

BENCAO

中國本草全書

The Complete Collection of Traditional Texts on Chinese Materia Medica

中國文化研究會編纂

126

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本卷卷花……普洱茶

山茶科植物普洱茶 *Camellia sinensis* (L.) O. Kuntze var. *assamica* (Mast.) Kitamura [*Thea assamica* Mast.] · 藥用嫩葉。味苦、甘，性寒。清熱生津，辟穢解毒，消食解酒，醒神透疹。

本草綱目

中國本草文獻系統工程的成功實現

將會把中華民族五千年的智慧

與

現代科學的技術手段高度融合

它所擁有的龐大的文獻數量與強大的電子功能

將會為中醫藥的進步和發展帶來革命性的推動

它的成果

將

惠澤所有的中國人

惠澤整個漢文化圈

最終惠及整個人類

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總序

吾國本草典籍，史傳造端於上古。炎帝神農，痛民之疾而遍嘗百草；黃帝軒轅，師學岐伯而本經初成。自此方劑救患於百姓，藥典昭垂於後世。其後五千年，歷朝有志之士，披頭跣足，攀緣於深山險谷；持杖負簞，尋行於曠野荒原。或身試口嘗，剖別藥性；或以命寄筆，辯證前人。歷代賢明帝王，亦委任重臣，畢集碩學；詔諭天下，徵求藥物；親閱文稿，御製書序。由朝野之努力，故凡羽毛鱗介，無遠不臻；惟根莖花實，有名咸萃。更乃博訪前墳，遠稽昔典，詳探秘要；博綜方術，考其名實，辨其異同；種析類剖，綱立目設，終備然成編。及其謄印，又分書以朱墨，寫真以丹青。字則方正圓潤，圖則綺麗維肖。翰墨流觴，書香四溢，至精至善，美侖美奐。以此繼之往之，充之廣之，遂代有新典推出，蔚成吾國本草之大觀。

本草，佑吾族人繁衍生息，以成今日泱泱大國，亦惠施周鄰各國，燦然為人類文化寶庫。其非但為一國之歷史遺產，更是醫藥之未來方向；其非但不與現代科技衝突，相反乃是現代科技無法替代之經驗數據；其非但是抽象文化符號，更是吾國實有之國家資源；其非但是中華民族五千年賴以生存繁衍之保障，而且是當今近二十億華人及亞裔民衆不可須臾離之生活要素。本草之功至偉，可徵之於往史，亦必可驗之於將來。然歷經戰亂禍患，焚毀佚散，本草典籍，史之所見千餘種，而今之所存未及其半，且多為孤本、殘本、抄本，散存於全球一百多個圖書館。加之年代浸遠，紙質酥脆，蟲蠹風蝕，不堪任用。故醫家所得用者不過十數，文獻家所得閱者不過數十。誠可謂查閱翻檢之用日難，失散毀壞之憂日劇！其可嘆者久矣。

自本世紀初，西方圖書學輸入中國，既有衆多醫家學者倡言系統整理中國本草文獻，為此奔走呼號，募資集款。然軍閥混戰，民生凋敝，外患頻仍，國將不國，何可言學術！何可言文化！本草之夢遂成泡影。世紀中期國事稍靖，醫家名流及學界賢達再言重修本草，期以科學方法系統收集整理。為此撰文馳書，懇呈政府，肺腑之言，上動天庭。然風起萍末，運動迭興，金鐘毀棄，瓦釜雷鳴，哲人自身不保，典籍與之俱焚！本草之夢再成泡影。

改革開放重啓國運，修典之議與之復起。本草課題列入國家科研計劃，然經費難以落實，課題組織渙散，垂垂又十五年去矣！一九九四年中國文化研究會應衆多學者專家之請，重新研究整理本草文獻，遂設立中國本草工程工作委員會、學術委員會、顧問委員會，專司其事，製訂本草系統工程計劃，分步完成《中國本草全書》出版及中國本草文獻數據庫建設。春秋四度，吾輩同仁殫精竭慮於文獻普查、目錄研究、體例編制、技術研發、文獻訪求，從未稍懈。所取之全程電腦作業，更是三班運行，夜以繼日。目下終可將《全書》付梓印刷，得圓此世紀之夢！

