

Preface to the Second Edition

Our practical experience over the last years supports the claim that tongue diagnosis is one of the most important diagnostic elements employed in Chinese medicine. Moreover, our experience confirms that tongue evaluation complements the established methods of modern Western diagnosis by enhancing the clinical information of the practitioner, to the effect of a holistic understanding of the individual human being.

For the expert it is amazing to observe how the tongue reflects the inner organs and their modifications caused by physiological influences and pathological dysfunctions. The correct assessment of the tongue starts between practitioner and patient—the two pillars of healing arts

over thousands of years—and focuses on the patient as an individual. By taking established Western diagnostics into account as well, the practitioner is able to achieve an encompassing diagnosis and therapy.

The overall success and the friendly reception of the first English edition of the *Pocket Atlas of Tongue Diagnosis* on the international market shows the actual need for such a book. The second edition includes updates of illustrations and corrections throughout the text and presents the full material with an improved layout.

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Preface to the First Edition

“Your eyes shall be your professors!”—Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493–1541)

J. W. Goethe, German writer, poet, and natural scientist of the 18th and early 19th century, once remarked: “The most difficult job is to recognize what is exposed in front of your eyes.” What he meant was that you must know and understand the subject and its background thoroughly before you can explain it properly. Without this knowledge and understanding it is impossible to describe something accurately or even to see it at all. As far as tongue diagnosis is concerned this requires understanding human anatomy, physiology, and embryology, as well as Chinese medicine.

The human tongue undergoes constant change. It reflects every modification within the organism, as well as in the environment. We do, therefore, encourage the reader to inspect her or his tongue several times a day in order to well distinguish its body, its coating, its consistency, and the continuous changes involved. The mirror will each time reflect a slightly different picture and the tongue always reveals the actual phase of flow (or “equilibrium of flow”) according to the prevailing individual syndrome, the *bian zheng*. The appropriate therapy should be applied in accordance with this. It is understood that the *bian zheng*, the differentiation of the individual syndrome, changes continuously, sometimes from hour to hour.

The procedure in Chinese diagnostics is the perennial differentiation between

opposites. It is the vital medical application of the famous **Principle of Contradiction**, which in occidental thought goes back to Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel, as well as to basic medical and diagnostic texts in the Chinese tradition (e.g., Chapter 49 of the *Ling-Shu Jing*). **Differentiation based on contradiction** is the correct rendering of the ideograph “*bian*,” which is derived from a primitive ancient Chinese character showing two criminals impeaching each other. Thus, “*bian*” is the exact equivalent of Aristotle’s *antiphrasis*, namely contradiction, which he declared the basic principle of logic, analysis, and cognition in his book on metaphysics. Therefore, administering a typecast herbal prescription or a standard needle combination unthinkingly would be quite unprofessional.

The great compilations of classical prescription (*Shang Han Lun*, *Jin-Gui-Yao-Lüe*, Thousand Golden Prescriptions, etc.) give recommendations to the physician in order to suggest an appropriate creative therapy. Chinese physicians wrote them for this purpose some 2000 years ago. That is why the *materia medica* combinations listed in Chapters 5 to 8 have remained without standard quantification of their components. Quantification is up to the experienced physician according to the individual *bian zheng*. Moreover, quantification varies slightly between the Chinese and Western population and between people living in different climatic zones. Just copying stereo-

typed prescriptions and applying them to a sick person is as unprofessional a procedure as treating a diagnosis in the foreground instead of understanding the whole background (mind, organism, environment) of the individual human being involved.

An experienced Chinese doctor has to perform a comprehensive differentiating syndrome diagnosis (*bian zheng*) before his or her therapy, including inspection of the tongue and evaluation of pulses. Otherwise, the ensuing therapy would not be a genuine traditional Chinese one.

In conclusion, we would like to mention that the text of this atlas with its illustrations is based on a documentary film entitled *Zungendiagnose—Zentrum der Chinesischen Medizin* (Tongue diagnosis—The core of Chinese medicine) published in 1990 by the German Research Institute of Chinese Medicine (GRICMED), Freiburg im Breisgau/Germany.

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