

Recipes of Planting the Seeds and Songs of Sleeping Alone: A Profile of Male Body Culture in Ming-Ch'ing China

Ping-chen Hsiung^{*}

Abstract

One of the challenges historians face these days is documenting the ever-changing historical experience of humanity stressed by scholars in other disciplines as some sort of a universal constant. The different perspectives humanists and behavior scientists take with regard to the body culture of men either as a particular cultural tradition sensitive to specific time and place or as a general human pattern founded on physical and material conditions represents disparate viewpoints. On top of this, in the field of Chinese studies, there exists a parallel tendency which designates “traditional China” some kind of an essential base (another level of universal constant in a regional sense?) over which the still larger force of progressive modernity (the global reality) eventually takes command. This study proposes to use the body culture of men during

Keywords: Life nurturing and chamber art, Male reproduction, Sleeping alone, Sexual or sexless? Angles on historicity

* Ping-chen Hsiung is a research fellow at the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica.

the Ming-Ch'ing period as an example to investigate and discuss such deliberations on historical specificity against a hypothesized general humanity and their myriad implications.

Although often described as a long thread running through the ages of Chinese physical culture, the belief and practice of both life-nurturing (*yang-sheng*) and chamber-art (*fang-chung*) may not in fact be as timeless as they appear. Nor were they, in their many manifestations nearly as domineering, consistent, or one-dimensional as they have been assumed to be. Using medical texts from male medicine (*nan-k' o*, andronology) from the 16th century onward, juxtaposed with literary evidence representing various religio-philosophical convictions in their advocacy on sleeping alone as a way of self-cultivation, this essay tries to give a portrait of the Ming-Ch'ing male body as both many-sided and temporal. The daily or individual management of this many-sided and temporal male body had to operate under the assumption of multiplicity as well as constant adaptation. The re-discovery of this pluralistic and ever-changing body culture of Ming-Ch'ing males, in addition, sharpens the problematic historical framework in both Chinese and Western scholars which customarily identifies the period under investigation either as the "late-imperial" period as China travels through its latter phase of the past, else as the "early modern" phase signifying the incipient stage of some new era. In other words, this historically contextualized body management of Ming-Ch'ing males hopes to help us face up to the modernity discourse founded on the universal and objective nature of bio-physical essentialism, as it engages both social specificity and the cultural representations of a different past.

The paper is divided into three parts: It first examines the historical character of the presumably ever-present Chinese tradition of *yang-sheng* and *fang-chung*. The essay then moves on to show the textual evidence for male reproductive medicine as it matured in Ming China.

Thirdly, it reviews male rites of passage in attempting to “sleep alone” as men entered “post-reproductive middle age” as a significant countercurrent and a factor their culture created to handle the bigger element of time as men went through the process of personal life course. Final thoughts will dwell upon the contrast and/or parallel meaning this may have for both the modern bio-physical male body on the one hand and the traditional (sexual or sexless) life-nurturing physique of Chinese men on the other.

China's Body Masculine

Bodies, male or female, have been assumed to be the most natural and direct instrument for the expression of sentiments and human desires. As such, they have also been thought to be the site of privacy, for the vigorous exercise of one's most private feelings. Recent explorations in woman's studies, however, alert us to particular formulations of bodily configuration, the appreciation of bodily functions, indeed the understanding of and thus the very sensual experience of the female body as a product of socio-cultural discourse, historically constructed. Until recently, on the other hand, the masculine counterpart of a presumably similar phenomenon has hardly been discussed with a view to disclosing the counterpart of this body culture exercised in gender terms.¹ The following investigation is a preliminary foray into some key elements in the construction of the body culture of men in late imperial China. In examining the forces, concerns, and facilities related to the management of the male physique, it intends to provide a perspective on the profile of Ming-Ch'ing Chinese masculinity.

Textual evidence that may inform us of the complex construction of

1 D. M. Hadley ed., *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1999).

Chinese masculinity or the body culture of men in the late imperial period is ample but scattered. Male sexuality seems at once obvious and elusive, inviting but difficult to put together or think through. Related source materials inevitably record life from different aspects, bear different representational traditions, and thus require different intellectual skills to elucidate their meaning before being synthesized to yield a glimpse of the larger picture. As a preliminary exercise in this relatively little explored subject, this present essay proposes to do three things, with the intent to gather a look at the problem from the angle of procreation and male body management in Ming-Ch'ing society. One, it will examine the changing culture of "the art of the inner chamber (fang-chung 房中)," and the rise of medicine for men (nan-k' o 男科) as a subspecialty in Chinese medicine in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Two, it will connect that with a small genre of literary writings that left us with traces of men's cultivation of their physical bodies, expressing in particular their sentiment in carrying out the much admired practice of sleeping alone (tu-wo 獨臥) after they passed a certain age (usually 39 or 40 sui 歲). Three, it will reflect on the bio-physical evidence in assisting a man's social obligation of procreation together with the seemingly contradictory, yet culturally complementary, literary representation on solitary sleep. A multi-faceted appreciation of the interplay of the old ethics with new aesthetics is aimed at that juxtaposes beguiling concealment against stark clarity, and sees individual fulfillment within or despite collective trends which all congregate in the formulation of a intriguing site for the consideration of masculinity and male body culture in the late imperial era.

While recognizing their pivotal role as the "significant other" in human reproduction, contemporary scholastic and popular views have always believed males to be and presented them as the irresponsible and irrepressible "free donor" in sexual or coital contacts. Such commonly

held modern notions along with the rationale behind them assume that, devoid of bio-physical results of conception and driven by endless carnal desires, men are the naturally wild party always ready to indulge and hardly capable of constraint. Recent statistics documenting the difficulties in receiving male cooperation in the promotion of family planning and contraceptive methods seem to reinforce the general impression that men are far less interested in limiting the number of children or restraining their sexual conduct. Many research projects are so conceived and made to yield supportive data. Otherwise the information gathered could be interpreted in such a way as to highlight a predominately female prejudice (in the positive sense) in watching and controlling reproduction. The following observation intends to show alternative convictions and practices of male reproductive behavior in late imperial China that in contrast may sharpen the distinct character of the above-mentioned modern thesis.

From the very beginning, it was clear that multi-purpose functions assigned to male sexual conduct in the traditional Chinese context (for self-cultivation, physical immortality, and good breeding) carried more than one, and at times conflicting, tendency. First of all, from early on in terms of agency, men were given the inescapable duty of observing and controlling their carnal activities since in concept and in practice they were identified as the active party playing a leading role in sex related matters. Thus the male body was there to answer all the questions of how (the frequency and techniques), which (to whom), when (the timing), whether (temporary or permanent abstinence), and what (the specific goal of each and every act) regarding sexual activities. From this perspective, the appearance of Ming dynasty Taoist manuals allowing for an independent womanly cultivation (nū-tan 女丹) or advocating unisexual coordination to spiritual and physical salvation (nan-nūshuang-hsiu 男女雙修, fu-fu shuang-hsiu 夫婦雙修) were noteworthy. So was

the appearance of a market-based social vogue advocating indulgence in romantic passions and lustful consumption. Secondly, conceptually speaking, the logic of traditional convictions on male sexuality advised men to be selective, moderate, and watchful in their coital engagements (choose the right match, the right time, the right occasion, and adopt the best mental attitude as well as superb physical skills). This promised a multi-functional yet constructive character to their carnal engagements (to bring them good health, good spirit and bright and filial sons). Yet they were also made conscious of the fact that individual man's inclinations in a philosophical, religious, and social stance could expose him to different physical conduct and sexual preferences, thus choosing one set of values or purposes while neglecting or deserting others. For example, a man may elect to pursue personal happiness in the Taoist style or religious salvation in the Buddhist understanding, thus paying less attention to the Confucian obligation to reproduce, or else to concentrate on family proliferation at the cost of one's own personal bliss. Thirdly, historically speaking, the competing philosophical, religious, and socio-ethical forces on open display, allowed the prospering economic market of the late imperial period to create a social and cultural space for a wild array of possibilities in the formulation of man's body culture as a result of the continuous interaction of these competitive and conflicting views. The complex and dazzling array of these different choices available to men presents us with an almost bewildering display of the embodiment of the male physique in Ming-Ch'ing China.

The duty of a man, whether first toward his own spiritual salvation and physical preservation or toward his ancestral clan and family procreation, thus, was up in the air, ripe for debate. So with all the methods and recipes out in the market offering secrets and magical instruction toward one aim or another, late imperial Chinese men were aware at all times that they could hardly be let off the hook of the results

of their sexual conduct or the many choices to fulfill their reproductive duties. Such was not simply a matter of privilege created out of biomedical recognition that it was after all women's bodies that were bearing the direct result of insemination or of technological inventions that it may be easier to manipulate or control the female reproductive organ or function. Under the influence of alternative propositions and technical instruments, socio-cultural institutions and medical-pharmaceutical devices raced to serve a male market in search of the creation mechanism to manage their reproductive processes and take control of their body that could best make sense of their own condition and that of those around them.

To Increase the Offspring

By pre-modern standards, traditional Chinese interest in procreation should not be a surprise. Ancestral worship and the Confucian value of family that some argue represented convictions predating Chinese history only worked to enhance the human instinct for bio-social succession. China's technical knowledge, together with its social ethics and cultural institutions, had long been there to facilitate this desire to produce. A branch of Chinese medicine called the specialty of "increasing (or spreading) one's offspring (kuang-szu 廣嗣)" represented one such instance. Medical and behavioral advice and practical recipes to create or enhance the chances of conception and successful gestation were laid out for interested men and women. The female section of this converged with other discussions on the female body to constitute traditional Chinese "gynecology (fu-k' o 婦科)" as we know it. The male part of this kuang-szu tradition, also came into a separate practice, at times called the "medicine for men (nan-k' o)," or "andronology" if you will. As the only known medical specialty attentive to bodily conditions and reproductive problems of the male population, this traditional Chinese medicine for

men provides a vital glimpse of the physical culture of men and male reproductive habits as well as the medical knowledge and technical assistance available in this area. The picture so obtained suggests that the need to produce children and the interest in increasing offspring, though of predominant concern, represented nonetheless a conditional value coached and modified by numerous other considerations. The conventional reference to the Chinese conviction of “the blessings in having many sons (or children) and numerous grandsons (grandchildren) (tu-tzu tuo-sun 多子多孫)” is but one glaring slogan popping out of a perplexingly complex social murmuring among conflicting daily homilies.

At a time when infant and child mortality was high, when artificial insemination was yet unknown, and when general interest in family reproduction was strong, the seemingly logical emergence of a literature and a practice to facilitate people's needs in successful breeding requires in fact cautious elucidation. For, in this instance, the counter-literature, the evidence, and the profession of lessening the chances of impregnation, existed always side-by-side.² What awaits deciphering in this textual and vocational tradition is that, due to a complicated combination of religious eclecticism, philosophical debate and medical-technological developments, less (less frequent and physically less indulgent) but more intense (more intensely planned and more intensely acted out) sex became a vogue in its own right. Refraining from carnal activities, philosophically, promoted the elevation and tranquility of the human spirit. Physically, continence in coital intercourse and seminal emission promised a strong faculty and improved “male essence (nan-ching 男精)” for the right moment. The Neo-Confucian emphasis on “reducing

2 Hsiung Ping-chen, “More or Less: Culture and Medical Factors Behind Marital Fertility in Late Imperial China,” Paper presented at the IUSSP/IRCJS Workshop on Abortion, Infanticide and Neglect in Population History: Japan in Asian Comparative Perspective, Kyoto, Japan, October 20-21, 1994.

human desires for the preservation of heavenly principles (ch' ü jên yü ts' un t' ien li 去人欲存天理) ” helped to provide intellectual back-up cautioning people to carefully moderate their propensity for material gain and physical indulgence. Ancient Taoist recommendations of “less (frequent) engagement (shao-yü 少御)” so as to save up spirit, energy, and precious fluid for the vital occasion was a leitmotif reworked and played out in many late imperial “life-nurturing (yang-sheng 養生)” texts. Inherent Buddhist misgivings toward the consumption of food and sex taught people that carnal needs (yin 淫) and greediness toward beauty (sê 色) were among the gravest of worldly traps and human sins, against which the laboring toward a state whereby sex represented the ultimate emptiness (sê chi shih k' ung 色即是空) promised the final enlightenment. With these three main elements in place, it is easy to see the socio-cultural make-up of the sex culture in the later centuries of the Chinese empire as an art of lessened but focussed sex. For any man interested in self-cultivation, longevity, or fine breeding, it was best to take his chamber activities seriously and cautiously. For practical advice, Taoist authors freely quoted Neo-Confucian teachings that urged all to try “keeping a clean heart and refraining from many desires (ch' ing-hsin kua-yü 清心寡慾).” A social site and cultural market was ready therefore whereby pharmaceutical recipes were adopted, and technical tricks presented that explained the principles while giving out daily know-how in bed chamber plays whereby saving up (pi-so 閉鎖) rather than letting go (hsieh 泄) of masculine fluids was the treasured secret. Buddhist advocacy of puritanical celibacy was, thus, conveniently juxtaposed with the Taoist preference for coitus interruptus to make a case for scarce but potent sex. Both, moreover, could turn around and become aids for the Confucian value of ethical and aesthetic self-cultivation as well as one's social duty of successful breeding. For the fulfillment of any or all of the above, the very rare yet well executed “high sex” seemed the perfect answer. Arts

and acts about which sixteenth-century manuals such as *Analysis on the Recipe for Planting the Seeds* (Chung-tzu fang-p' o 種子方剖) and *The Compendium on Life Management* (Shê-sheng tzung-yao 攝生總要), both authored by the Taoist convert Hung Chi (洪基), promised to reveal.³ With China's increased literacy for both men and women (more in wealthy urban centers but also in rural areas) being fed by a booming publishing industry serviced by prospering domestic commerce and enlivening popular culture, it also conjured up a complicated, contrived yet hot and bubbling enactment of the sexual body feminine and masculine, for thrill or for skill.

