

Preface for *Handbook of Contemporary Chinese Pulse Diagnosis*

Pulse diagnosis is a special method in Chinese medicine, the records of which date back to the 7th century BC. The earliest relevant medical literatures discovered to date are the silk rolls of *Pulse Methods* and *Yin Yang Pulse Diagnosis of Impending Death* unearthed from the Mawangtui tombs. It is believed that they were written between the dynasties of Qin and Han, around the end of the third century BC. Pulse diagnosis and its clinical application are explained in all the classics of Chinese medicine such as *Spiritual Pivot*, *Plain Questions*, *The Classic of Difficult Issues*, *Treatise on Cold-Induced Diseases* and *Synopsis of Prescriptions from the Golden Chamber*. Written by Wang Shuhe in the Three Kingdoms period, *The Classic of Pulse* has served as a link between the past and future and is of far-reaching significance in the history of pulse studies, sphygmology. Li Shizhen of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) gave detailed, clear, structural, concise, and simplified descriptions of different types of pulses in *Binhu's Sphygmology*, which has served as a guide for later generations of practitioners of Chinese medicine. Over thousands of years, while accumulating experiences of pulse diagnosis through apprenticeship to older masters, practitioners of Chinese medicine have made new discoveries, contributing to the ever-expanding compendium of knowledge.

Menghe, a small town in Changzhou, Jiangsu, China, has produced a large number of medical experts in successive dynasties. Since the Qing dynasty (1636 – 1912), the most reputed families are Ma, Fei, Ding, and Chao, each of which had their own specialty, and each was skilled in pulse diagnosis. The pulse method of Menghe Style Medicine started from Fei Boxiong (Jingqing by courtesy name, 1800 – 1879). The book *Surplus of Medical Essence (Yi Chun Sheng Yi)* written by him devotes its first chapter to pulse methods. The Jingqing pulse method was derived from Mr. Jiang Zhizhen's secret pulse method. Also, Ding Ganren (1865 – 1926), the founder of Ding's style in Menghe, said in the preface of his book *Essentials of Pulse Study (Mai Xue Ji Yao)*, "My departed brother Songxi was sophisticated in literature and also studied medicine. He learned from Jingqing and got the manuscript of the secrets of pulse methods from Zhizhen. Later I studied it carefully and eventually gained an understanding of the secret." This book consists of the experiences of three experts -- Li Shizhen, Chen Xiuyuan and Jiang Zhizhen. Ding's knowledge of pulse was transmitted to his grandson Dr. Ding Jiwan (1903 – 1963). Dr. John H.F. Shen (1914 – 2001) studied in the Shanghai College of Chinese Medicine when Dr. Ding Jiwan was the President. After his graduation, he remained a follower of Dr. Ding. During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, when Shanghai fell into enemy hands, both of them escaped to Hong Kong. Dr. Shen was in constant attendance of Dr. Ding and acquired the true essence of Menghe Style Medicine. The Ding family secrets regarding pulse methods were not included in the regular curriculum of the College, but Dr. Ding kindly transmitted them to Dr. Shen as a token of their special relationship.

Dr. Leon Hammer, a Cornell-trained psychiatrist, once met Dr. John Shen by chance and admired his impressive diagnostic and therapeutic results. This marked the beginning of his study of Chinese medicine. He spent 27 years as a disciple of Dr. Shen, a successor of the Ding's branch of Menghe Style Medicine. From Dr. Shen, he learned Ding's pulse method and

conducted in-depth research in this field. His practice of pulse diagnosis won him fame among Chinese medicine professionals in the US, and he formed a “Shen-Hammer Pulse Diagnosis System” based on Dr. Shen’s experiences and his personal exploration. In 2001, he published *Chinese Pulse Diagnosis: A Contemporary Approach*, which is more than 800 pages long. Dr. Hammer is also a model for the integration of Chinese medicine and Western psychology; He is also author of the book *Dragon Rises, Red Bird Flies: Psychology & Chinese Medicine*, which was published in 1990. Both books are highly influential in the American Chinese medicine community.

An eminent figure in the Chinese medicine profession in the US, Dr. Hammer wears multiple hats. He is one of the earliest commissioners of the Accreditation Commission of Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine (1981), a member of the Blue Ribbon Committee of NCCAOM which initiated the Chinese Herbology module exam (1995), and a member of the New York State Board of Acupuncture (1991 – 1998). In 2001, Dr. Hammer became the Board Chair of Dragon Rises College of Oriental Medicine and received “The Educator of The Year” award from the American Association of Oriental Medicine. In his seventies, Dr. Hammer gave up his clinical practice to focus on teaching and publication. He is now in his nineties but still vigorous and remains diligently engaged in writing.

Dr. Hammer has high praises for Menghe. He believes that his academic roots come from Menghe and is proud to be one of the successors of Menghe Style Medicine. Language did not prove to be a barrier in his research of the classics of Chinese medicine. He is not any less well-versed in such classics as the *Inner Classic of Yellow Emperor*, *the Classic of Difficult Issues* and *the Classic of Pulse* than many Chinese scholars. He respects Menghe and is familiar with Menghe. In addition to the Ding’s family, he is well-informed about other family branches of Menghe Style Medicine, and even knows stories about marriages among those families. It is past belief that an American doctor could be in possession of these facts. Dr. Hammer also has the honor of becoming a member of the Menghe Style Medicine Heritage Association of Changzhou, which is where Menghe Style Medicine originated.

In the few years of my acquaintance with Dr. Hammer, I have come to highly admire his academic achievements. I was delighted to learn that the Chinese version of his *Handbook of Contemporary Chinese Pulse Diagnosis* will be published. When I was asked to write a preface for this book, I was greatly flattered but, since the best way to show deference is to comply, I humbly share these thoughts with readers.

I conclude this preface with a poetic couplet that a Chinese scholar once sent Dr. Hammer, because it also echoes my sentiment:

*A successor to the ancient art of Menghe;
A compassionate heart that is forever young.*

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At the beginning of Winter 2015