本草之學，基於人道根本。吾國文明向崇仁道，謂生生者乃天地之大德，疾癘者乃人生之大患。故古來爲學，先天下之憂而憂，留心民瘼民疾，關情民患民痛。故先世神農百草之嘗，一日七十毒而終不悔。而後世聖賢修訂本草，常以一字之訛誤而夜不寐。心憫之而行慎之，如臨深淵，如履薄冰。書乃司命之書，學乃救死之學，可不慎乎？由此知本草之學，乃本於人道，體關民生。

本草之學，究於天人之際。吾國哲學崇尚自然，人法天地，生成長育，與天契合，故儒家哲學持天人合一之論。天人一物，非止依存，實爲同類，故張子《西銘》有民胞物與之說。虎嘯於林，無醫而傷可天救；鷹搏於空，無藥而患可天痊。聖賢於是體而悟之，嘗草辨穀，審花閱水，藥與天合，方由天成。西方醫藥界對化學藥物公害之體認，亦思返自然，於是方有近年替代醫學 Alternative Medicine 之興焉。取用自然而維護自然，乃吾國本草學之特質，故宋徽宗《聖濟總錄·序》稱：「功利及草木，惠澤被牛馬」，斯言誠是。現代質疑工業社會對自然之侵戕，反省近世哲學與科學之構建，其後來者乎？由是知本草之學，乃本於自然，知覺在先。環境、健康與人權，乃公元二十一世紀人類之主題。吾國本草之學，其與關乎？當此《中國本草全書》付梓之際，遙情幽思，揮之不去，滿腸熱語，竟索之不得。嗚呼！江流萬古，誰當憶百草之嘗；香存一瓣，吾欲祭千花之魂。

戊寅三月

魯軍



PREFACE

The Complete Collection of Traditional Texts on Chinese Materia Medica runs over 240,000 pages in some 400 volumes. This encyclopedic body of data, called "*ben cao*" for short, is a systematic presentation of all the major literature on traditional Chinese medicine from the earliest Chinese dynasties to the end of the 19th century.

The study of Chinese medicinal herbs is more than a monumental botanical, zoological and mineral survey; it is a scholarly undertaking within the broad framework of Chinese views on man and nature. The materia medica collection reflects man's self-awareness, man's awareness of nature, the relationship between man and nature, the Chinese worldview and way of life. Imagine what can be learned, the strides of understanding that can be made, if this vast collection of traditional knowledge is scrutinized under the objective eye of modern science!

Materia medica, as a unified body of thought, has been fragmented and scattered by the wind and waves of China's turbulent history. Owing to numerous disruptions in China's cultural and linguistic scholarship in the last century, presently only a handful of Chinese scholars are versed in the full scope of Chinese texts on the topic. Outside of China, due in part to a culture and language gap, only a handful of historians of science are even aware of the existence of this vast collection of knowledge, let alone its import.

The term materia medica, based on the ideographs *ben cao*, is used three ways in ancient Chinese:

(a) In the broadest sense of the word, materia medica refers to all traditional Chinese medicine.

(b) Materia medica also refers to the study of individual medicinal herbs as well as compounds comprised of two or more compatible medicinal herbs which ties into the tradition of "medical formulary," or prescription-making.

(c) Shen Nong's Herbal Classic, *Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing* is the oldest book on pharmacology in China. This influential text was in circulation for a thousand years, from the Han Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty.

It should be pointed out that there is no such thing as a complete collection of all literature on traditional Chinese medicine. Existing documents probably only account for twenty to thirty percent of the historical texts. Needless to say, many valuable documents have been lost or destroyed through the ages. Even when such inevitable losses are taken into account, however, there still remains a body of medicinal data so vast that 400 volumes represents only the most important texts in the field.

