

Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine

Roots of Modern Practice

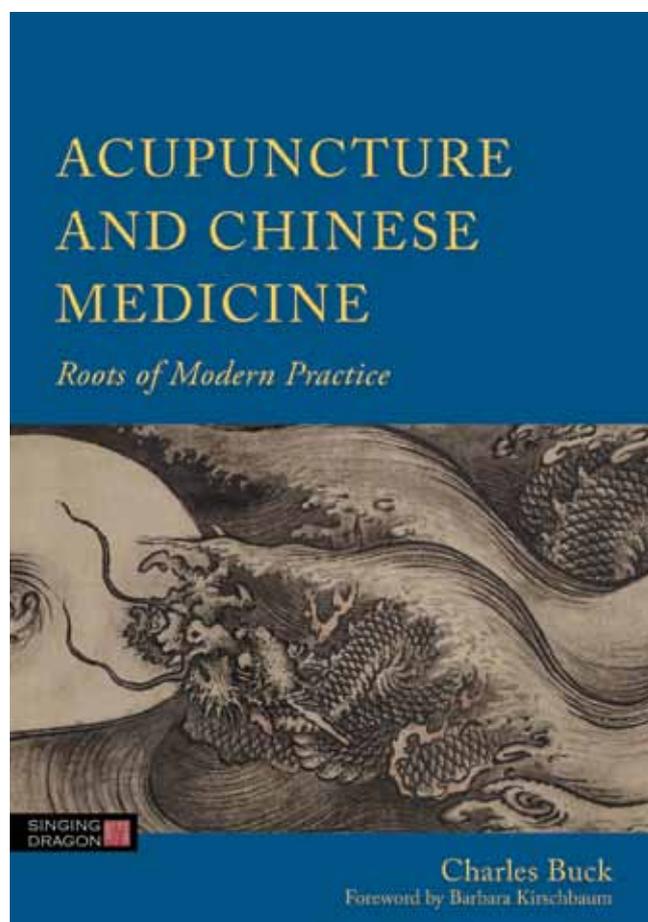
Charles Buck

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This book in many ways reads as a compelling tale, holding your attention as you observe how the progress and advances in Chinese medicine were impacted by warfare, political strife and peace, as well as Buddhist and Taoist influences. One waits with anticipation to see how the various challenges, such as treatment of epidemics and febrile diseases, will be met. Beginning with an insightful foreword by Barbara Kirschbaum, followed by the author's introduction, this history takes the reader from the pre-Han era in clear chronological order through the various dynasties up to the early 20th century. Over the course of seven chapters,

it explores in detail the significant historical figures and their contributions to the development of Chinese medicine.

The book is very well laid out and includes a helpful chart of the Chinese dynasties for reference. It is interspersed with appropriately placed text boxes which contain: explanations of particular concepts; summaries of book contents; lists of texts and formulas by key figures, as well as treatments and diagnostic questions. The appendices include a helpful glossary of terms and a list of the main historical texts included in the book. There is a comprehensive bibliography, index and a separate index of classical texts for readers interested in further research.

While the author has included a few of his personal interpretations and speculations, they are clearly identifiable as such. The author acknowledges that he only scratches the surface and some of the major historical classics such as the *Nei Jing* and *Shang Han Zha Bing Lun* do not get the coverage they deserve due to shortage of space and coverage by other authors. While this may disappoint some, the inclusion of comprehensive information on the less well-known figures and their contributions has merit. One gets a clear idea of the sheer extent of written works, both extinct and extant, relating to this medicine. We also get a glimpse of the impressive contributions by some key figures such as those of Sun Si Miao, whose work included diverse topics from infectious diseases to gynaecology, and ethics. Similarly we see the emergence of energetic acupuncture and the contributions of Bian Que and Hua Tuo, famed for his acupuncture, surgery and anaesthesia during the Han dynasty.

Of particular interest are the revelations that challenge the viewpoint that Chinese medicine is limited to treating less serious conditions and that it is a lightweight unscientific option when compared to modern biomedicine. The author brings to the fore some of the knowledge and practices that are usually seen as hallmarks of the latter and not attributed to Chinese medicine. There are numerous examples of this including the achievements in areas such as forensic medicine, vaccination, anatomy, and the work of Ge Hong who is credited with the first clinical description of smallpox.

What some may find surprising are the influences of the traditional medicine extending beyond China to impact Western medicine and modern-day healthcare. However, in reading this text one is struck by the resonances with present-day circumstances and the same issues that perpetuate the diverse incarnations and undulating status of Chinese medicine. We currently see the same co-existence of different schools of thought, spectra of practitioner training and competencies, varied regulation, competition and misunderstanding.

