhist orthodoxy were respected. In this light, it is likely that many recipes that could be interpreted as promoting sexual congress would have been modified or altogether stricken from canonical Buddhist sources, only leaving behind the ones that could be subsumed under medical categories other than the arts of the bedchamber.

Love philters suffered a similar fate in the Taishō Tripiṭaka in that they were sanitized and cleansed of any overt sexual elements. Thus recipes do not speak of 'obtaining the love of a woman' (*de furen ai* 得婦人愛) but rather of generating 'blissful mutual love' (*huanxi xiang'ai* 歡喜相愛) – a term that describes conjugal harmony but can also be used in reference to the deep

⁶¹ For instance, we may also cite the *Foshuo da jinse kongque wang zhou jing* 佛說大金色孔雀王呪經 (Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Great Golden Peahen Queen Spell; T. 987) 479b, which mentions genital pain (*yin tong* 陰痛) as one of the ailments healed by the spell it discusses. Again, getting rid of genital pain would certainly facilitate intercourse, but indirectly so. The Tang dynasty *Qianshou qianyan Guanshiyin pusa zhibing heyao jing* T.1059.104a, quoted in the *Ishinpō* mentions a method for remedying a difficult pregnancy that involves rubbing charmed sesame oil on the belly and inside the vagina. The label of aphrodisiac for this recipe is tenuous as well, despite the fact that the text elsewhere broaches the topic of conjugal harmony.

⁶² Many of these points are developed in Buddhist embryological literature. For an overview, see Andreeva and Steavu (2016).

respect and unromantic admiration that exists between close friends. Ample love philtre recipes survive in canonical Buddhist scriptures, but they are almost never found in medical texts. Instead, they typically appear in spellbinding manuals, reflecting indigenous Chinese attitudes before the import of Āyurvedic notions. For example, *The Scripture of the Numinous and Essential Gate to the Ritual Techniques of the Great Perfection Dhāraṇī of Supernatural Power as Spoken by the Vajra-Being of Impure Traces* (*Huiji jingang shuo shentong da matuoluoni fashu lingyao men* 穢跡金剛說神通大滿陀羅尼法術靈要門; T. 1228), hereafter *Dhāraṇī of the Vajra-Being of Impure Traces*, contains methods for subduing ferocious beasts, perilous yakṣas, venomous creatures, evil demons, and ill-intentioned rivals – preoccupations that have little to do with medicine. Although Ucchuṣma is in some capacity a god of obstetrics, the *Dhāraṇī of the Vajra-Being of Impure Traces* is essentially a collection of spells.⁶³ It preserves a method for making people fall in love with each other. Love philters were typically uncomplicated to craft, but in this particular text, the instructions are exceedingly simple. The officiant inscribes the names of the two targets or ‘patients’ on a sheet of paper. He then places the paper at his feet and intones the appropriate *dhāraṇī* 108 times in order to charm it. Thereafter, mutual love between the two individuals will perdure.⁶⁴ Exactly who the targets were supposed to be is not spelled out, and since the usual term for ‘husband and wife’ (*fufu* 夫婦) does not appear, readers could be led to think that there was nothing remotely connubial about the method. It is very probable that in their effort to expurgate unsavory elements from the Buddhist canon, editors considerably modified some recipes. Thus, ‘Vajrakumāra’s Dhāraṇī [for Realizing] One’s Wishes’ (*Jingang tongzi suixin zhou* 金剛童子隨心咒), which corresponds to Dunhuang manuscript P. 3914 and includes the *dhāraṇī* spell along with instructions for four love philters, also appears in the Taishō Tripiṭaka’s *Nāgārjuna’s Treatise on the Five Sciences* (*Longshu wuming lun* 龍樹五明論; T. 1420), but only as a spell.⁶⁵ The *dhāraṇī* is longer in its canonical version, however, there are no ritual instructions or narrative context provided, as if they had simply been deleted.

⁶³ For Ucchuṣma as a god of obstetrics, see for instance, Yang Zhaohua (2013), pp. 30-31 and 169-170.

⁶⁴ 若有相憎人令相愛敬者。即書取彼名姓。於自足下呪一百八遍。其人便相愛重永不相捨。Huiji jingang shuo shentong da matuoluoni fashu lingyao men (T. 1228) 158b.

⁶⁵ T. 1420.2.961b. While in Dunhuang materials Vajrakumāra is closely associated with love philter recipes, canonical texts that are tied to him such as the *Sheng jia’ni fenu jingang tongzi pusa chengjiu yigui jing* 聖迦拏忿怒金剛童子菩薩成就儀軌經 (Scripture of the Ferocious Vajrakumāra Bodhisattva for the Ritual Procedures for Achievement; T. 1222) and the *Jingang tongzi chinian jing* 金剛童子持念經 (Vajrakumāra’s Dhāraṇī Scripture; T. 1224) do not broach the subject.