Looking into the nuanced details of this kuang-szu literature, it becomes clear that, while ostensibly concerned with man's duty to widen the branches and spread out their seeds, these medical-philosophical texts were not devoted solely or primarily to the "art of chamber." Nor was successful reproduction their only purpose. This line of argument was weighted together and executed along with a whole host of considerations and conditions, which made every art of sex naturally situated yet highly debatable. For one's ethical state, personal cultivation, inherited social positions, or the spiritual-physical environment where the copulation was to take place could all carry key implications wisely attended to or not. Thus, the chances of success (not just of coital intercourse or conception thereafter but also regarding the prospect of producing and raising healthy, bright, high-achieving, and long-living offspring) could well ride not with "more" but with "less" sex.

Reverence for Nature and Man's Effort to Enhance it

A distinct appreciation for Nature manifested in ancient Chinese cosmology, one which Taoist philosophy and Taoist popular religion later

3 Hung Chi洪基, *The Compendium on Life Management* (Shê-sheng tzung-yao 攝生總要, 1882).

on inherited and built on and other schools of thought such as Confucianism or even Legalism showed their interest in, was the common cultural heritage that manifested as high respect for the forces of nature. Concepts such as life (sheng 生), heaven (t' ien 天), and genuineness (chên 真) were fundamentals that manifested themselves as core values in this cultural discourse. Within this system a frank recognition of human bodily needs (such as food and sex) became important corollaries to the main creed of naturalness. To enable a natural flow and a healthy abundance of life, principles and activities related to procreation appeared to be of graver concern than explanations pertaining to the origins of creation. In this scheme, people need to investigate carefully and learn gradually sensible ways, in theory and in practice, to manage their bodies as a first lesson towards good living.

An intriguing characteristic of this long held belief in the works of nature, however, is a parallel notion that somehow, as important participants in the universe, human beings can and should in fact “nurture” and “enhance” Heaven’s doings through their own proper actions. Whether termed “life nurturing (yang-sheng)” , “life elongating (chang-sheng 長生),” “life caring (shê-sheng 攝生)” or some other similar name, this millennia-old tradition pointed at a conviction that since a life-bearing and life-creating force was at the heart of the order of nature, as dutiful members of that cosmos, humans should make it their duty to act as friendly and responsibly toward their bodies and toward any other procreational elements as they could. They should certainly feed themselves comfortably, sleep well, and try their best to breed successfully. If necessary, these matters should and could be supplemented by external measures, like breathing, exercise, special diet, and even medicine. It becomes obvious then that, under this perception, sex and procreation can be looked upon under quite a positive light. Both are the most natural among the natural forces, without which a world of ceaseless lives and

endless living becomes unthinkable. The pleasure in sex was also to be affirmed, since from very early on, it was observed that happiness in coital activities was essential to the health of the parties involved as well as to the success of reproduction intended.

On the other hand, or precisely because of these convictions, ancient Chinese textual and pictorial evidence, related to early beliefs and practice in sex, reproduction, religion, and health, point to a world whereby human control and self-management in such affairs as sex and procreation were believed to be possible and commendable. And far from being a passive or careless party in sexual and reproductive activities, a man was to take active interest while bearing key responsibility for good handling in such engagements, the manuals providing specific recipes as well as other technological devices to help people reproduce satisfactorily and wisely inculcating some fundamental kernels of this tradition. Following this all human intervention in, and technical manipulation of, people's sex life or reproductive experience was not only acceptable and legitimate but also constructive, necessary, and exciting. This was posed not as an opposite departure or deviation from the paths of nature, but as enhancing, facilitating and indispensable human devices to sharpen, deepen, and in the end drive home and make clear the true meaning of a heavenly intention.

This intense interest in sex and sexuality as indispensable and essential to life, whether in its preservation or in its elongation, was inherent in Taoism in its ancient roots. In later imperial times this strong preference (over the preservation and elongation of life) developed into a core value to both philosophical Taoism and the popular Taoist religion. Translated into practical terms, not just among its educated and upper class followers, it nurtured a lifestyle in favor of self-preservation of the physique, as among the masses it bred rituals and activities designed for the purpose of holding on to one's earthly body.

This cult of longevity and immortality, when perceived as demographic behavior, helped to formulate an attitude toward carnal activities that was both positive and yet modest. The positive value placed upon sexual hygiene in connection with a Taoist search for health enhancement and eternal existence produced a pervasive belief in life-nurturing (yang-sheng) in historical and contemporary Chinese populations closely associated with practice of the art of the inner chamber (fang-chung). While the ultimate concern for longevity and the Taoist inclination toward material scarcity and spiritual thriftiness (or conservation) continued to function as the core of this cultural framework, what seeped into Chinese medicine and popular religion included ideas that dwelled upon the value for a man to “take in numerous virgins (tuoyü t’ ung-nü 多御童女),” and the techniques to “absorb the female essence in order to complement the male element (ts’ ai-yin pu-yang 採陰補陽).” The expansive cultural taste of the T’ ang empire (618-907) provided a fertile ground whereby such an indulgent and male-centered sex culture reportedly prospered, mostly among the aristocracy, which left behind the legend of a liberating and licentious Chinese attitude toward sex and sexuality, especially in comparison with Protestant Christian mores, that European liberals like R. H. van Gulik envied.⁴

A certain embedded suspicion against over-indulgence, unconditional merry-making (tsung-yü 縱慾、k’ uang-huan 狂歡) and the emphasis on a healthy respect for physical satisfaction (chung-yü 重欲), however, were always elements to be reckoned with. The Sung (960-1279) Neo-

4 See an overall discussion of sexuality in Chinese history in R. H. van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China: A Preliminary Survey of Chinese Sex and Society From ca. 1500 B. C. till 1644 A. D.* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961); For a different consideration on sexuality and fertility, see Hsiung Ping-chen, “More or Less: Culture and Medical Factors behind Marital Fertility in Late Imperial China,” in James Z. Lee ed., *Abortion, Infanticide and Child Neglect in East Asian Population History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), pp. 1-42.

Confucian philosophy combined Buddhist contemplation and Taoist cultivation in a Confucian revivalism and contributed much in bringing out once again this appreciation for prudence in a resurgent preference for modesty (shên-yü 慎欲) and restraint (chieh-yü 節欲) in China's sex culture for the later imperial period. In the wake of this important intellectual turn and cultural movement in its eclecticism, a synthesis of classic Confucian values on bio-social reproduction was increasingly mixed with both the Buddhist wish to minimize human desires (chüeh-yü 絕欲) so as to transcend the karma of endless suffering and the Taoist emphasis on saving the essence in order to enhance physical well-being to create a special blend of self cultivation and careful handling of the human body.

In other words, at least from the tenth century onward, and certainly after the twelfth century, this newly developed philosophical school of Neo-Confucianism ushered in a heightened interest in meditation, self-control, and physical management among Chinese men. It began as a vogue among the educated elite, but quickly merged with the social trends and institutionalized ethics facilitated by various Buddhist and Taoist cults on the popular level. Under this Neo-Confucian brand of self-cultivation, an increasingly contemplative attitude toward life in general had transformed into a serious observation of one's daily conduct, where watchful inner eyes were to examine time and again the performative aspect of personal life. An almost combative distrust of "human (especially bodily) desires (jên-yü 人欲)," at the core of this cultural phenomenon and social movement proved of grave consequence to the values and behavior of the later era. Quietude and self-control gradually became the quintessential qualities of a commendable human. Rendered into concrete daily deeds, these gradually trickled down to the minute procedures in family rituals and personal affairs that prepared a fresh social and cultural ground for the exercise of human sentiment

in private.

Positive Sex and Pleasure

Historically, how to reconcile the “positive” (or at least “non-fault”) attitude Chinese culture held toward sex and sexuality with other, puritanical trends under development becomes a complicated question. For at the microscopic level, the general character of this tradition could be appreciated from more than one angle. There was the Confucian affirmation of carnal desires and sexual consummation as constituting but the most basic and “natural” of the human instincts and practical needs (functions). The Confucian idea that: “With (the activities of) drinking and eating, in men and women, exist the greatest of human desires (yin-shih nan-nü, jên chih ta yü ts’ un yen 飲食男女，人之大欲存焉).”⁵ This expressed well the core value of a “naturalist” and non-suppressive stance toward sex (in notion or in action), with which the Taoist philosophy was only too happy to concur. Indeed, Taoists would add their still stronger view in asserting that the tangibly “constructive” (on top of the natural channeling of healthy needs) effects good sex can produce in maintaining and enhancing the physical and spiritual well-being of men and women to lengthen their earthly lives. When health-related concerns were brought into the picture, especially after medicine and the medical profession came increasingly into their own in the second millenium of the empire, old mottoes of mixed Confucian and Taoist origin such as “man cannot go without women, and women cannot go without men” continued to be cited. Sex so conducted could bear direct consequence on reproduction (whether one was to beget any offspring, whether a boy might be aimed at, and whether the child one received would live to maturity, or turn out to be smart and capable), and in terms of philosophy,

5 “Li yün p’ ien 禮運篇,” in *Li chi 禮記* (Taipei: Hsin-wen-fung, 1986), vol. 9, p. 10.

religion and health, prostitute-sex had always been well within the normative social cultural parameter. Whether one decides to act out the endowed human nature, pursue longevity and seek immortality, or simply to succeed in family procreation, sex is proper, as proper sex is the key to a victory overall. There surely existed prejudice, pejoratives and mystiques about sex, but the shadowing of a puritanical association of human sex with guilt, sin, or shame was never intrinsic to this historical context.

Furthermore, since the contemplative, controllable, and positively easily manipulated and manipulative character of human sex (whether via behavioral, mechanical, or pharmaceutical means) was never a question, it opened up all sorts of possibilities for ingenuity in coital formulae and fecundal designs. Along this line of thinking, in fact, only well-planned and carefully carried out sex could meet its all-purpose function of satisfying the human desire for carnal pleasure (which promised to elevate people's spiritual virtue in the art of self-cultivation [hsiu-tê yang -hsing 修德養性] while at the same time enhancing their physical well-being in pursuit of immortality [ch' iu-hsien yang-sheng 求仙養生]), and their earthly duty to breed. Approaching this goal of positive sex, the emotional and physical gratification of both the male and the female parties was essential, as the deficiency in either compromised the end effect in the four-in-one mission of human sexuality in pursuit of spiritual elevation, health promotion, successful reproduction, and personal pleasure. The majority of works in this massive and long existent literature on moral cultivation, physical exercise, and bio-social breeding were authored by men and for the consumption of men primarily, while passages instructing in the skills of pleasing a woman were present. However sections preaching attitudes and techniques for the self-gratification of males were even more prevalent. An irony that stood at the core of this conviction remained that to maximize one's own pleasure or

have a good chance of fertilization, less frequent, thus better, sex was the answer.

