



COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE ALBUM OF  
CHINA'S TIBETAN CULTURE



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## Volume Three: Traditional Science and Technology, Fine Arts, Literature and Entertainment

(Brief Account in English)

### 1. Traditional Science and Technology

Tibetan traditional science and technology constitutes an important component of Tibetan ancient culture, among which medicine, astronomy and calculation form a peculiar theoretical system. Architecture, agriculture and animal husbandry in Tibet are of local features. Ceramic and textile techniques have a long history. It is obvious that paper-making and printing techniques originated from the Central Plains.

Tibetan medicine gradually accumulated rich experience of medical treatment and was greatly influenced by medicine of the Central Plains, India and Persia. It not only has its own peculiar theoretical system, but also serves as a bright pearl in human traditional medicinal treasury. In the Tubo period, *Four Medical Classics* written by g·Yu-thog Yon-tan-mgon-po laid a theoretical basis for Tibetan medicine. In the Qing Dynasty, *Four Medical Classics--Blue Glaze* edited by sDe-srid Sang-rgyas-rgya-mtsho and its supporting medical charts (Tangkas) embody the supreme achievements of Tibetan medicine, among which the research on embryo growth, autopsy, surgical operations and others reached the advanced level at that time. *Tibetan Herbal Medicine* is a huge collection of Tibetan medicaments. And Tibetan medicaments are used widely in the world, benefiting masses of people.

Through the observation and reflection on the celestial body and phenomena of nature, Tibetans learnt much knowledge about astronomy and calculation and integrated the traditions of astronomy and calculation of India and the Central Plains. As a result, they created a complete system of Tibetan Time-wheel calculation. Time-wheel *Sutra*, including the Eight Diagrams, the Nine Palaces and the Twelve Animals, exerted a far-reaching influence on the creation of Tibetan astronomy and calculation. The competition between *vGyung-rtsis* and *Nag-rtsis* promoted the development of Tibetan astronomy and calculation. The book titled *White Glaze* embodies the cream of various sects, marking the formation of the system of Tibetan astronomy and calculation. Tibetan calendar, also called Tibetan Time-wheel Calendar, is a combination of *Yin* (lunar) and *Yang* (solar) calendars and a product of local experience and alien knowledge.

Architecture embodies both art and techniques. Ancient buildings in Tibet are enriched and varied



and extraordinarily splendid in architectural skills. Tibetan buildings can be roughly divided into houses owned by common people and public or court buildings. Monasteries are scattered everywhere in Tibet. Tibet preserves most of monasteries within the territory of China. The system of the fusion of the state and the religion remained in Tibet for such a long time. Therefore, it is quite difficult to make a clear distinction between religious and official buildings. The Potala Palace, built in supreme workmanship and based on the hill at the back, has been listed on the register of *World's Natural and Cultural Heritages*. Houses owned by common people are different in accordance with circumstances. In nomadic regions in the Northern Tibet, people live in yurts. While in the agricultural regions in the Southern Tibet, people inhabit flat-roofed houses. In addition to these two kinds, there are fortress-like houses and railing-style buildings.

Tibetans go in for both agriculture and animal husbandry. The combination of agriculture and animal husbandry once made a powerful and prosperous Tubo Kingdom. Barley, wheat, peas and rapes are major crops. Cows, sheep and horses serve as main domestic animals. The domestication of yaks and Tibetan mastiffs and the breeding of mDzo (offspring of a bull and a female yak) are the peculiar contribution made by Tibetans for mankind. Tibetans also introduced or created a series of practical techniques according to circumstances, such as oil pressing, wine brewing, milk processing and others.

## 2. Fine Arts

Sculpting and painting constitute an outstanding part of Tibetan traditional fine arts. Most of craftsmen remain obscure, but the masterpieces they created are acclaimed as the acme of perfection.

Tibetan fine arts emerged in the Neolithic Age. The introduction of Buddhism made fine arts develop and prosper. The sculptures in the bSam-yas Monastery and the Jo-khang Temple are very obvious in their alien features. The works in the mTho-Iding Monastery, the Gu-ge Palace, the Sa-skya Monastery and the Zha-lu Monastery are of peculiar local styles. The sculptures and paintings in the dGav-Idan Monastery, the Se-ra Monastery, the vBras-spungs Monastery, the Pal-kor Monastery, the Tashilhunpo Monastery and the Potala Palace mark the highest level of Tibetan traditional fine arts.

In Tibet, clay, wood, stones, butter and metals are usually used to make statues, among which clay



sculptures and bronze statues are in great number and exquisite in workmanship. The clay sculptures in the mTho-lding Monastery are very lifelike, showing the level in the formation period of Tibetan sculptures. Metal statues are varied in shape and as far as bronze statues are concerned, there are nine different styles.