There are other clues of editorial intervention, albeit subtle. It is perhaps significant that 'Vajrakumāra's Dhāraṇī [for Realizing] One's Wishes' is attributed to Nāgārjuna in its canonical incarnation. In the *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine*, the famed Buddhist philosopher is associated with a pair of love philters that cite *Nāgārjuna's Recipes* (Longshu fang) as their source.⁶⁶ The extant version of *Nāgārjuna's Treatise on the Five Sciences* does not reproduce the recipes, but it does hold a considerable quantity of therapeutic methods for healing illness. It is possible that these methods originally included love philters that were excised along with the description of the uses of Vajrakumāra's *dhāraṇī*.⁶⁷

Conjectures aside, very rarely, love philter recipes are found in therapeutic or medical Buddhist texts from the Taishō Tripiṭaka. The aforementioned *Thousand Arm Thousand Eye Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's Scripture on Curing Illness and Applying of Medicines* expounds medical treatments and therapies for a plethora of ills. The following love philter is consistent with other examples that have been considered from Buddhist manuscripts, but there is an added devotional component in the form of an esoteric incantation to be intoned in front of an effigy of the bodhisattva:

If a husband and wife are as incompatible as fire and water, take feathers from the tails of mandarin ducks. Thereupon, incant them 1008 times in front of the statue of the Goddess of Great Compassion [Avalokiteśvara]. [When the feathers are] worn at the waist, the couple will be immediately happy and love and respect each other to the end of their lives.⁶⁸

若有夫婦不和狀如火水者。取鴛鴦尾。於大悲心像前呪一千八遍。上帶之。彼是即終身歡喜相愛敬。

Because it unambiguously signals that it is destined to married couples and is situated in a medical text, this canonical love philter recipe is more in line with those encountered in Buddhist manuscript culture. It is however, an exception to the rule. The overwhelming majority of love philters from the Taishō Tripiṭaka are ambivalent about the specific context of their use.

⁶⁶ See above, p. 31; and *Ishinpō* 25.6.

⁶⁷ The love philters attributed to *Longshu fang* might also have been part of a separate, lost text. Song bibliographies list a *Longshu pusa yaofang* 龍樹菩薩藥方 (Medical Methods of the Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna) in 4 *juan*, a *Longshu yanlun* 龍樹眼論 (Nāgārjuna's Treatise on Ophthalmology) in 3 *juan*, and a *Longshu zhoufa* 龍樹呪法 (Dhāraṇī Methods of Nāgārjuna), all of which are no longer extant; see Hsia, Veith, and Geertsma, *The Essentials of Medicine in Ancient China and Japan*, 75 n. 13. What is certain is that Nāgārjuna was associated with medicine in medieval China.

⁶⁸ T. 1059.104c. Compare to *Ishinpō* 26.5: 《千手觀音治病合藥經》曰：若有夫婦不和如火水者，取鴛鴦尾於大悲像前呪一千八十遍，身上帶彼，是終身歡喜相愛敬。

Moreover, they are most often found in ritual manuals centering on *dhāraṇīs*, in other words, spellbinding. Aside from spellbinding texts, love philters also commonly appeared in canonical Buddhist sources on divination. Thus, as a general rule, the Taishō Tripiṭaka maintained indigenous associations between love philters and the mantic arts (*shushu*).

Accordingly, the only two canonical Buddhist texts that preserve instructions for operating a *shi* 式 divination board, or “cosmograph,” also have entries on eliciting feelings from or seducing others. In the Buddhist context, cosmographs were highly stylized wish-fulfilling mobile mandalas, distant cousins to the earlier non-Buddhist versions used for hemerological calculations and divination procedures.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, they were employed in very similar ways. Depending on what they aimed to have realized, adepts aligned one of five (for each of the five directions) representations of the deity on the mobile round “Heaven plate” with one of eight devas (or *lokapālas*, directional guardians) depicted on the stationary and square base of the instrument, the “Earth plate.”