A New Quest for Preserving Vitality

This intense interest in and high development of the art of sex with religious and philosophical connotations was present since ancient times, yet poor knowledge and boastful pronouncements tended to create the illusion of perennial traditions or changeless continuity. The legendary belief and practice of inner chamber art called fang-chung is among the best-known. Consultation of textual evidence quickly shows us, however, complex twists and turns within this long adherence to a fascination and art mixing sexuality and religion behind repeated reference to familiar terms and a few old citations. For our concerns here, the key issue is to clarify the historical process, to delineate the connection as well as important breaks that had taken place between this so-called long tradition of yang-sheng from ancient times, to the famous fang-chung during the T' ang, and finally to the surface of a new fad of kuang-szu (increasing one's heirs) and i-lin (宜麟, begetting offspring) during the Ming and Ch' ing periods. A close reading of the key texts suggest a few stages of development: One, China did manifest a long interest in "sex hygiene" from the angle of males that involved sexual exercise and a belief in the pursuit of longevity (chang-sheng) from the ancient era. Such terms as "the Seven Harms and Eight Benefits (ch' i-sün pa-i七損八益)" or the concerns for self management and control of male sexual conduct (chieh-chih節制) in relation to the accomplishment of a blissful old age (shou-k' ao 壽考) in texts like the Ma-Wang-tui (馬王堆) manuscript are good examples.⁶ By medieval times, however, elaborate sexual

6 Ma Chi-hsing 馬繼興, "Yang-sheng fang 養生方," Ma-Wang-tui Ku I-shu K' ao Shih 馬王堆古醫書考釋 (Chang-sha: Hu-nan k' o hsueh chi shu ch' u pan shê, 1992), p. 721; "Shih wen 十問," Ma-Wang-tui Ku I-shu K' ao Shih, p. 934; "T' ien hsia chih tao shu 天下至道書," Ma-

techniques seemed to have carried the fancy of the day that would not hesitate to encourage people's indulgence in sexual pleasure (lê 樂) as they immersed themselves in the wide discussions on coital positions and physical movements during intercourse. In Sun Szü-miao's (孫思邈) *A Thousand Golden Recipes* (Ch' ien-chin fang 千金方) from the T' ang, old reminders on the value of thriftiness were mixed in this new excitement for sexual manipulation, the goodness in "receiving many women (tuoyü 多御)," and "collecting ample yin elements to complement the deficiency in the yang essence (ts' ai-yin pu-yang)." ⁷ The talks on the "nine poses (chiu-chuang 九狀)" and "six positions (liu-shih 六勢)" that survived in the text of I-hsin-fang (醫心方) represented the same vogue and give us an incisive glimpse at the high tide of T' ang sexuality later referred to as the art devoted to the "benefits of bed chamber (fang-chung pu-i 房中補益)." ⁸

This long-held attention to male sexuality that won its name as a tradition in fang-chung in medieval times manifested a different facade during the Ming-Ch' ing period which has been erroneously referred to as a continuation or "come back" of China's fascination with the bed chamber art. ⁹ For beginning in the mid-sixteenth century or so, we witness the growth of male reproductive medicine and an increasingly burgeoning market for erotic literature and popular art. To be exact, the fad lasted altogether but one hundred years or so, from the 1540's (in the Wan-li period of the Ming) to the 1630's (during the very last years of the

Wang-tui Ku I-shu K' ao Shih, pp. 1026-1044.

7 Sun Szü-miao 孫思邈, "Beneficiary School of the Fang-chung 房中補益," *A Thousand Golden Recipes* 千金方, chüan 27 (Beijing: Hua hsia, 1993), pp. 388-389.

8 丹波康賴, I-hsin-fang 醫心方 (Tokyo: Chu mo shu fang 筑摩書房, 1993).

9 Robert Hans van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China: A Preliminary Survey of Chinese Sex and Society From ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961); Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chamber: Women and Culture in the Seventeenth-century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

Chung-chên reign). In these years, on the medical front, a few important texts advising people on the principle of successful male reproduction (such as Wan Ch'üan's Important Principles for the Increase of Offspring [萬全, 廣嗣紀要] in the mid-16th century, or Yü Ch'iao's Important Words for Increasing the Offspring, [俞橋, 廣嗣要語] printed in 1544) circulated widely in the market. Finally in the 1630's the term nan-k'o (medicine or treatments for man) was formally coined for this subspecialty within Chinese reproductive medicine, in Yüeh Fu-chia's The Correct Treatise on How to Plant the Seeds from the Miao-I Studio (Miao-I-chai I-hsüeh cheng-yin chung-tzu p'ien [岳甫嘉, 妙一齋醫學正印種子篇]), issued in 1635, for instance. Hung Chi's text for Analysis on the Recipe for Planting the Seeds (Chung-tzu fang-p'o), out in 1638, showed that the need for such consultation and assistance continued to be alive under any of the three popular names: the way to increase one's heirs (kuang-szu), the method to secure many offspring (i-lin), or some secret recipes on planting the seeds (chung-tzu 種子). The fact was that the focus here was clearly on reproduction, not sexual satisfaction or coital acts. The human physical process of intercourse was still closely attended to, it is true, though to a far less degree and solely for the purpose of successful breeding. The value of the good health of the male body continued to be present as well, yet that too was for its instrumental service of being the ultimate goal of an unflinching performance in procreation, in perfectly planting the seeds. The change may seem subtle for untrained eyes, but the turn was a clear and significant one.

For the Sung-Yüan transition often referred to in the study of the Chinese history of medicine, we see two things happening that bridged the pre-T'ang obsession on coital positioning as a vital lead-on to longevity and the post-Ming interest in successful procreation through careful sex instead. For a few influences came down from this period that formed a significant connection in bridging the medieval fang-chung tradition

with the late imperial concern for *kuang-szu*. Among the four masters, for instance, Chu Chên-heng's (朱震亨, 1281-1358) much cited "Cautions for Carnal Desires (sê-yü chên 色欲箴) revealed due inspiration from the Chu Hsi school of Neo-Confucianism that he inherited,¹⁰ on the one hand, and an inclination toward thrifty exercise of sexuality believed to be essential to successful procreation and central to Ming reproductive medicine, on the other.¹¹ It created enough of a theoretical distancing from the T'ang thrill for the beneficiary effect of *fang-chung* (called *fang-chung pu-i*) represented by the famed Ch'ien-chin *fang* (A Thousand Golden Recipes) while making important headway for a new focus on careful sex that was at the core of the late imperial concentration on bodily control for the good of self-cultivation and reproduction. Another important text from the obscure thirteenth medical history is the Three Part Book of Good Advice for a Long Life (三元參贊延壽書) by Li P'eng-fei (李鵬飛) that provided many pivotal principles on an attitude of positive but limited sex that were to be of guiding importance to the characterization of the Ming-Ch'ing outlook on male reproductive culture and sexuality.¹² Such key notions as "Never Refrain from Sex (yü pu k' o chüeh 欲不可絕)," "No Premature Sex (yü pu k' o tso 欲不可早)," "No Indulgence in Sex (yü pu k' o tsung 欲不可縱)," "No Forced Sex (yü pu k' o ch' iang 欲不可強)," "Important Avoidance regarding Sex (yü yu so pi 欲有所避)" that soon became stock phrases in late imperial texts and practices of male body culture and reproductive medicine owed much to the wide circulation of

10 Chu Chen-heng was once a disciple of a follower of the Chu Hsi's School of Neo-Confucianism, albeit four generations down the road.

11 Chu Chen-heng 朱震亨, "Cautions for Carnal Desires (Sê-yü chên 色欲箴)," *Kê Chih Yü Lun 格致餘論* (Beijing: Chung kuo chung i yao ch' u pan shê, 1995), p. 683.

12 Li P'eng-fei 李鵬飛, *Three Part Books of Good Advice for a Long Life 三元參贊延壽書*, collected in *Szu k' u ch' uan shu ts' un kmu ts' ung shu 四庫全書存目叢書*, vol. 259 (Tainan: Chuang-yen, 1995), pp. 173-220.

texts like Li' s.¹³

The Mid-Ming Turn to Procreation

Recent studies on late imperial Chinese society and culture, it is true, depict it as a time when a market in erotica, fed by an increasingly prosperous economy and fluid moral values, presented many relatively care-free, even enviously versatile behavioral choices. People' s notions and practices of sex and sexuality appeared presumably more exciting, or “pornographic,” for both men and women. Yet even the admirers of this “liberal” social air take note of other “counter-intuitive” trends. The discoverer of Chinese bedchamber art, Robert Hans van Gulik, who in his widely circulated book on *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, elaborated on the many precious alluring Ming erotic prints surviving among Japanese collectors and collections, speaks on the other hand of the peculiar contemporary attention to reproduction emerging out of the old lure for “the sensually seducing” sexual alchemy from the mid-Ming onward. The actual texts of this (kuang-szu and chung-tzu) tradition that Robert Hans van Gulik pays passing interest in yet neglects to explain, however, had a richly documented history that can reveal much about the body and sex culture of 16th and 17th China and may reveal many twists and turns in the old stereotypical impressions people have of this area. This in turn shows that if we want to better understand matters of sexuality or to approach the world of body culture for this period, we need to devise a strategy that is both evidentially inclusive and conceptually integrating. For the social practice and cultural trends that we are trying to grasp spread traces infusively among people high and low, albeit in different fashions. It leaves behind erotic novels for the consumption of men and

13 The term yü (欲) that texts like Li' s used here literally means “desire,” or carnal desires. The content of these discussions was primarily about sex and coital encounters.

women in bustling towns who were sophisticated in taste and generous in spending, color prints to amuse an adventurous urban audience who had just made their wealth in the rapidly growing commerce, of the day as well as the thinly veiled romances that theaters showed and that attracted even country folks looking for a sensual thrill in an occasional visit to a theater performance or local story telling. Morally threatened “traditional” families still wanted to go on living a honest and stable life, it is true, keeping to their titles and properties, producing healthy and promising children, and sticking to Confucian and Neo-Confucian aspiration. So model family instructions continued to flood markets big and small, competing against socially questionable though culturally enticing commodities. Practitioners of the related medical fields, in addition, of gynecology and male reproduction, of pediatrics and child-rearing, made themselves available in ever-increasing numbers and varieties for popular consultation and consumption. Schools of different philosophical persuasions, religious tracts old or new, too, competed fiercely for willing followers on the left or right. Due to these latter reasons, for the more practically concerned or conservatively minded, their attitude towards physical pleasure seemed understandably cautious, and their views on bodily experience more “utilitarian.” Men and women in the growing towns with a few newly made taels in their pockets may have set their eyes on the excitement of good sex freshly packaged, but the question as to whether any of the fanciful tales or colorful sex could help anybody if one was in need of a child, or whether simple, healthy copulation resulting in happy conception, smooth pregnancy, a good birth, and even a bright son that would live to maturity, make it through the civil service examination, bring back a successful title in officialdom and still remain a caring filial offspring hung heavy and close to their curiously seduced but watchfully apprehensive heart. There, in part, lay the complexity of sexuality and body culture in Ming-Ch’ing

China, this as well as the other reasons is why we need to consult medical texts together with songs and lyrics, for instance, when we think of people's convictions and management, in daily activities and rituals, among late imperial Chinese men when they were with their women or by themselves.

In an unintended way, medical texts like Wan Ch'üan's *Kuang-szu chi-yao* (Important Principles for the Increase of Offspring) present for us both reproductive medicine—medicine for men (*nan-k' o*) and pediatrics (*yu-k' o* 幼科) in particular—and the larger social-cultural environment conducive to its development. A careful reading of the minute messages it contains can thus disclose information regarding both the historical background that nurtured the flourishing of this branch of medical expertise called *kuang-szu* (increasing one's offspring) as well as the actual knowledge, art, and techniques this new wave of fertility consultation involved. Upon first glance, it looked as if the perennial concern for a balance between healthy regular sex as a man's (usually meaning the males though theoretically including all humanity) daily need and its controlled exercise as the built-in apprehension towards overindulgence (*tsung-yü*) and the cultivation toward self-constraint (*kua-yü*) merely continued. Examined more closely, we see a complex, indeed not so subtle change taking place within both China's inherited notion of positive sex and long interest in the search for “a pure heart and thrifty desire” (*ch' ing-hsin kua-yü*) for self-cultivation. What texts like *Kuang-Szu Chi-Yao* make clear for us is the pivotal social and cultural twist family procreation inserted on both ends of this positive sex and limited carnal activities, all for people's heightened desire for successful reproduction.¹⁴ Wan Ch'üan, among other experienced experts in the

14 Wan Ch'üan 萬全, *Important Principles for the Increase of Offspring* (*Kuang-szu chi-yao* 廣嗣紀要), collected in Ch'iu Ching-yüan 裘慶元, *Chên-pên i-shu-chi ch' eng* 珍本醫書集成, vol. 4 (Beijing: Chung kuo chung i yao ch' u pan shê, 1999), p. 291.

