

Paul U. Unschuld
Horst-Goertz-Institute
Charité-Medical University Berlin, Germany

**A new realm of sources for Chinese medical historiography.
The Chinese Medical Manuscripts of the 16th to the 20 century in Two
Collections in Berlin**

The historiography of Chinese medicine has been based on printed texts for many decades. Translations and contents analyses of books from the imperial era have been major sources for the image of Chinese medical history that has formed in the West. It is only recently that awareness has grown of the social limitations of such a data base. Central to a new perception of Chinese medicine has been the “discovery” of handwritten books prepared by Chinese authors over many centuries. Their examination suggests that a medicine based on the Chinese sciences of systematic correspondences (yinyang and five agents doctrine) may not have spread beyond an educated elite of traditional upper social echelons in pre-modern China. A majority of the population appears to have trusted in rather different means when confronted with illness and a need to seek expert help. This paper will introduce the broad range of authors and topics of a unique collection of Chinese handwritten books in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin and in the Ethnology Museum of Berlin, to draw attention to a huge treasure of information on the ethics, the theory, and the clinical practice characterizing health care among wide circles of the Chinese population from the 16th through the mid 20th century.