Painting is a major form in Tibetan fine arts, thus it is called the "Lord of Hundred Flowers". Paintings can be classified into rock paintings, murals, Tangkas and woodblocks. Rock paintings existed from the Pre-historic Age to the Tubo period, and they are quite similar in technique, theme and style to those discovered in Mongolia and other places. Murals, originated from the Tubo period, were mainly painted on the walls in monasteries and palaces, adding radiance and beauty to mural arts of the Central Plains, India, Nepal and Khotan. From the period of the 13th century to the 15th century, the Gyantse Style, represented by murals painted in the Pal-kor Monastery, came into being. Tangkas are analogous to scrolled paintings in the Central Plains, which can be classified into embroidery and painting Tangkas. Embroidery Tangkas can be divided into silk, brocade and embossed embroidery Tangkas, which were popular in the Yuan Dynasty and obviously came from the Central Plains. Painted Tangkas were widely circulated, including colored, gold, cinnabar and black Tangkas, which were influenced by Indian and Nepalese paintings. Woodblock, a comparative young painting style, was introduced with the introduction of block printing. Tibetan traditional painting was well-developed and such painting styles as the sMan-thang School, the mKhyen-brtse School and the Kar-ma sGar-bris School emerged. Today, they still have great and strong vitality.

### 3. Literature and Entertainment

Tibetan literatures are rich and colorful, among which poems are most influential. *King Gesar*, a heroic epic, serves as a literary work written in form of talking and singing. Having been created and bettered continuously by Tibetans, it has become the longest one in the world. Mi-la-ras-pa's *Thousand Songs* is pregnant with meaning while *Sa-skye's Mottoes* enjoys great popularity. *Tshangs-byangs-rgya-mtsho's Love Songs* strikes root in the hearts of the people. Tibetan myths and legends, ancient Dunhuang songs, sNyen-ngag poems and *Biography of Lotus* (*Biography of Pho-lha-nas*, a biographical literary



work), are of great and peculiar value in literature.

Tibetan opera came into being in the 14th century, which is a comprehensive art with singing, dancing and music in one. Thang-dong-rgyal-po was generally acknowledged as the founder of Tibetan opera. The reason why he wrote plays and organized people to perform Tibetan operas was to raise money to build bridges and benefit all living beings. Eight Tibetan operas, such as *Princess Wen Cheng* and *sNang-sa*, prolong performing and are continuously improved, which have become a bright pearl of traditional local operas.

Dance music can be classified into three forms: folk, religious and court. A folk dance named Bro-gzhas can go back to ancient times. Usually performers are singing while dancing and people, men and women, old and young, participate in it. Young men and women especially adore this kind of dance. They usually delightedly sing and dance all night long. Monks in monasteries perform religious dances (vChams) and the masks they wear are very peculiar. Religious dances are very dense in their Buddhist flavor, such as punitive justice of cause and effect. Court dances were popular in the upper classes of society and various musical instruments were used in performance. Court dances were performed very often in the period of the Fifth Dalai Lama's reign.

Music falls into three categories: folk, religious and court. Folk music, accompanied with folk songs, is mostly related to labors and can be classified into the gZhas style, the gLu style and the Free Style. Court music obviously assimilated the musical elements from the Central Plains and the Western Region. Religious music is a peculiar form of Tibetan music. Drums and cymbals serve as common musical instruments. As for Tibetans music scores, Tibetans adopted the method of using five sounds to mark phonetic symbols and a traditional Chinese musical notation from the Central Plains, but they made some improvements.

Tibetan traditional sports include horse race, archery, ox race, stone-lifting contest, wrestling, Vurdo(ballista), mountaineering, all of which are closely related to the sports from the mainland of China.



第一章  
传统科技





CHAPTER ONE

TRADITIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY







## 一、医学

藏族医药学以原始的医药知识为基础，在中原、印度、波斯医学的影响下，逐渐形成了自己独特的理论体系，积累了丰富的实践经验，是人类传统医学宝库的重要组成部分。

早在公元前，藏族先民就认识到动物、植物、矿物的某些部分具有解除人体疾病的功效，认为“有毒就有药”。其后又学会了热酥油止血、青稞酒清洗外伤患处、柏枝艾蒿熏烟防治瘟疫等医疗知识。

公元641年，文成公主入藏，携来了多种医学书籍。其中部分由汉地僧医玛哈德瓦和藏族译师达磨郭夏合作译成藏文，名为《医学大全》。大约与此同时，藏王还从印度、大食等地邀请名医传播医学知识，合作编写了《无畏的武器》。《医学大全》和《无畏的武器》均已失传，部分内容保留在《月王药诊》和《四部医典》中，为藏医学的发展打下了基础。

公元710年，金城公主进藏，再次带来了大批医学书籍，其中部分被陆续翻译成藏文。以此为基础，汉地医僧摩诃衍和藏族译师毗卢遮那等结合当地的医疗传统和经验编著了《月王药诊》。《月王药诊》是现存最古老的藏医学专著，共分113章，几乎囊括了医学的方方面面。从该书的内容来看，中原和印度医学的影响十分明显，但藏族特色亦很突出。

公元708年，宇陀·云丹贡布诞生于拉萨西部一个医学世家中；其父亲是藏王的御医，母亲是甲萨曲尊。他从小热爱医学，多次到内地和印度游学，总结了藏医学的实践经验，将中原、印度、大食医学与本地医学融会贯通，终于著成了《四部医典》，确立了藏医学的理论体系。宇陀·云丹贡布被藏族人民尊为“医圣”，称之为“第二药王”。

《四部医典》曾被赤松德赞作为珍贵的“圣经”埋藏于桑耶寺，直到11世纪初才重见天日。老宇陀的十三世孙小宇陀对《四部医典》进行了补充和修订，《四部医典》才算定型，并开始流传。《四部医典》采用药师佛的两个化身即明智仙人和心生仙人互相问答的形式展开，由四大部分组成，分别称为根本医典、论说医典、秘诀医典和后续医典，共计156章，包括