The first Buddhist cosmograph text, the *Sutra of the Esoteric Cosmograph of the Five Great Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattvas for Instantaneous Great Accomplishment* (*Wuda Xukong zang pusa suji dashen yan mimi shi jing* 五大虛空藏菩薩速疾大神驗祕密式經; T. 1149), features five Ākāśagarbha bodhisattvas on the Heaven plate. There are 40 potential combinations (5X8) between the bodhisattvas and devas, but only 37 are listed as the text is incomplete. Among the 37 combinations, eight (22%) center on artificially eliciting feelings of love or affection in others. The recipe format is not observed since it is a divination text, but the aim and outcome of the ritual are entirely the same as in methods that employ love philters as in the following example:

If you wish to obtain the ultimate affection of the Empress, her ladies-in-waiting, and even all noble women, match the bodhisattva [of the western direction] with the deva Vaiśravaṇa [...]. If you wish to have a husband and wife love each other, match the bodhisattva of the western direction to the deva Vaiśravaṇa. Write the names of both male and female [on separate papers], join them together, place them between the Heaven and Earth plates, and seal them closed. Supplicate [the bodhisattva]. [...] If you wish to have a man and woman that have mutually separated love and cherish each other as they originally did, match the bodhisattva of the western direction to the deva Vaiśravaṇa. Supplicate [the bodhisattva].⁷⁰

若人欲得王后采女乃至諸貴女極愛者。[西方]菩薩加[毘沙門]天。祈之必得之。[...] 若人欲得夫婦相愛者。以西方菩

⁶⁹ For a recent assessment of the *shi*, see Kalinowski (2012).

⁷⁰ T. 1149.608ab.

薩加毘沙門天。書男女姓名和合天地間置封之。祈之。[...]
若人欲得夫女相離如本愛念者。以西方菩薩加毘沙門天。
祈之。

In this source, the specific combination of Vaiśravaṇa, *lokapāla* of the northern direction, with the Ākāśagarbha, bodhisattva of the west, consistently yields enamoration. The second Buddhist cosmograph text, the *Cosmograph Method of the Saintly Deva Vināyaka* (*Sheng huanxitian shifa* 聖歡喜天式法; T. 1275) upholds the association. Although it replaces the five Ākāśagarbhas of the Heaven plate with four Vināyaka devas, foregoing a deity in the center, the Earth plate and the ritual method remain essentially the same. The context for the application of the methods is more ambiguous than in the previous text. Below is the first item of four (15% of the total number of entries) that deal with affairs of the heart:⁷¹

If you wish to obtain the love and affection of another, match the Moon-Love [Vināyaka] deva [of the West] with the deva Vaiśravaṇa. As for their emissaries [who must also be invoked], summon the twenty-eight lunar lodges [that are depicted on the Earth plate as well].⁷²

若欲得他愛念者。以月愛天加毘沙門天。使者。呼二十八宿。

There is also a visualization component to the practice. In both cosmograph texts, adepts are enjoined to contemplate seed-syllables transforming into the relevant deity on the Heaven plate and then to visualize that deity (or its envoys) descending to them in order to fulfill the wish. This is a marked departure from the recipe format that became the standard in medical treatises. However, even in these divination texts, the instructions are succinct and direct, redolent of the tone of love philter recipes. There are also, to be fair, five instructions in both the *Esoteric Cosmograph of the Five Great Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattvas* (14% of items) and the *Cosmograph Method of the Saintly Deva Vināyaka* (19% of items) concerned with illness—either healing it or causing it. But again, these are framed in a way that is much more evocative of the mantic arts. Health, rather than medicine *stricto sensu*, was also part of a broader category of worldly concerns that Esoteric Buddhism addressed. This was most often undertaken through of a

⁷¹ 27 out of the total 32 possible combinations (4X8) are extant in the received *Sheng huanxitian shifa* T. 1275.

⁷² T. 1275.324c. However, in the instructions immediately before this entry, the same combination of Moon-Love Vināyaka and Vaiśravaṇa yields merit (lit. 'meritorious virtues'; *fude* 福德). Out of the other three instructions concerning affection or conjugal love, one involves Vaiśravaṇa; the other, Indra (East); the last one implicates Varuṇa (West); see T. 1275.324c. Vaiśravaṇa is otherwise implored for tranquility in one's household; T. 1275.325a.

combination of *dhāraṇī* spells, talismans (*fu* 符), and visualizations, as is the case in the pair of divination texts under consideration.⁷³