field, in the first passage of his advice for increasing the chance of impregnation, stated that personal moral cultivation (hsiu-fa 修法), conservancy in desires (kua-yü), just like careful selection of one's spouses (tsê-p' ei 擇配), good nurturing of one's health (t' iao-yüan 調元), and picking a good time to copulate (hsieh-ch' i 協期), were all part of the scheme for fine breeding, not simply means towards self gratification or individual longevity as the ancient saints and medieval alchemists had it.¹⁵ Under this larger framework we witness how philosophy turns encouraged popular customs, which together with the gathering of proverbial sayings, producing useful recipes, skills, and moral inspiration eventually connected it with China's timeless yang-sheng and fang-chung traditions to refurbish sex with a mostly fresh and re-oriented late imperial outlook and technological innovation. For a medical author and field practitioner such as Wan Ch' üan, therefore, while providing specially designed "pills to boost the male member (chung-yang tan 壯陽丹)" "balls to warm up the female palace (nuan-kung tan 暖宮丹)," or "recipes to plant the seeds (chung-tzu fang 種子方)," was also stern about opposing the folk fad for taking in young concubines (ch' ü yu ch' ieh 娶幼妾) or the habitual blaming of wives for infertility. Alone among other doctors in this growing field of reproductive medicine, called kuang-szu, i-lin, chung-tzu, or nan-k' o, he was out to promote regular sex between fully mature men and women.¹⁶ He prepared and deliberated upon recipes for the treatment and consummation of both husband and wife as a package.¹⁷ He openly advocated monogamy, the marriage and loyalty of one husband with one wife to the end of their years.¹⁸ And he composed a special

15 Wan Ch' üan, *Important Principles for the Increase of Offspring*, chüan 1, p. 295.

16 Wan Ch' üan, "Kua-Yü 寡欲," *Important Principles for the Increase of Offspring*, chüan 2, pp. 299, 305.

17 Wan Ch' üan, "T' iao-Yüan 調元," *Important Principles for the Increase of Offspring*, chüan 4, pp. 302-306.

18 Wan Ch' üan, "Kua-Yü 寡欲," *Important Principles for the Increase of Offspring*, chüan 3,

treatise entitled “Infertility Being Solely Men’s Fault (wu-szu chieh nan-tzu chih kuo 無嗣皆男子之過).”¹⁹ It is in this context that he laid down his medical service to help men, as husbands and fathers-in-waiting, to improve their art, skills, and chances to marry, to copulate, to arrive at conception with their spouses, and to hope for the birthing of healthy, bright, long living and duely filial children. It was with the same anticipation also that he cited the legendary custom of “sleeping alone in the summer months (hsia-yüeh pi tu-su 夏月必獨宿),” like the advice for plain tastes (tan tzu-wei 淡滋味), for purposefully “staying away from the bedchamber net (yüan wei-mu 遠帷幕),” to conserve the precious drops of male essence (hsi-ching 惜精), to cherish the credible body of man (ai-shên 愛身), to cultivate one’s virtue and correct mind, in the hopes of having successful sex.²⁰ Good sex defined in Ming-Ch’ing terms was therefore measured by fine reproduction, for which the strengthened male body (as a result of traditional yang-sheng skills), and smart bedchamber techniques were but the instructional means, no longer pursuable goals in and of themselves, as of old. Among other things, Wan would not mind assisting men to deal with impotence, cure their premature ejaculation, or to harden their members in order to facilitate their happy affairs (chuang-yang chu-hsing 壯陽助興), all aimed at the begetting of nice children who will hopefully live a long life (yu-tzu yu-shou 有子有壽).²¹ As specialists in this newly extended medical field of reproduction, as learned authors in male fertility, Wan and his colleagues were both pro-life and pro-choice, speaking from primarily but not exclusively a male perspective. For the families and clans, the interested

p. 301.

19 Ibid.

20 Wan Ch’üan, “Kua-Yü,” Important Principles for the Increase of Offspring, chüan 2, p. 298.

21 Ibid., p. 299.

customers and the social vogue driving them wished not just for a child or any son, they were greeting one another and praying on altars far and near for the blessing of a “noble child (kuei-tzu 貴子),” a fine son. As male doctors serving mostly male customers, they had to try serving the needs that brought their customers to their doors in the first place.

Chang Chieh-pin's (張介賓, 1563-1640) *I-lin ts' ê* (Proposals to Create Offspring 宜麟策) was another booklet by a famous medical author offering advice for popular concerns about fertility.²² Admitting himself to be a man who managed to produce a son only in his later years, Chang said that he had a particular sympathy for and personal interest in propagating useful ideas and practices in this regard.²³ Stressing like most that reproduction, being a natural matter (tao-hua tzu-jan 道化自然), its essential Tao should mostly follow the principle of “non-thinking” and non-intervention (wu-szu wu-wei 無思無為). Yet, Chang continued, upon this earth there are infertile lands and unproductive areas, thus some human assistance might be brought forth for husbands and wives who did performed like everybody else but were left with no children (wu-szu 無嗣). For his part, he liked to present his consultation in five categories: appropriate time (t' ien-shih 天時), suitable place (ti-li 地利), human coordination (jên-shih 人事), assistance of medicine and food (yao-shih 藥食), and treatment of diseases (chi-ping 疾病). For each of these categories, Chang laid down his deliberation, disclosing interesting trends in contemporary mentality and social norms as well as a practitioner's advice. We read therefore that the foregrounds of a temple, sideways of a local shrine, sites by a graveyard, coffin, well, or stove could all be places people chose for intercourse that demanded chastisement. Chang also cautioned his readers that copulation should

22 Chang Chieh-pin 張介賓, *Proposals to Create Offspring (I-lin ts' ê 宜麟策)* (Taipei: shih-chieh, 1962).

23 Chang Chieh-pin, *Proposals to Create Offspring*, p. 1.

be avoided in places under the bright glow of sunshine, moonlight, or fire torch, or in dark, damp areas that smelled dangerous, or in places that gave out an eery, unpeaceful air to the mind and spirit. People ought to be wary about not committing an additional offense (fan 犯) by “doing” it upon sensitized sites²⁴ lest premature, short-lived, or handicapped children be born as a result, unknown calamities, uninvited disasters be borne upon the house, or worse still, unfaithful or unfilial (pu-chung pu-hsiao 不忠不孝) offspring be produced of these inauspicious unions.²⁵ For picking a good foundation, the fine base for bearing the fruits of fecund activities, Chang first gave his idea of a woman suitable for containment: she should be “calm and not agitated, substantial rather than light, thick rather than thin, mature and not young.”²⁶ “Thus any woman with short lips or small mouth” would not be advisable, for these were external signs of the inner character of her private parts.²⁷ Nor would those with small ears, frail voice, weak body, dry hair, loose teeth, wide-open eyes, sharp-shaped button, or those who ate little be an appropriate selection. Overly fat women were no good, Chang said, but outstandingly beautiful women, with wavy bodies and alluring bone structure could also be a bad choice.²⁸ Females with tight and quick pulses were not appealing, as were any appearing with “a head fearsome like tiger, a neck as strong as a bear, a face looking wayward, eyebrows standing straight up, or a voice like that of a wolf or wolverine.” Such women, Chang emphasized, could all lead to vicious, awful disasters. People did best to avoid them.²⁹

Sex taboos or advice for wife-selection, it is true, were no news to Chinese wisdom literature. But by the late-Ming and early-Ch'ing era,

24 Chang Chieh-pin, “Ti-li地利,” *Proposals to Create Offspring*, p. 2.

25 Ibid.

26 Chang Chieh-pin, “Chi-chih 基址,” *Proposals to Create Offspring*, p. 3.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

these good old homilies carried messages that spoke volumes of their changing social grounding as well as their teleological implications. A medical author, Chang warned against indulgence in male homosexuality (nan-yin 男淫)³⁰ in addition to people's habits of getting a concubine for no particular reason.³¹ He cautioned against men's love for alcohol.³² For those who "intended to pick a fine occasion to spread one's seed (yu tsê-ch' i pu-chung-chê 欲擇期布種者)," Chang's recommendation was that: "drinking less is better than drinking more, maintaining total sobriety is better than taking a few drinks."³³ In this clearly male-oriented and male-targeted literature, moreover, it is intriguing to note that experts like Chang insisted, against the long background of focusing solely on women for the blame and remedies of infertility that gynecological texts set forth, that male illnesses be confronted before going to the female to solve the problem. "We must deal with ourselves before our women," Chang said.³⁴ His elaboration on the "Ten Keys (shih-chi 十機)" in creating a prime moment for fecundity echoed other fertility consultation from the late-16th century on, which stressed the novel notion that in intercourse "women were really the hostesses while men mere visiting guests calling upon their (women's) hospitality (nü-chu nan-k' ê 女主男客)."³⁵ Under the general air of increasingly open gender contacts and the booming sex market, moreover, these late Ming male physicians were not shying away at all from discussing the element of "romance" in coital acts. In Chang's deliberation on the importance of "embracing (huai-pao 懷抱)," he proclaimed that pleasure was at the root of the mechanism of

30 Chang Chieh-pin, "Sê-chieh na-yin 色戒男淫," *Proposals to Create Offspring*, p. 14.

31 Chang Chieh-pin, "His-ch'ieh 蓄妾," *Proposals to Create Offspring*, p. 5.

32 Chang Chieh-pin, "Yin-sh 飲食," *Proposals to Create Offspring*, p. 5.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

34 Chang Chieh-pin, "Nan-ping 男病," *Proposals to Create Offspring*, p. 7.

35 Chang Chieh-pin, "Sh-chi 十機," *Proposals to Create Offspring*, pp. 3-4; Chang Chieh-pin "Hsiao-ch' an lun 小產論," *op. cit.*, p. 5.

creation (sheng-chi 生機). In principle, therefore, mutual affection between man and a woman created the “emotional opportunity (ch’ing-chi 情機)” for procreation. Such occasions arose as their emotional needs matched one another’s, it became divorced when such emotional forces disengaged.³⁶ Under this premise, he opposed wild male conduct in forcing themselves sexually upon a woman, violently knocking and pressing into her “(private) gate” even if she was unwilling to open her door to take him in. Chang disapproved also of men’s fascination with overly young women. Tender girls right after their hair was pinned up (fu-tsan 甫簪) were like unripe grains or immature silkworms, he said: they could hardly be useful for bearing one’s fruits or producing a good cocoon.³⁷ He did eventually serve his kind of fertility medicine, but insisting that “there are no fixed principles in following these recipes for planting one’s seed.” Each man would have to discover his own prescription suited to his own needs.³⁸

As medical authors like Wan Ch’üan or Chang Chieh-pin wrote, plenty of other popular writers joined in to take a shot at this booming market of reproductive assistance. We witness famed names like Yüan Huang (袁黃, 字了凡) who came up with his version of *The Genuine Insights to Pray for Offsprings* (Ch’i-szu chên-ch’üan 祈嗣真詮).³⁹ *Bright Words for Men and Women* (Nan-nü shên-yen 男女紳言) appeared in the late-17th century in the early Ch’ing period, evidence of a continuous run of this socio-culture market in fertility literature. Yüan’s disciple Han Ch’ü-ming (韓初命) explained this increasing demand for such consultations at the popular level that prompted accomplished writers like Yüan

36 Chang Chieh-pin, “Sh-chi,” *Proposals to Create Offspring*, p. 4.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

38 Chang Chieh-pin, “Yao-shih 藥食,” *Proposals to Create Offspring*, p. 6.

39 Yüan Huang 袁黃, *The Genuine Insights to Pray for Offsprings* (Ch’i-szu chên-ch’üan 祈嗣真詮) (Taipei: Hsin wen fung, 1985).

with a ready audience following him in examination handbooks and popular religion pamphlets to want to extend their service to them in this area.⁴⁰ Yüan's concise production included but ten suggestions that began with "repentance (kai-kuo 改過)" and ended with chanting popular Buddhist sutras (pai-i kuan-yin 白衣觀音, ta-pei-chou 大悲咒) in praying for the blessing of an offspring.⁴¹

Recipes for Planting the Seeds

In addition to proverbial wisdom, popular conviction, and ritual acts, social values and cultural forces favoring procreation in traditional China brought about significant technical vehicles in the hope of facilitating such wishes. A key text in the male branch (nan-k' o) of Chinese procreation medicine from the first half of the seventeenth century illustrates, in concrete terms, the nature and composition of such a body of knowledge.

The Correct Treatise on How to Plant the Seeds from the Miao-I Studio (Miao-I-chai I-hsüeh cheng-yin chung-tzu p' ien 妙一齋醫學正印種子篇) by Yüeh Fu-chia (岳甫嘉), from the Wu-chin (武進) district of Chiang-su Province, stands out among its kind at the end of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).⁴² In addition to its openly pro-natal proposition, naming the book after an explicit cause of fertility, "planting the seeds or sowing the offspring (chung-tzu)," it represents the best example of a separate, medical consultation on the body and reproduction for men as to that for women. The text begins with a section (shang-chüan 上卷)

40 Han Ch' u-ming 韓初命, "K' o Ch' i-Szu Chên-ch' üa yin 刻祈嗣真詮引," in *The Genuine Insights to Pray for Offsprings*, p. 1.

41 Yüan Huang, "Kai-kuo 改過," *The Genuine Insights to Pray for Offsprings*, pp. 1-4; "Ch'i-tao 祈禱," *The Genuine Insights to Pray for Offsprings*, pp. 25-29.