The thematic style allows one to follow the progression of the various aspects of Chinese medicine, such as clinical practices and theoretical approaches, and its evolution into a systematic and professional medicine with education not only through apprenticeships, but also on a large scale in state sponsored training schools.

This is an accessible book which will appeal to non-practitioners who have an interest in the origins and background of Chinese medicine, and it has particular significance for students and practitioners. Those who appreciate that their initial training in this medicine is but the start of a journey, and may have little or no prior knowledge of the material covered within the book, are presented with a window into how knowledge was acquired and developed and its relevance in clinical practice today. This allows the practitioner reader to experience a sense of connectedness to historical physicians.

Readers will gain an awareness of how comprehensive and solid the bedrock of Chinese medicine is and of its possibilities both clinically and in terms of the future development of the medicine itself. A valuable asset to any practitioner's or student's bookshelf, this history portrays Chinese medicine as an evolving tradition of professional medicine, developed by intelligent and rational thinkers.

Not only is this book an interesting and highly informative read, it has much to contribute in its own right to the future story of Chinese medicine practice. A significant question for today is whether or not the Chinese medicine profession can have any impact, not merely in securing the existence of the medicine but doing so in a way that its full potential can be appreciated and exploited. The opinion of this reviewer is that this narrative, combined with emerging high quality research evidence, has a significant role to play in establishing a more positive perception of the validity of Chinese medicine and its role within the bigger realm of international healthcare. By empowering practitioners in particular with the knowledge of the rich tapestry and true potential of this very effective medicine, it engenders a sense of respect and responsibility to truly understand and develop the work of those giants on whose shoulders we all stand and in whose footsteps we now walk.

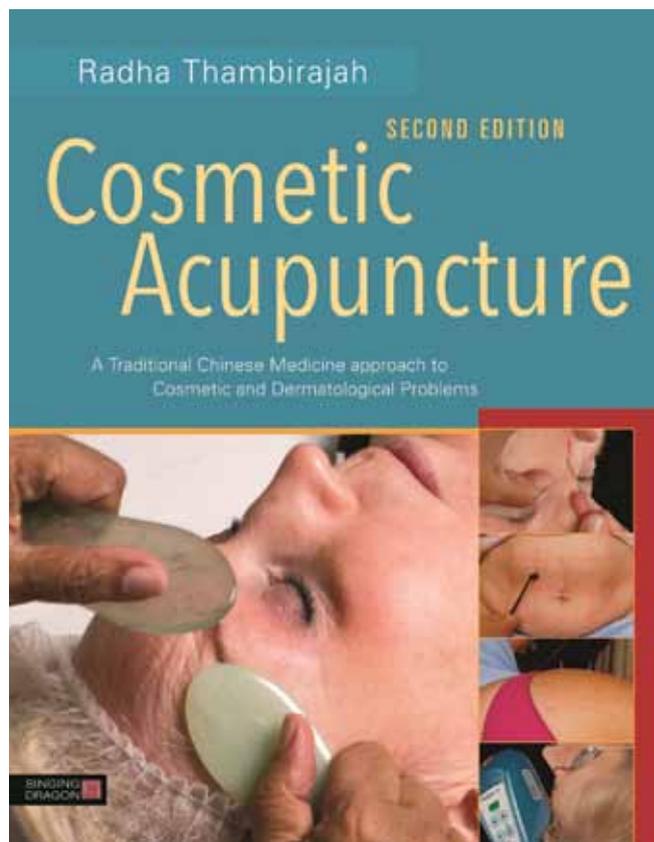
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Cosmetic Acupuncture

Radha Thambirajah

Publishers: Singing Dragon, London and Philadelphia (2016)
2nd Edition

Hardcover: 243 pages with illustrations
RRP: £40.00; Kindle edition: £33.24



The title of this book might lead you to think primarily of anti-ageing treatments. This work aims to give acupuncture practitioners a practical and detailed approach to a wide range of issues that may affect appearance: from acne to psoriasis, from hair loss to obesity, as well as the effects of the passage of time.

Over many years of experience the author has developed specific constitutional treatments to work alongside local treatments, together with advice on diet and lifestyle. Her work demonstrates that beauty is much more than skin-deep and that true beauty can only arise from good internal health. The thesis of her work seeks to provide acupuncturists with a fully systemic approach to dermatological wellbeing.