Among the texts in the Taishō Tripiṭaka that contain recipes for love philters, few are those that can be qualified as medical sources. The *Thousand Arm Thousand Eye Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's Scripture on Curing Illness and Applying of Medicines* is a rare exception, whereas counterexamples of spellbinding or divination materials that make use of love philters are comparatively copious. These are typically Esoteric Buddhist ritual texts that resemble early and medieval Chinese manuals on mantic arts. Aphrodisiacs on the other hand, are all but absent in the pages of the Taishō Tripiṭaka. Some recipes tackle medical issues that can indirectly impede sexual activity, but in the form that they are preserved, these recipes certainly do not promote intercourse and cannot, as a result, be rightfully considered aphrodisiacs. Thus, despite the fact that potency therapy and the other seven divisions of Āyurvedic medicine were introduced into China via Buddhism and its canonical scriptures, text preserved in the Taishō Tripiṭaka did not readily challenge indigenous views of love philters and aphrodisiacs. This was left to local manuscript cultures and Chinese medical treatises. The latter was the earliest genre of received literature to formally incorporate prescriptions for both aphrodisiacs and love philters into standardized medicine, and collapse the boundaries between them and other medical disciplines.

Concluding Discussion

Michel Foucault's appraisal of Chinese sexuality as a pleasure-driven art form fundamentally different from its Western counterpart may have been simplistic, but its operative opposition between *ars* and *scientia* was nonetheless insightful. When applied to China alone, the binary is more than a convenient cliché, a by-product of Eurocentric discourses of Othering. The dichotomy reflects issues that early and medieval Chinese bibliographers

⁷³ *Manshu shili yan mandejia wanai mishu ruyi fa* 曼殊室利焰曼德迦萬愛祕術如意法 (Mañjuśrī's Secret Arts As-you-wish Method of the Flaming Maṇḍala for [Obtaining] the Ten Thousand Affections; T. 1219), to cite a final example, contains a method to elicit love in others via a spell or, alternatively, a maṇḍala visualization. It opens with the following declaration: 'As for the origin of the mantra teaching [Esoteric Buddhism], it stems from the homa ritual. None can surpass it. Within it there is the method of the secret teaching of love. It is for the purpose of obtaining love and affection from all sentient beings of future generations' 夫真言教源。自護摩法無上也。此之中祕密教愛法也。為求末世眾生敬愛; *Manshu shili yan mandejia wanai mishu ruyi fa*, T. 1219.97b. Here however, the scope is considerably broader than that of conjugal harmony or interpersonal love.

were actually grappling with when it came to interpersonal sexual or emotional welfare and the concrete measures taken towards their enhancement. For Chinese bibliographers, the tension between “art” and “science” took the shape of a formal taxonomical division between aphrodisiacs and love philters, between medicine and spellbinding, and to some degree between the implied categories of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, legitimacy and illegitimacy.

Indian Āyurvedic medicine sidestepped the problem entirely by collapsing love philters and aphrodisiacs under the same category of potency therapy. That Indian medical notions were integrated into Chinese medicine through Buddhism and its circulation networks is indisputable. Chen Ming, Catherine Despeux and others have spearheaded efforts in demonstrating how classical Indian therapies, medicinal ingredients, and etiologies permanently affected the Chinese medical landscape. It follows that classical Āyurvedic typologies also made their mark on a relatively plural and permeable indigenous healing tradition. With these typologies came a reappraisal of China’s indigenous potency therapies, aphrodisiacs and love philters. In earlier sources, aphrodisiacs and love philters were considered separately, their recipes belonging to distinct categories: aphrodisiacs were classified under the para-medical tradition of the arts of the bedchamber, itself subsumed under the rubric of nourishing life (*yangsheng*) or more broadly “recipes and techniques” (*fangji*). Love philters on the other hand belonged to the way of seduction, which was understood as a type of spellbinding typical of the mantic arts (*shushu*). At Dunhuang, especially in manuscripts that dealt with healing methods, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, this contrast between love philter and aphrodisiac disappeared. Both were deemed medical, just as they were in Indian medicine. Thus, an increased familiarity with non-Chinese medical systems, as evidenced by Baoliang’s and Yixing’s sixth and seventh century accounts of Āyurvedic disciplines, contributed to a shift in indigenous views. This shift manifested not only in local manuscript cultures, but also in the major Chinese medical treatises of the medieval period. It even extended to the tenth century Japanese medical anthology, the *Recipes from the Heart of Medicine* (*Ishinpō*), which was faithfully modeled on those treatises and copiously cited them.

