

De-centering the Global Middle Ages
University of Michigan

CHINESE MEDICINE IN MONGOL IRAN: FOR A GLOBAL
UNDERSTANDING OF MONDINO'S *ANATOMIA CORPORIS HUMANI*

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The Eurocentric history of medicine has long maintained that Mondino de Luzzi (c. 1270 – 1326) was the first physician to combine a systematic practice of human dissection with the study of anatomy in the medical curriculum at the University of Bologna. His *Anatomia Corporis Humani*, written in 1316, is not only considered the first dissection textbook, but also remained the authority on the subject until at least the end of the sixteenth century. Considered by many scholars as the father of modern anatomy, Mondino paved the way for human dissections, which had been banned in the third century for legal religious proscriptions.

Recent studies in medieval Asian history have revealed that human dissections had been performed in China since the late-eleventh century, and that medieval Islamic attitudes toward the practice were not so condemning as previously believed. The recent rediscovery of a fourteenth-century Persian manuscript, *The Precious Book of the Ilkhans on the Branches of Chinese Sciences* (1313), will prove that centuries-old knowledge on anatomy, produced in China and filtered into Islamic medicine through the Mongols, has contributed to the visual compilation of Mondino's *Anatomia*. Although it might be true that no Islamic writer is known to have performed their own dissections, this talk wishes to enlarge the focus on the birth of anatomy as a scholarly subject from a Western focal point to a global panorama which righteously includes the Asian contribution.

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