42 Yüeh Fu-chia 岳甫嘉, *The Correct Treatise on How to Plant the Seeds from the Miao-I Studio (Miao i chai I-hsüeh cheng-yin chung-tzu p' ien 妙一齋醫學正印種子篇)* (Beijing: Chung i ku chi ch' u pan shê, 1985).

entitled nan-k' o (medicine or treatments for men) as a structured counterpart of the nü-k' o (medicine or treatments for women) that makes up the second half of the composition. As explained in his preface (tzu-hsü 自序), the author considered the aim of his compilation to be to help those men and their wives with “difficulties in begetting an heir (chien-szu 艱嗣)” and those who had lost hope of having any children (wu-tzu 無子 or chüeh-szu 絕嗣).” His advice for men, roughly speaking, consisted of three aspects: the right principles of copulation, key techniques for fruitful intercourse, and specific recipes to facilitate a healthy and productive sex life.⁴³

For the correct mindset toward copulation, he advocated such ideas as the importance of “maintaining the principle of humanity (ts' un-jen 存仁),” of nurturing kindness, of “achieving magnificent pleasure for both women and men (liang-ch' ing ch' ang-mei 兩情暢美),” and of conservation and reservation of both worldly desires and carnal activities, all of which could have classical roots though with considerable new adaptations. On technical details, he recommended such ideas as men looking for the right moment (women showing a desire to engage as if quite un-endurable [yü chiao-chieh pu k' o jên chih chuang 欲交接不可忍之狀],” keeping to a simple life style (avoiding over-exhaustion [chieh-lao 節勞], aggravation [nu 怒], getting drunk [chieh-tsui 戒醉], or overindulgence in taste [sh' ên-wei 慎味]), and practicing special exercises to “cultivate the male essence (lien-ching 煉精),” and so forth.⁴⁴

The pharmaceutic recipes Yüeh prescribed included those to enhance male potency and those aiming at promoting “fruitful sex.” In total he listed over five dozen items: concoctions (t' ang 湯), recipes (fang 方), pills (wan 丸), cakes (kau 糕), prescriptions (tan 丹), powders (san 散),

43 Yüeh Fu-chia, *The Correct Treatise on How to Plant the Seeds from the Miao-I Studio*, p. 4.

44 Yüeh Fu-chia, *The Correct Treatise on How to Plant the Seeds from the Miao-I Studio*, pp. 5-7.

drinks (chiu 酒), and so on, for consultation. All carried explicitly enticing names fitted to their propagative purposes (e.g. sheng-ching chung-tzu fang 生精種子奇方, kuang-szu chi-chi wan 廣嗣既濟丸, tzu-yin chuang-yang tan 滋陰壯陽丹, chiu-p' in fu-yang san 九品扶陽散 etc.). They were accorded to be wonderfully helpful methods (ch' i-fang 奇方, i-fang 益方) with proven effects (ch' eng-hsiao chü-lüeh 成效舉略).⁴⁵ Many were converted, therefore, into rhymed verses for easy memorization and wide transmission. Seemingly technical details were frequently referred to as principles (tao 道) to connect them with the spiritual virtues behind these techniques and to remind their users of the larger philosophical and cosmological benefits they might bring forth.

Coming from a long tradition of Taoist beliefs in life nurturing (yang-sheng) and the Confucian concern for family reproduction, the special characteristics as well as the historical background of this late imperial literature on male medicine invites additional elucidation. A survey of emerging textual and material evidence indicates, first of all, that the alleged decline or subsiding of the yang-sheng culture, rooted in ancient Chinese religion and cosmology, was unwarranted.⁴⁶ It is true that as a system of thought and practices this yang-sheng tradition was not without its own ebbs and flows. Yet many of the basic tenets and techniques remained intact and in circulation until at least the eighteenth century, though often with different emphases and varying connotations. The two-sided effect of human sexuality, as a vehicle for either personal transcendence or self-degradation, continued to stand at the core of late imperial Chinese sex culture. Minute changes in technical details (including food and drug in-take in one's daily maintenance, self-

45 Ibid., pp.11-39.

46 Charlotte Furth, "Rethinking van Gulik: Sexuality and Reproduction in Tradition Chinese Medicine," in Christina K. Gilmartin ed., *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 125-146.

management for one's mind and body, as well as the vital importance of coital engagements) at the everyday life level, especially pertaining to copulation, continued to attract serious attention and invite constant innovation. Furthermore, the mixture of the shamanistic Taoist origin of this sex culture with its later development in pharmaceutical recipes and alchemy devices, though amply manifested in the Sui-T'ang (581-907) "medical" texts, was a potential promised at the very beginning. These ancient origins remained even as Taoist popular religion and vocational Chinese medicine evolved increasingly into their own later in Chinese history. Thirdly, a proper evaluation of the Neo-Confucian input on the evolution of this art of "planting the seeds" (as much in the form of a socio-cultural value on family reproduction as in the stress on mental rectification and physical self-watchfulness) is crucial to a full appreciation of the historicity of this seemingly perennial Chinese preoccupation. Fourthly, the changing character of China's medical and pharmaceutical practices guaranteed the adding on and acting out of fresh ideas, additional ingredients, and novel prescriptions to facilitate old beliefs, whether in revising conventional methods or designing entirely new values.

As mentioned, Yüeh's text was not the only access people, or men, had to fertility medicine. Other medical authors provided similar advice manuals (e.g. Wan Ch'üan's *Important Principles for the Increase of Offspring*, and Chang Chieh-pin's *Proposals to Create Offspring* were eminent examples). Indeed in the Ming (1368-1644) market of reproductive medicine, there was no lack of expertly worded or popular how-to books on sale: all crying out to provide secrets as to the skills, art, or joy in spreading the seeds or increasing one's offspring. (Yü Ch'iao's, *Important Words for Increasing the Offspring* provides another example).⁴⁷

47 Yü Ch'iao 俞橋, *Important Words for Increasing the Offspring* (Kuang-szu yao-yü 廣嗣要

Nor were the contents of this particular compilation on “planting the seeds (chung-tzu p’ ien 種子篇)” entirely unheard of before then. A lot of Yüeh’ s suggestions may be traced back to earlier precedents either in concept or in design. But in revising and openly repudiating other familiar ideas and practices, the author made a clear stance in showing his reconsideration and reform of China’ s mixed heritage in this regard. The text attests to this attempt as it displays Yüeh’ s accomplishment in absorbing, combining, assessing, and re-creating a medicine for men fitting his own interpretation of the social needs and the technological facilities meeting this demand. Yüeh’ s focus on men, stressing the “enhancibility” of their fertility performance, to create the platform of nan-k’ o, nevertheless makes his deliberation on seed-planting stand out as a distinguished case among the numerous late imperial Chinese strategies for male reproductive performances.

A shared feature of this broader kuang-szu literature tended to combine the old life-nurturing (yang-sheng, now often termed life-managing [shê-sheng]) tradition with a new emphasis on heir-begetting (ch’ iu-szu 求嗣) as a social need and communal value. In mixing the two goals of family reproduction and self-cultivation together, this late-Ming branch of male advice literature stressed the pivotal value the latter had towards the success of the former. Whether in re-captioning the traditional concerns for the timing (called “heavenly moments,” t’ ien-shih), the location (called the “earthy advantage,” ti-li), or the preparation (called the “humanly affairs,” jên-shih) for the right kind of conjugal activities, it emphasized that no conflicts existed between an individual’ s search for personal cultivation and physical transcendence on the one hand, and this same individual’ s social obligation to breed on the other. Indeed, the paths to such disparate goals not only crossed each other but

語) (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1962).

were identical, as effective copulation depended on saved-up, potent “male essence” that had been nurtured and intensified through carefully observed abstinence. Contemporary medical texts and popular advice elaborated on the various ways to “nurture the (male) essence (yang-ching 養精)” (ching 精, the same word for semen) and “receive medication, fu-yao 服藥,” both being vital methods of self-cultivation and successful breeding. Various exercises, attitudes, and daily life arrangements were celebrated for their power in facilitating reticence and “desire control,” and positive means towards achieving a state whereby the quality (of sex and semen both) outweighs its quantity (kuei ching pu kwei tuo 貴精不貴多).⁴⁸ Clinical case records that such texts included demonstrated the key concept and argument behind these prescriptions as well as the step-by-step procedures for their preparation.⁴⁹ The pharmaceutical composition and the names of these recipes bore evidence to the value the experts saw in “calming the spirit (an-shên 安神),” in “securing the foundation (ku-pên 固本)” and to “producing the essence (sheng-ching 生精).”⁵⁰ The pills and balls that helped to lengthen one’s life furthermore consisted of the exact same ingredients as those prescribed either for “planting the seeds (chung-tzu fang)” or for “extending the family line (yen-tzung 衍宗).”⁵¹

The Popular Front From Yü Chiao’s Important Words to Yüan Huang’s Genuine Insights

Yü Ch’iao’s small booklet *Important Words for Increasing Offspring* (Kuang-szu yao-yü), like other texts from this newly carved out territory

48 Yüeh Fu-chia, *The Correct Treatise on How to Plant the Seeds from the Miao-I Studio*, pp. 7-11.

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 11-40.

50 *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15, 20, 27-28.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

of reproductive medicine, showed a clear post-mid-Ming character with newly revised alterations mixed with familiar proverbial phrases and medical references from the past.⁵² In his own introduction, Yu admitted that daily hearsay (p' ing-jih so-wen 平日所聞), remarks by officials, scholars, and priests (chin-shên fang-shih chih shuo 縉紳方士之說), and comments from and discussions by famous people now and before (ku-chin ming-chia i-lun 古今名家議論) made up the three sources constituting the bulk of his present composition.⁵³ The main conviction that cut through his deliberations, however, is a rooted belief in the naturalness of procreation. Just as “there can be no hill without any grass or shrubs, no earth barren of grain or millet, nor should there be a man incapable of reproduction (jên wu pu sheng yü 人無不生育).”⁵⁴ The point was that as fertilizers can make rich land out of poor to create the conditions for growing plants, appropriate nurturing (yang 養) was vital in assisting human procreation. He cited a story in connection with the famous Yüan doctor Luo T' ien-i (羅天益) whereby a surprise snowstorm in the spring of wu-wu (戊午) devastated most of the gardens in his neighborhood. Budding peach and plum blossoms were all but gone under the rain and inch-thick snow. Only one old gardener led his family in hitting and shaking the snow off their branches while burning grass underneath the roots to counter the harsh weather. That year, Yü continued, this one orchard reaped an enviable harvest while the rest of the gardens were left with little fruit. The advice and recipes he was to offer, on the secret of increasing the chances of producing offspring (kuang-szu), were much like the strokes to get the snow off the peach and plum trees or keeping the flame in the furnace going to protect the buds from falling (both by the

52 Yü Ch' iao 俞樾, *Important Words for Increasing the Offspring (Kuang-szu yao-yü 廣嗣要語)* (Taipei: Shih chieh, 1962).

53 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

54 *Ibid.*

way were stock metaphors for fertility in Chinese arts and letters). He presented a three-fold supplement for enhancing breeding in humans: to adjust (male) essence (ching) and (female) blood (hsuëh 血) (t' iao-li ching-hsuëh 調理精血), to concentrate on the authentic foundation (of procreation) (chih-chih chên-yüan 直指真源), and to prepare medication for both men and women (nan-nü fu-yao 男女服藥).⁵⁵ Together with these three treatises, complimented by four diagrams (szu't' u 四圖), and thirty-five recipes (san-shih-wu-fang 三十五方), Yü was confident that “there is no man under heaven who could not be a father, nor any woman unable to become a mother (t' ien hsia wu pu k' o fu chih nan, wu pu k' o mu chih nü 天下無不可父之男，無不可母之女).”