However, despite Āyurvedic medicine entering China through the vector of Buddhism, notions pertaining to potency therapy, one of its eight fundamental disciplines, barely surfaced in the Taishō Tripiṭaka. Instead, pre-Buddhist Chinese views were upheld in canonical Buddhist sources and the separation between aphrodisiacs and love philters remained in effect. The exact reasons for this are not entirely clear, and more work on the relationship between manuscripts and received canonical materials is necessary to elucidate the enigma. Nonetheless, we may consider the

following points in tentatively positing some rationale: first, Buddhism generally condemned sexual activity and emotional attachment as causes of suffering and rebirth. To promote aphrodisiacs would have been problematic to say the least – especially in light of the fact that the arts of the bedchamber were a favorite target of medieval Buddhist polemicists in their invectives against Taoists.⁷⁴ Love philters on the other hand were compatible with Buddhist teachings as long as the emotions they engendered were understood as universal love instead of individual infatuation. Second, Buddhists probably had little interest in disturbing indigenous categories of knowledge and practice. In fact, during the early medieval period, they were keen on emphasizing their creed's compatibility with Chinese culture rather than its differences. Because of their focus on granting worldly benefits, Esoteric Buddhists in particular could capitalize on these emic categories by seamlessly introducing their own brand of "spellbinding," which included love philters, into the established religio-therapeutic framework.

Āyurvedic views on sexual and connubial harmony circulated in local manuscript cultures including Dunhuang, but according to the data gleaned from the Taishō Tripitaka, there was no concerted Buddhist effort to actively influence or change Chinese medicine. In all likelihood, the taxonomic equivalence between aphrodisiacs and love philters that can be observed in medieval Chinese medical treatises developed on account of physicians who, like Sun Simiao for instance, were sympathetic to either or both Buddhism and new ideas about medicine. His *Essential Recipes for Urgent Need Worth a Thousand* (*Beiji qianjin yaofang*) is replete with Āyurvedic and Buddhist inflections. Even his famed introductory section "On The Absolute Sincerity of the Great Physician" ("*Dayi jingcheng*" 大醫精誠), often compared to the Hippocratic Oath, is imbued with Buddhist notions and terminology. In order to be a superlative physician, Sun Simiao insisted, one should cut wants and needs and show nothing but exemplary compassion; one should make a solemn vow to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings and treat them, without discernment for social rank, wealth, age, beauty, friendship or enmity, ethnicity, or intelligence, considering all as if they were one's closest kin.⁷⁵ Writing almost at the same time as Baoliang, Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536 CE) added a series of therapeutic methods to the pre-existing medical corpus in his recension of and commentary to the *Divine Husbandman's Pharmacopoeia* (*Shennong bencao jing jizhu* 神農本草經; ca 200-

⁷⁴ Zhen Luan's 甄鸞 (fl. 535-581) *Xiaodao lun* 笑道論 (Essays to Ridicule the Tao) in *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Illustrious Collection for the Spread of Buddhism; T. 2103), 9.152ab, is a representative example.

⁷⁵ *Beiji qianjin yaofang* (Essential Recipes for Urgent Need Worth a Thousand Cash), 1.16b: 凡大醫治病，必當安神定志，無欲無求，先發大慈側隱之心，誓願普救含靈之苦，若有疾厄來求救者，不得問其貴賤貧富，長幼妍媸，怨親善友，華夷愚智，普同一等，皆如至親之想; see also Demiéville (1937) p. 263.

250 CE), thereby bringing the total number of methods to one hundred and one. In this way, what was previously known as the “Vade Mecum Recipes” (*Zhouhou fang* 肘後方) became the “Hundred and One Recipes” (“*Baiyi fang*” 百一方), and accorded with the Buddhist notion of the 101 illnesses of the 4 elements (*sida* 四大).⁷⁶ Both Buddhism and Indian medicine were at the zenith of their cultural relevance in the medieval period. It is not unreasonable to fathom that physicians saw them as viable sources of new knowledge to advance their trade. In so doing, they relied on the expositions of Baoliang and Yijing of course, but also on manuscript culture and practices they observed first hand. Thus, the third reason why canonical Buddhist sources did not adopt new Āyurvedic taxonomies when it came to aphrodisiacs and love philters is that the chief motor for the propagation of new medical ideas were not Buddhists – they were Chinese physicians. This seems like a more plausible scenario for the medicalization of aphrodisiacs and love philters observed in medieval medical treatises than Buddhists attempting to impose Indian classificatory schemes onto a sophisticated pre-existing indigenous system of Chinese medicine without doing so in their own canonical materials.

To be sure, the patients who consumed aphrodisiacs and used love philters were more preoccupied with diligently following the prescriptions’ instructions and awaiting their results. They probably did not give too much thought to whether they were engaging in medical therapy and longevity practices or spellbinding and divination, nor to whether it was Buddhist, Āyurvedic, or indigenous.

⁷⁶ See for example, the *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經 (Scripture on Cultivation of Right Practice and Original Arising; T. 184) 2.466c dated to the second century: 人有四大，地、水、火、風，大有百一病。

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