The author, Radha Thambirajah is a well-known acupuncturist and lecturer with more than 40 years' experience. She trained

in medicine and acupuncture at the Shanghai Medical College and until 1984 practised in Sri Lanka. There she was a pioneer of acupuncture and founded the Academy of Chinese Acupuncture. Since moving to the UK she has carried on her clinical work as well as lecturing widely across Europe. She has also written the book *Energetics in Acupuncture* (Churchill Livingstone, 2010).

The author's constitutional understanding of conditions and factors affecting the skin and appearance are rooted in TCM and the Five Elements. However it is important to realise the familiar terms of Blood, *yin*, *yang* and *qi* are used here in a particular way. To appreciate the rationale for the treatments given throughout the book, the reader needs to be fully aware of the intended use of well-known terminology to avoid any possible confusion.

The author clearly sets out her paradigm and explains her concepts of Blood, *yin*, *yang* and *qi* and their relation to the nature and appearance of the skin. She then explores the relevant energetics and pathologies in the context of the Five Elements. There are plenty of helpful diagrams and schematics to help the reader visualise the energetic shifts and imbalances involved. We are given a detailed explanation of how all the elements affect the skin. In the instance of Liver Blood deficiency she finds local facial treatment will be of no value until the constitutional issue is corrected. She emphasises the importance of identifying the underlying cause of issues such as wrinkles that might be related to stress, sinus issues or eyesight. The reader is encouraged to address these as well as giving local treatment for a more long-term result. There is a specific chapter on the Lungs in relation to water and the potential effects if there is poor distribution of moisture to the skin.

Various techniques in relation to needling, cupping, plum blossom, moxibustion and *gua sha* are described which the author has found helpful in her constitutional and local treatments. She also discusses laser treatment. Of particular interest is her descending technique for needling Spleen 6 (*san yin jiao*) for hot skin conditions that occur only in the upper part of the body.

Following her general approach to diagnosis and treatment the author proceeds to discuss a wide range of specific conditions affecting the skin. Diagnosis and treatment of issues such as warts, psoriasis, alopecia and eczema are addressed using the author's traditional Chinese paradigm. Explanations are clear and to the point. There are a selection of case histories and some brief Western medicine interpretations. It would have been good to see a few more case histories given the author's vast experience.

We then come to the treatments offered for particular 'cosmetic' problems. These include facial concerns as well as approaches to some body issues such as cellulite, firming the abdomen and obesity. This will be the chapter you feel you are seeking if you are interested in adding facial acupuncture to your practice.

The author explains that it is preceded by the vital information of previous chapters so that the reader's treatments can work with all aspects of the skin to give the best results. The treatments described are split into two sections. Firstly the author applies constitutional treatment. This is completed and then any local work is performed. Useful suggestions for patients' self-help are given with the treatments as well as in a dedicated chapter. It is important to note that the local treatments given for the face are not related to specific acupuncture points or identified muscular treatments but simply to the areas needing attention for say lifting or wrinkle reduction. The amount of local needling in any one session is usually less than some other forms of facial acupuncture that include facial meridian points, where a half-hour gap between constitutional and facial is advisable, or treating on separate days.

This is the second edition of this book and the author has added a new chapter. This looks at the facial types in relation to the Five Elements and offers treatments for imbalances arising from the specific tendencies. The relation of the upper, middle and lower areas of the face to the Triple Heater is also discussed and provides for some additional understanding of facial diagnosis and treatment. A couple of 'cosmetic' points: this edition is in hardback and the new layout and choice of diagrammatic colours has added clarity. There are some additional photos and many more of the photos are in colour.

This book is a valuable contribution to understanding dermatological problems from a Chinese medicine perspective. On the whole the constitutional treatments can be studied and used without the need for personal instruction. If you are new to the facial or cosmetic acupuncture techniques you may feel a practical workshop would be beneficial, for which this book would provide helpful support.

In the relatively small number of works in English that include the topic of facial and cosmetic acupuncture, each has their own unique perspective. *Constitutional Facial Acupuncture* (Churchill Livingstone, 2014) by Mary Elizabeth Wakefield, for example, works with the eight extraordinary meridians and particular facial treatments. There is no one definitive approach to cosmetic and facial acupuncture and Radha's book adds an interesting and different approach to the field.

Sue Kalicinska originally trained at the International College of Oriental Medicine (ICOM), East Grinstead, UK and has been practising traditional acupuncture for 28 years. For the last eight years she has also been offering facial and restorative acupuncture treatments in her practices which are located in London and Surrey. Sue runs occasional postgraduate workshops for qualified acupuncturists including 'The Inner and Outer Makeover' providing training in facial and restorative acupuncture.