The content of his Important Words for Increasing the Offspring, however, is a mixed bag of pharmaceutical recipes, put side by side with daily life advice and popular eclectically gathered homilies. Viewed together, we see innovative medical treatments for fertility, propagated for the consumption by a society that had recently seen the spread of economic prosperity from cities and towns to villages, with populations of young and old, women and men at once thrilled and challenged by this search for up-to-date morality to adapt to this monetary operated market of reproduction. People's intensified interest in enhancing their fecundity had to be appreciated within and against this ethical and aesthetic trend generated in part by new socio-economic possibilities from the mid-sixteenth century onward that medical experts on male reproduction perceived as both an erosion of old mores and exciting employment opportunities for their expertise. We read in Yü Chiao's work, therefore, elaborate explanations of an itemized list of pharmaceutical ingredients as well as detailed instruction for the preparation and intake of what he called the “Number One Prescription on Planting the Seeds Ever (ku-

55 Ibid., p. 1.

chin ti-i chung-tzu fang 古今第一種子方),”⁵⁶ also known as the “five-tzu clan-pro creation pill (wu-tzu yen-tzung wan 五子衍宗丸).”⁵⁷ Old stories had it, Yü proclaimed, that generations of usage of this produced such persuasive results among the villagers that it became a legendary cure. Believers should take ninety pills of these honey-combined small balls on an empty stomach, and another fifty before going to bed, “swallowed with plain liquid or salty broth (or warm liquor on winter months).” Auspicious dates for coital engagement, were to be selected according to his almanac calculation, while “avoiding Buddhist monks, nuns, widows, widowers, or the witness of chickens, dogs, or the six farm animals”⁵⁸ while “doing” it. This wu-tzu yen-tzung pill stood out among Yü’s recipes as a special fix for men, most of his other prescriptions being a unisexual treatment with matching deals for women.⁵⁹ Like Wan Ch’üan before him and most of the practitioners in this growing field of kuang-szu medicine at the time, Yü was convinced that a balanced yin-yang force and smooth husband-wife relations were the key to a strong body, healthy sex, and fertile intercourse. As medical experts they were all against early marriage (ancient medical texts told people that a man began to ejaculate at sixteen while a woman had her menstruation at fourteen, but marriage should not take place before he reached thirty and she twenty). They warned against the harms of early sex, claiming premature love-making between teenage women (tsao-chiao 早交) and men (tsao-yü 早御) was bad for their health and for reproduction. “Whereas thrifty carnal desires lead to successful breeding (kua-yü tsê yu tzu 寡欲則有子)” was a favorite slogan. Within their medical-cultural parameters,

56 Yü Ch’iao, “wu-tzu yen-tzung wan 五子衍宗丸,” *op.cit.*, p. 15.

57 *Ibid.* So called because it calls for the five ingredients of ko-chi-tzu (枸杞子), t’u-szü-tzu (菟絲子), ch’ê-ch’ien-tzu (車前子), wu-wei-tzu (五味子), fu-p’en-tzu (覆盆子).

58 Yü Ch’iao, *Wu-tzu yen-tzung wan, Important Words for Increasing the Offspring*, p. 16.

59 Such as ta-tsao-wan (大造丸), yen-nien-i-szu-tan (延年益嗣丹), see *Ibid.*, pp. 16-19.

they abhorred the scandal of over indulgence in material comforts by the youth of the day, and they disdained men lost in their anxiety while calculating loss and gain (te-shih 得失), wishing constantly for the day when they could replace their horse with a cart, and a hoot-covered carriage with plain cart when they got the former.⁶⁰ All these misbeliefs and superstitions concerning the pleasure of “endless, consumption desires (shih-yü wu-chieh 嗜慾無節)” had but “empty weakness (hsü-shuai 虛衰)” for their subscribers. Once people lost the understanding and practice of the way (Tao) of careful nurturing (shê-yang yu-tao 攝養有道), a wholesome healthy body or a good life was nowhere to be found, and the abundant supply of fine children was but a natural loss.⁶¹ On this line of thinking, Yü cautioned that excessive indulgence in sex was like a wonderful bath too frequently enjoyed.⁶² A man’s youth or maturity were all to be duly rationed and scheduled, and Yü proclaimed that was why he concluded his handbook for male reproduction with an essay “On Depletion and Aging (Lun shuai-lao 論衰老).”⁶³

Further Proliferation in the Early Ch’ing

To be sure, medicine for men (nan-k’o) in late imperial China was not the equivalent of reproductive medicine, nor were the recipes for planting the seeds (chung-tzu fang) an indispensable part. Fu Shan’s (傅山, 1607-1684) contribution to nan-k’o, entitled *Fu Ch’ing-chu Nan-k’o* (Medicine for Men by Fu Ch’ing-chu 傅青主男科), presumably authored

60 Yü Ch’iao, “Chih-chih chên-yüan lun 直指真源論,” *Important Words for Increasing the Offspring*, p. 2.

61 Yü Ch’iao, *Important Words for Increasing the Offspring*, p. 1.

62 Yü Ch’iao, “Lun-t’ung-chuang 論童壯,” *Important Words for Increasing the Offspring*, p. 29.

63 Yü Ch’iao, “Lun-shuai-lao 論衰老,” *Important Words for Increasing the Offspring*, pp. 30-33.

in the second half of the seventeenth century though not printed until the late nineteenth century, did not consist of anything related to male reproduction, but instead covered all sorts of general advice and remedies for the physical complaints of men.⁶⁴ Chung-tzu fang, recipes for planting the seeds or begetting a son, it appears, was a generic term referring to guidance, instructions, or prescriptions believed to be of help to procreation, for both women and men. The booklet on gynecology by Fu Shang, called *Fu Ch' ing-chu Nü-k' o* (Medicine for Women by Fu Ch' ing-chu 傅青主女科), had ten small entries on female infertility (pu-yün 不孕) all under the category of chung-tzu (planting the seeds).⁶⁵ In fact, as a fuller subspecialty that branched out in an earlier stage, for authors or texts that did not develop a special entry for nan-k' o, Chinese gynecology often included discussions on male reproductive health within their table of contents. The *Principles and Treatments of Gynecology from the Chu-lin Temples* (竹林女科證治), said to be authored by the priests from a Buddhist monastery Chu-lin-szŭ sêng-jên (竹林寺僧人) known for its expertise on women's health and issued in 1883, contained forty-seven different entries on reproductive medicine relating to both sexes.⁶⁶ Under the discussions on "Quest for Heirs (ch' iu-szu)," fifteen covered various problems men had in begetting offspring (nan-tzu chien-szu 男子艱嗣), as opposed to those on women's difficulties with infertility (fu-jên pu-yün 婦人不孕).⁶⁷ This was in part due to the fact that fu-k' o

64 Fu Shang 傅山, *Medicine for Men by Fu Ch' ing-chu* (Fu Ch' ing-chu nan k' o 傅青主男科) (Fu chou: Fu chien k' o hsüeh chi shu ch' u pan shê, 1984).

65 Fu Shang, "Chung-tzu 種子," *Medicine for Women by Fu Ch' ing-chu* (Fu Ch' ing-chu Nü-k' o 傅青主女科) (Taipei: Shang-wu, 1966), pp. 27-36.

66 Chu-lin szŭ sêng-jên 竹林寺僧人, "Preface," *The Principles and Treatments of Gynecology from the Chu-lin Temples* (Chu-lin nü-k' o chêng-chih 竹林女科證治) (Ch' ing T' ung-chih shih-i Nien K' o-pên 清同治十一年刻本).

67 *Ibid.*, chüan 4.

(medicine for women or gynecology) came much earlier, at least as early as the Sung dynasty (960-1279), as a practicing sub-specialty within traditional Chinese medicine concerned with female reproductive health, well before its counterpart in male medicine, the nan-k' o vocational path relating to male physiology and sexuality. In almost all the existent texts on kuang-szu, i-lin, or chung-tzu, therefore, we can find some kind of a counterpart, in the form of either a matching title or an important section saved for gynecological discussion, but not vice versa. The late Ming publication of Chung-tzu pien by Yueh Fu-chia, printed in 1635, with a booklet on nü-k' o following its main text on nan-k' o as its first chapter (chüan) is a good example. Hung Chi' s writing on Chung-tzu fang p' o, out in the market three years later (in 1638) showed the same sort of development.⁶⁸ By the early Ch' ing, in other words, we see both a further proliferation, and thus evaporation, of this late-Ming male medicine with other medical specialties or cults of self-cultivation.

Songs of Sleeping Alone

From a related though different angle, traditional Chinese convictions on the “zero-sum” nature of the reserve of male essence (semen, ching 精) and on the progressive decline of human vitality over time combined to encourage men to exercise caution and constraint in his sexual life as they aged. The Taoist emphasis on self-control mixed with the Buddhist slighting of physical experience and material needs, when met with post-Sung Neo-Confucian beliefs, created a fertile ground for the increased cultivation of “sleeping alone (tu-wo).” Men, or the self-cultivating among them, as they passed their reproductive youth and

68 Hung Chi 洪基, “Chung-tzu fang p' o 種子方剖,” *The Compendium on Life Management* (She-shên Tzung-yao, Ch' ing Kuang-hsü Pa Nien Chung-k' an Chin-hsiang-pên 清光緒八年重刊巾箱本, microfilm).

approached mid-age (usually taken to be forty), felt included to retreat to rest by themselves at night, so as “not to see the temptation of the desirable (pu-chien k’ o-yü 不見可欲).” Avoiding cohabitation can cut men entirely off from battling with carnal desires and save them the struggle to want to engage yet not to emit. From the Sung (960-1279) period onward, moreover, this custom, though in existence earlier, was also becoming a vogue both in male aesthetics and as an important pursuit in personal cultivation. As a rite of passage for middle-age men, it carried a strong attraction leaving behind an intriguing literary trail.

The famed poet from southern Sung, Lu Yu (陸游, 1125-1210), produced a verse describing his “Random Thoughts (san-huai 散懷)” after reaching his middle years.

Since reaching mid-age I severed my (carnal) desires and thought of
 them no longer,
 Now how difficult can it be to contemplate (giving up) meat?
 What Heaven bestows upon me has always been thin,
 Only as I clear up all of such (desires) shall I gain a little peace.
 中年欲絕不復念，今日肉食夫何難？
 天公賦予本來薄，一蓋掃空方少安。⁶⁹

For those believing in this change, there were ample supplies of ancient wisdom and earlier anecdotes in support of their lifestyle. Mencius’ reference to “being thrifty on human desires (kua-yü)” as the key to cultivating one’s mind, or Lao Tzu’s words on not seeing the enticing so as not to be disturbed could all be mobilized to add additional validity. As the vogue went on stories continued to be circulated, or created, on the benefit of “sleeping alone (tu-wo).” One famous story

69 Lu Yu 陸游, “San huai chih êrh 散懷之二,” in Chien nan shih kao 劍南詩稿 (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1961), vol. 84, p. 1147.

spoke of the Southern Sung (1127-1279) Prime Minister Chia Szu-tao's (賈似道, 1213-1275) encounter with his bouncy colleague Pao Hui (包恢, 1182-1268) at court. Seeing Pao getting up and down the stairs, bowing and kneeling at this and that altar with little difficulty, Chia could not help but want to know the secret to Pao's long and healthy life. The secret to the art of maintenance and nourishment (wei-yang chih shu 衛養之術), Pao allegedly replied, had to do with a kind of "pill" he took from a secret source. Duely impressed, Chia wanted this great recipe revealed, at which point Pao smiled and disclosed the prescription to his superior: "What your humble servant, myself, has been taking for the past fifty years is nothing but this pill of sleeping alone (tu-shui-wan 獨睡丸)" a disclosure said to have brought roaring laughter from the audience.⁷⁰

This secret medicine of tu-shui-wan (sleep-alone-pill) embodies more than the humor that met the ear. It came from a culture where people had always believed in medication to bring about immortality (physically and spiritually). It reminded people of those legendary immortals, who as early Taoist stories had it, tried to hold on to their bodily functions while they slept alone to invigorate their sensory faculties to achieve supreme existence, in body as in soul. Proverbial sayings from the Ming attested to such a mentality in popular verses:

Taking a thousand drugs cannot compare with the good of sleeping alone for a single night;

Receiving medicine for a thousand days cannot work as well as lying down by thyself for one evening.

服藥千裏，不如一宵獨臥。

服藥千朝，不如獨臥一宵。⁷¹

Or:

70 Wu Lai 吳萊, San ch' ao yeh shih 三朝野史 (Beijing: Chung-hua, 1991), pp. 2-3.

71 Yang Shên 楊慎, Ku chin yen 古今諺 (Beijing: Chung-hua, 1985), p. 29.

Taking drugs for one thousand days can never work as well as sleeping alone for a single night;

Taking to a pitcher of wine is not as good as filling the stomach with congee.

服藥千朝，不如獨宿一宵。

飲酒一斛，不如飽食一粥。⁷²

The combined concern for carnal activities (*fang-chung*) with the prevalent search for longevity (*chang-sheng*) and nurturing of physical well-being (*yang-sheng*), had a long tradition that, some argue, went as far back as neolithic times. Well-know medieval authors have left with us eloquent testimonies to the notion and their personal practice. The T'ang poet Pai Chū-i (白居易, 772-846), for instance, wrote a poem entitled "A Song of Reclining Alone (*tu-mien-yin* 獨眠吟)":

Sleepless in this long night, I rose to the stairs.

A few stars scattering the galaxy decorated a sky wanting to dawn.

For fifteen years under the moon light,

whichever one night did I not sleep on my own?

夜長無睡起階前，寥落星河欲曙天。

十五年來明月夜，何嘗一夜不孤眠。⁷³

Verses of sleeping alone, at this point, had yet to become an emulated genre, but with the charm and power that Pai held in T'ang society and Chinese literature, they were on their way.

Evidence suggests that as Neo-Confucian eclecticism combined with medieval Buddhism and Taoist to create an intensified practice of self-

72 Hu Wen-huan 胡文煥, *Lei hsiu yao chüeh* 類修要訣, collected in *Chung kuo i shüeh ta ch' eng san pien* 中國醫學大成三編 (Ch'ang sha: Yeü-hu shu shê, 1994), vol. II, p. 916.

73 Pai Chū-i 白居易, *Pai hsiang shan shih chi* 白香山詩集 (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1961), chüan 12, p. 127.

cultivation, interest in asceticism (kua-yü) and in cutting off carnal desires (chüeh-yü) increased. Personal preference for solitary experience was influenced by the social swing in favor of moral prudence and self-control. Customary rites of passage, in standing to dwell on one's own after the thirty-ninth or fortieth birthday, added special power to the male process of aging in Ming-Ch'ing China. There was, moreover, evidence from popular cults and folk medicine suggesting that this might not have been an entirely elitist taste. The standing Taoist notion regarding the depletable nature of male vitality, together with the popular belief in the interchangeable character of one's sexual energy and physical well-being, helped to persuade rural men and village ordinaries that conservation and self-restraint in sex was probably a necessary and safe habit. Anxieties over the premature exhaustion of the male essence and an inadequate supply of "kidney water (shên-shui 腎水 at the source of male sexuality)" was a constant horror in Chinese gossip and popular medical advertisements. Men's apprehension about over-indulgence or being overly exacted could only be aggravated by the apprehension that the overused male organ could fail them in vital coital performances (dependable, enduring) for the purpose of reproduction.

From the sixteenth century onward, on the other hand, there surfaced an intensified fascination with reproduction and sexuality, fed by a prospering market flooded with new prints and bold appetites, enabled by a seemingly ever-growing purchasing power and dazzling materials to be purchased. With it, old discussions on cautious sex and thrifty, carefully-controlled carnal desires were brought up again, reemphasized in the citations of Mercian warnings over excessive consumption from the high classical period, of reminders of the wisdom of conservation in eating, drinking, or coital activities from the Six Dynasties, and calculations of the limited allowance of semen and life that called for watchfulness even as men carried out their sex alchemy for longevity from the

T' ang. All of the above, however, asked their followers to consider careful, controlled, limited sex (chieh-yü, chih-yü 制欲, kua-yü), but never to cut it off entirely. Never, in other words, was the kind of severance of sex and carnal thoughts (chüeh-yü, ch' üyü 去欲) that late Ming to middle-Ch' ing authors suggested to their readers contemplated. This latter thrust for complete solitude as part of late imperial self-cultivation, in mind as well as in spirit, in virtue as well as in physique, for ethics as well for aesthetics, was what breathed new life into and gave a new edge to this discourse of living by oneself and sleeping alone. It was believed to be good for one' s health, to lessen the chances of illness, to lead to an enviably old age, and even help one to achieve a state approaching Taoist immortality or Buddhist deliverance, if heeded.

Beginning especially since the mid-sixteenth century, literati notes were dotted with discussions on the benefits of sleeping alone. Numerous ancient quotes from Taoist mythology were elaborated upon anew. The legendary character P' eng Tzu' s wisdom, for instance, that “taking a hundred packs of medicine can not compare with sleeping on one' s own” was exaggerated ten times over to add power and flavor for a late imperial audience. Earlier poems eulogizing solitary dwelling were collected. Cautions were even given to women warning against their “unwarranted” fantasy of marrying a young groom (pieh chia i shao nien 別嫁一少年). Lyrics from celebrated free-spirits like the Sung poet Lu Yu, (who called himself “the old man who did as he pleases [fang-wêng 放翁]”) who said “the bottom line for my own health at ninety lies in the simple fact that half of those days were spent in a single nest (tan-ch' i 單栖)”, gave people as much condolence as encouragement.⁷⁴

Songs of sleeping alone were sang among men who took to this view.

74 Yü Pien 俞弁, Shan ch' iao hsia yü 山樵瑕語, collected in Szu k' u ch' uan shu ts' un mu ts' ung shu 四庫全書存目叢書 (Tainan: Chuang-yen, 1995), vol. 152, p. 48.

An example of such is Hu I-tzu' s (胡以粹) “Lyrics of Sleeping Alone (tu-su-yin 獨宿吟)” that tried to appreciate beauty while asserting discipline.

Chilly and pure, a singular crane sleeping alone on this frosty day.
 His shoulders tightly tugged in,
 A warmth stretching to cover the feet.
 The quilt encloses the burner,
 Incense releasing a fragrance full.
 The combat soldier at heart does not rise,
 Trying to seduce a date with the solitude.
 This evening I slept till the sun roasts over the window grid.
 A blissful kind of comforts, perhaps,
 The kind of life this brings.
 孤鶴清寒，霜天獨宿。
 緊摠肩，暖覆足。
 被擁爐香香馥馥，心兵不起媚幽獨。
 這眠到曉日烘窗，也算人生自在福。⁷⁵

Morality, if any, was gained at no small price, as larger aesthetic, religious, or physical purposes lurked in a distance.

Not all contemporaries agreed on the value or necessity of self-confinement. Some expressed doubts that this “sleep-alone-pill” would actually lead to longevity, citing medical classics of the opinion that people past the age of eighty could not retain physical warmth and thus needed to sleep with others. Others like the admired eighteenth-century poet Yüan Mei (袁枚, 1716-1797) confessed that “For the better half of my life, I never slept by myself unless stricken down in illness (pan-sheng

75 Ch' u Jên-huo 褚人獲, “Tu wo yin 獨臥吟,” in *Huo hu chi pu chi 壑瓠集補集*, chüan 2, collected in *Li tai pi chi hsiao shuo ta kuan 歷代筆記小說大觀* (Taipei: Hsin-hsing, 1978), p. 5891.

fei-ping pu-ku-mien 半生非病不孤眠)。” There were also cynical critics, who questioned the wisdom of solitary sleep if in actuality one did not succeed in expelling or suppressing all “run-away thoughts and uncontrollable desires (hu-szu luan-hsiang 胡思亂想).” What benefit was there if every ounce of energy and bit of spirit one had were spent trying to chase away and repudiate the sentiments and desires thought to be uncalled for? Until the end of imperial China, debates and discussions regarding the issue of male celibacy continued to rise, arresting social attention, and manipulating collective tension.⁷⁶

Conclusion: The Male Body and Man’s Right to Self-Management

The modern assumption that, by not having to physically carry the fetus or bear the “fruits” of sexual intercourse, men are naturally less prone to carefulness and tend to be more irresponsibility towards coital activities is problematic. For seen comparatively, the assumption that males are negligent and insensitive to their carnal desires and body management is but a slice of unhelpful modern mythology. Male reproductive culture in imperial China indicated that for reasons of health-preservation as well as the successful breeding of the next generation of wholesome, intelligent, and heirs, little could be risked on instantaneous personal indulgence. In a society that believed in the morality, aesthetics, and heavenly blessing involved in any meaningful reproduction, even an ordinary man had to be concerned about his own efforts towards conception or contraception as a serious “right” in its own terms. In this environment, as a matter of fact, sex was not only to give pleasure and allow procreation, but it was also an essential part of one’s spiritual and physical well-being, a key pathway to longevity and the search for

76 Wang Chih-ch’ un王之春, “Tu-shui-wan 獨睡丸,” in Chiao-sheng sui-pi 椒生隨筆(Taipei: Wen-hai, 1961), chüan 4, pp. 139-140.

immortality. The distinction between temporal individual gratification and long-term social obligations that sex implied then is by no means a “modern” invention. Adding health-enhancing and salvation-seeking potentials, Chinese Taoism actually identifies coital activities as a vehicle to arrive at a wide array of (at least four) different purposes. Any of these may be achieved separately, but, more intriguingly, all can also be accomplished through the same route. Sex for fun, sex for birth, sex for personal health and individual immortality, or sex for self-cultivation and eternal salvation are not only mutually non-exclusive, they indeed all call for the same principles and methods in contemplation and execution.

In this context, for those outside of Western linguistic, cultural, and social orbits, the adoption of such terms as “pro-life” and “pro-choice” to describe the two camps and different stands on family planning, contraception, and abortion seems especially mystifying and misleading. In most other times and places, life and choice appeared intertwined and interrelated. Choices are usually made in the pursuit of life, and life can hardly go on without constant exercise of choice. It is a puzzle why both are not conceived as belonging on the same side, accomplishable in the same fashion.

The hypothesis that somehow the idea of separating sex and reproduction, of identifying copulation for fun and intercourse as a matter of duty can only be a recent inspiration or modern liberation, and rests on ignorance fed by self-congratulatory prejudice. The advocacy that, in concept and in practice, differentiated sex only came as a result of revolutionary changes in reproductive science and technology is an erroneous inference that mistakes end results for their cause in history. The proclamation of the so-called “sex-revolution” as a human novelty of the modern in physiology and twentieth century’s invention of contraceptive devices (e.g. intra-uterine blockage, contraceptive pills, and safe,

effective, and inexpensive abortifacients and surgical procedures of abortion) is but another self-centered statement fed by the post-enlightenment social stance. The case of sex culture and reproductive medical literature in historical China provides us with direct counter evidence. Coital intercourse as both a source of pleasure and potential opportunity for conception had always been recognized as different aspects of the same act. The joy of sex was accepted in the affirmative, not entirely in and of itself, but as part of a cosmological system that respected nature and valued human bodily functions and sensual experience as a vital channel to a wholesome existence and moral or religious self-cultivation. Chances of conception, by this logic, were worth pursuing and avoiding at the same time. Successful reproduction in its better sense should include all the happenings long after the journey of life begins (whenever or however that is understood) and the broad socio-cultural occurrences for its prospering. Sexuality and coital activities thus demanded careful planning, nurturing and constant conscientious cultivation (for a fine consequence, and not just for any pregnancy to take place). Nature and nurturing again cannot be two opposite concepts. The philosophical school called “life nurturing (yang-sheng)” and the Taoist conviction of voluntary celibacy both placed respect for and enhancement of Nature at their core. This helps to point to the peculiarity of contrasting nature and nurture, sex for pleasure or sex for duty, exercising the body for oneself or keeping the body for others. For considered as parts of the same package, a Chinese man was seen deeply absorbed in his interest in “planting the seeds well” while contemplating his bliss when granted a few nights of “sleeping alone.” Alone and together, these two aspects of the same male existence ask that wise tempering and careful management of his sexuality and bodily activities be considered humanly natural as the indispensable two sides of the same coin that defines masculinity. It was a right not to be deprived him, or saved only for the female gender

simply because women technically hold the containers for the joining of the forces of nature, the yin and the yang.

The pre-feminist rhetorical assumption that confuses past records with modern problems to arrive at a deconstructed but recently made-over understanding of the humanities with the domain said to be characteristic of the masculine leaves us with prolonged ignorance and neglect of the investigation and observation of men. Pursuits in women's studies, however, make blatant the erroneous nature of this hypothesis that mistakes the male element behind human activities as particular to the masculinity of men. This cannot but heighten the glaring intellectual vacancy in matters related to the construction of manhood historically which stands in need of closer examination. Any preliminary exercise of such an investigation turns up, as does this present one, both "empirical data" to be digested as well as "cultural debris" that compel us to reflect upon the many inherited conceptual intellectual frameworks that tend to set off our quest in the first place. A historical-textual study on something as basic and essential as the body culture of Chinese males, for instance, reveals to us the intriguingly multifaceted and constantly evolving picture of this social cultural construction in its historical context. Ming-Ch'ing men, curiously or not, disclosed themselves as dwelling in an environment that demanded them to fulfill their obligation to reproduce while never forgetting to remind and lure them toward the equally pressing daily temptation, and pressure to self-cultivation, in the midst of the search for moments of solitude. Delving into the philological delineation of various textual transmissions and philosophical, religious, and historical connections as well as disruptions that melt into the socio-cultural make-up of this male culture of the physique, we realize that none of the legendary references to China's perennial traditions like yang-sheng (longevity pursuit) or fang-chung (art of the bedchamber) can be taken seriously. This drives and invites

more endeavors to probe further into our many blind-areas toward this wildly complex human ecology of the past that was never systematically continuous, unified, nor simply sporadic or erratic. This preliminary discovery also reminds us of the cultural-intellectual background (from especially the late-19th and early-20th centuries onward) that has both directed and misled us to our point of inquiry in the beginning the national historiographical frame that imaged and produced for us a continuous cultural heritage and national narrative. This needs to be reconsidered, as does the enlightenment thesis that convinced many of the sensibility and universality of a human history founded on directional development and wistfully, linear improvement. The composite picture of the existential reality of Chinese men during the Ming-Ch'ing period defied most academic autopsies that may have yielded pictures which are part and parcel of this familiar modern outlook. This takes us to the scarily thrilling fact that many structural loopholes inherent in our common knowledge of history, literature, religion and the arts may be all too self-evident. Such an understanding of the world of privacy and sentiment demands that we include legitimately a deeper dialectical relationship that may be problematic in both what we have always known and what we are habitually unaware of. If such has by no means been anything accidental, perhaps the overall reflection can yield something that will call our attention to the curious aesthetic and ethical law once framed to the Chinese as the rule of “concealing to reveal (yü-yen mi-chang 欲掩彌彰).”

As this initial investigation into the materials related to men's handling of their bodies discloses to us much hidden information that represents a facade of intellectual conventions of the past, it also leaves open more previously unsuspected questions. The assumption of (human) bodily conducts and sexual affairs as matters intimate and (thus?) of a private nature is the first one. Medical, literary, and religious texts from

Ming-Ch'ing China show that there can be ample reasons why such information or activities may be of frank concern and constantly open debate and discussion. These sources remind us as well that, for people situated in a different historical environment, human physical faculty and sexuality are objects of management and control for the males just as much as they are for the females, which in turn illuminates not simply the strangeness of pre-modern concepts and practices but also the peculiarity of the configuration of the self-less, body-less, and unsentimental modern subject (of both men and women, individual citizens and the national body) as we know it. Re-looking at and rehearsing glimpses of men's bodies in the late imperial Chinese context confirms our suspicion, furthermore, that in a socio-cultural niche at variation from this modern outlook, body and sex could have a rhetorical relationship as well as functional explanation, just like that between ethics and aesthetics, or that between revealing and concealment. The private might not be so private (close up), when privacy was understood through a different host of sentiments, in concealment or revelation.

Glossary

- ai shên 愛身
 an-shên 安神
 Chang Chieh-pin 張介賓
 chang-sheng 長生
 chên 真
 ch' eng-hsiao ch'ü-lüeh 成效舉略
 chi-ping 疾病
 ch' i-sün pa-i 七損八益
 Ch' i-szu chên-ch' üan 祈嗣真詮
 Chia Szu-tao 賈似道
 chieh-chih 節制
 chieh-tsui 戒醉

chieh-lao 節勞
 chieh-yü 節欲
 Ch' ien-chin fang 千金方
 chih-yü 制欲
 chih-chih chên-yüan 直指真源
 chin-shên fang-shih chih shuo 縉紳方士之說
 ching 精
 ch' ing-hsin kua-yü 清心寡慾
 ch' ing-chi 情機
 chiu 酒
 chiu-chuang 九狀
 chiu-p' in fu-yang san 九品扶陽散
 ch' i-fang 奇方
 ch' iu-hsien yang-sheng 求仙養生
 ch' iu-szu 求嗣
 Chu Chên-heng 朱震亨
 ch' üjên yüts' un t' ien li 去人欲存天理
 ch' ü-yü 去欲
 Chu-lin nü-k' o chêng-chih 竹林女科證治
 Chu-Lin szǔ sêng-jên 竹林寺僧人
 ch' üyu ch' ieh 嬰幼妾
 chuang-yang chu-hsing 壯陽助興
 chuang-yang tan 壯陽丹
 chüeh-szu 絕嗣
 chüeh-yü 絕欲
 chung-tzu 種子
 chung-tzu fang 種子方
 Chung-tzu fang-p' o 種子方剖
 chung-tzu p' ien 種子篇
 chung-yü 重欲

fan 犯
 fang 方
 fang-chung 房中
 fang-chung pu-i 房中補益
 fang-wêng 放翁
 fu-k' o 婦科
 fu-fu shuang-hsiu 夫婦雙修
 Fu Ch' ing-chu Nan k' o 傅青主男科
 Fu Ch' ing-chu Nürk' o 傅青主女科
 Fu Shan 傅山
 fu-tsan 甫簪
 fu-jên pu-yün 婦人不孕
 fu-yao 服藥
 Han Ch' u-ming 韓初命
 hsi ching 惜精
 hsia yüeh pi tu su 夏月必獨宿
 hsieh 泄
 hsieh-ch' i 協期
 hsiu-fa 修法
 hsiu-tê yang -hsing 修德養性
 hsü-shuai 虛衰
 hsuèh 血
 Hu I-tzu 胡以梓
 huai-pao 懷抱
 Hung Chi 洪基
 hu-szu luan-hsiang 胡思亂想
 i-fang 益方
 I-hsin-fang 醫心方
 i-lin 宜麟
 I-lin ts' ê 宜麟策

jên-shih 人事
 jên-yü 人欲
 jên wu pu sheng yu 人無不生育
 kai-kuo 改過
 kau 糕
 ku chin ming chia i lun 古今名家議論
 ku-chin ti-i chung-tzu fang 古今第一種子方
 ku-pên 固本
 kua-yü 寡欲
 kua-yü tsê yu tzu 寡欲則有子
 kuang-szu 廣嗣
 kuang-szu chi-chi wan 廣嗣既濟丸
 Kuang-szu chi-yao 廣嗣紀要
 k' uang-huan 狂歡
 kuei-ching pu-kwei-tuo 貴精不貴多
 kuei-tzu 貴子
 lê 樂
 liang-ch' ing ch' ang-mei 兩情暢美
 lien-ching 煉精
 liu-shih 六勢
 Lu Yu 陸游
 Luo T' ien-i 羅天益
 Lun shuai lao 論衰老
 Ma-Wang-tui 馬王堆
 Miao-I-chai I-hsüeh cheng-yin chung-tzu p' ien 妙一齋醫學正印種子篇
 nan-ching 男精
 nan-k' o 男科
 nan-nü fu-yao 男女服藥
 Nan-nü shên-yen 男女紳言
 nan-nü shuang-hsiu 男女雙修

nan-tzu chien-szu 男子艱嗣
 nan-yin 男淫
 nu 怒
 nü-tan 女丹
 nü-chu nan-k' ê 女主男客
 nuan-kung tan 暖宮丹
 pai-i kuan-yin 白衣觀音
 pan sheng fei ping pu ku mien 半生非病不孤眠
 Pao Hui 包恢
 Pai Chu-i 白居易
 pi-so 閉鎖
 pieh chia i shao nien 別嫁一少年
 p' ing-jih so-wên 平日所聞
 pu-chien k' o-yü 不見可欲
 pu-chung pu-hsiao 不忠不孝
 pu-yün 不孕
 san 散
 san-huai 散懷
 san-shih-wu-fang 三十五方
 sê 色
 sê chi shih k' ung 色即是空
 sê-yü chên 色欲箴
 shang-chüan 上卷
 shao-yü 少御
 shih-chi 十機
 shih-yü wu-chieh 嗜慾無節
 shê-sheng 攝生
 Shê-sheng tzung-jao 攝生總要
 shê-yang yu-tao 攝養有道
 shên-yü 慎欲

sheng 生
 sheng-chi 生機
 sheng-ching 生精
 sheng-ching chung-tzu fang 生精種子奇方
 shen-shui 腎水
 shou-k' ao 壽考
 Sun Szǔ-miao 孫思邈
 Szǔ-t' u 四圖
 ta-pei-chou 大悲咒
 tan 丹
 tan-ch' i 單栖
 tan tzu wei 淡滋味
 t' ang 湯
 tao 道
 tao-hua tzu-jan 道化自然
 te-shih 得失
 t' iao-li ching-hsuëh 調理精血
 ti-li 地利
 t' ien 天
 t' ien hsia wu pu k' o fu chih nan, wu pu k' o mu chih nü 天下無不可父
 之男，無不可母之女
 t' ien-shih 天時
 t' iao-yüan 調元
 ts' ai-yin pu-yang 採陰補陽
 tsao-chiao 早交
 tsao-yü 早御
 tsê-p' ei 擇配
 ts' un-jên 存仁
 tsung-yü 縱慾
 tu-mien-yin 獨眠吟

tu-su-yin 獨宿吟
 tu-shui-wan 獨睡丸
 tu-wo 獨臥
 tuo-tzu tuo-sun 多子多孫
 tuo-yü 多御
 tuo-yü t' ung-nü 多御童女
 tzu-hsü 自序
 tzu-yin chuang-yang tan 滋陰壯陽丹
 wan 丸
 Wan Ch' üan 萬全
 wei-yang chih shu 衛養之術
 Wu-chin 武進
 wu-szu wu-wei 無思無為
 wu-szu 無嗣
 wu szu chieh nan tzu chih kuo 無嗣皆男子之過
 wu-tzu 無子
 wu-tzu yen-tzung-wan 五子衍宗丸
 wu-wu 戊午
 yang-ching 養精
 yang-sheng 養生
 yao-shih 藥食
 yen-tzung 衍宗
 yin 淫
 yin-shih nan-nü, jên chih ta yü ts' un yen 飲食男女人之大欲存焉
 Yü-Ch' iao 俞橋
 Yüan Huang 袁黃
 Yüan Mei 袁枚
 yü chiao-chieh pu k' o jên chih chuang 欲交接不可忍之狀
 yü pu k' o ch' iang 欲不可強
 yü pu k' o chüeh 欲不可絕

yü pu k' o tsao 欲不可早
 yü pu k' o tsung 欲不可縱
 yü tsê ch' i pu chung chê 欲擇期布種者
 yü-yen mi-chang 欲掩彌彰
 yü yu so pi 欲有所避
 yüan wei-mu 遠帷幕
 yu-k' o 幼科
 yu-tzu yu-shou 有子有壽
 Yüeh Fu-chia 岳甫嘉

種子方與獨臥吟： 側窺明清男性的身體文化

熊秉真*

摘要

世事雖多乖而難逆，識者對情欲世界或禮教規範卻易持一萬變不離其宗的印象。人文學者之論文化傳統，行為科學上之逐心理要素，幾近如此。漢學研究學界對於中國養生房中的敘說，以及背後虛擬而無庸言喻的男性身體文化，亦有類似之假說。本文即欲以微觀而近寫明代中國醫籍文獻及文學表達中可側見之男性身體經營，略述其氣質內容上之曲折與多變。

對於緊接於近現代以前的明清時期，過去一般學者或指其中國歷史文化發展之「近世」或「前近代」(early modern period)，或謂其為中華「帝國之晚期」(late imperial era)，前者視其狀態為導向日後近現代發展之先聲，後者則稱其諸般現象為快速沒落，即將告終的皇朝帝業的一個尾聲。無論展望其(光明之)未來，或說僅延其(一度輝煌但終告暗淡之)過去，在這兩種基本預設中，歷史與文化的發展都是與時俱移，隨著歲月而推進，且各自呈單線、單向之行進。然而，不論中國的禮教秩序、情欲施展、性別文化、或者身體經營，仔細追究、調查、整理起來，前述藏在歷史文化敘述後面、無庸言宣的宏觀式預設，似乎都不易成立。蓋時空的因素千百年來不但在中國人的情欲世界留下了清楚的刻痕，即單舉養生、房

關鍵詞：養生與房中之傳承、男科中的固精之道與種子之方、獨臥之吟、男性身體文化、禮教中國與情欲明清

* 中央研究院近代史研究所研究員。

中之傳統，藏在同一詞彙語言系統之後，活動於類似文獻載記之下的，仍有多番不同面貌的現實生活。明代關心廣嗣之道的所謂「男科」醫學，以及同時流傳於士庶階層之間，既求傳家種子，又欲修身獨臥的兩端之執，即十分鮮活地點出了當時男性身體經營的多元面貌，及其在時代上曾經歷的多重起落。歷史上是否曾有一個亙古不變的禮教中國，面貌不斷往多方變幻的情欲明清又該如何理解、掌握，是本文期望商榷於識者之疑問。

論文將分三個主軸進行：一是檢討所謂養生與房中之傳承，作為中國男性身體文化之大傳統，其於明代之特殊風貌，二則細述明代廣嗣與男科中的固精之道與種子之方。最後將此身體所負傳宗接代之責，與明清修身之追求、養性之欲望，與長生之活動，在士庶各階層男性生命儀節中之推展，比較而觀之。換言之，以種子之方與獨臥之吟對舉互映，以側窺近世中國男性身體文化之轉折。