According to legend, Chinese materia medica was first compiled by the Emperor Shen Nong over 5,000 years ago. Emperor Shen was said to have been so moved by the suffering of his subjects to the ravages of disease that he went off to mountain forests in search of cures. Through observation of animals and their diet, he noted that certain plants had medicinal qualities. The emperor personally sampled various kinds of plants, sometimes ingesting poisonous herbs in the process. Despite the risks he did not give up, and eventually discovered useful medicines to relieve the suffering of his people. The Emperor is honored and respected even today as the father of natural medicine. There are still many temples in honor of the "King of Medicine" in China, Japan and other Asian countries.

Shen Nong's Herbal Medicine Classic (Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing) is not only the earliest known text on medicine, but also describes the properties of 365 kinds of individual herbs.

The Book of Fifty-two Prescriptions, discovered in the Han Tomb at Mawangdui (dated 168 B.C.) includes 394 kinds

of recognizable individual herbs and 283 kinds of medicinal compounds. During the Han Dynasty, herbs were classified according to formal name, alternate name, place of origin, method of collection, flavor, toxicity, medicinal effect, major function, diagnosis and treatment, processing and production, method of preparation, quality standard, method of usage, comprehensive use, etc.

By the 7th Century, a book entitled *Newly Revised Materia Medica* was published on the basis of a national survey on the origins of herbs organized by the government. The series runs 54 volumes with detailed information on 850 kinds of individual herbs. By that time, medical formulary on the study and record of compound medicines ran as large as 2,600 volumes, such as *A Collection of Prescriptions From All Nations* (Si Hai Lei Ju Fang).

The volume of literature on medicinal herbs increased dramatically in subsequent centuries until the 19th century when the content of *ben cao* compilations was influenced by the incoming wave of Western science and culture. By that time, Chinese traditional medicine had developed into an all-encompassing system of academic inquiry, cultural achievement and a way of life. Herbal medicine was guided not just by the accumulated knowledge in a huge quantity of texts but by extensive research and disciplined methods of application. The total textual data on the topic is estimated to run around 600 million words. This includes information on over 5,000 individual herbs and over 100,000 compounds.

The materia medica collection is organized as follows:

1. classification of medicines;
2. kinds of medicinal herbs;
3. the function and effect of medicinal herbs, including flavor, channel tropism, toxicity, major function, side effects and incompatibility;
4. method of collection, including recovery, preliminary processing, dehydration, packing and preserving;
5. research on medical production, including the form and dosage of medicinal herbs, compatibility, compounding, composition and purification;
6. research on the origin of medicinal herbs, including the location of production sites, method of output, nurture and breeding of plants and environmental protection;
7. prescriptions, preparation, usage, known incompatibilities and contraindications;
8. dietetic medicine, health foods;
9. clinical research.

Over several thousand years, the Chinese people have also established a comprehensive system of propagating and applying materia medica. As early as the 2nd century B.C., the central government had set up an official position specifically to govern medicine, and by the 7th century, a bureau of medicine was established by the central government. Many individual emperors attached much importance to the study of Chinese materia medica, and some of them conducted personal surveys on medicinal herbs to compile and revise texts on herbal medicine.

In ancient China, every township had drug stores where herbal remedies were produced and put on sale. To be a doctor in ancient China was to be an expert on herbs and their applications. Even scholars brushed up on materia medica so that they could have a back-up career if officialdom did not suit them. The goal of education was to become a good doctor if not a high-ranking official. Every conscientious mother was expected to know something about health-keeping herbs, to

be able to identify commonly used herbs, to use different herbs according to season, to adjust the daily diet to prevent disease, and to use herbs to treat common ailments and minor injuries.

Even today, materia medica is an important symbol of Chinese culture. Over the centuries, herbal medicine has helped to secure the survival and reproduction of both individuals and society. Disasters both man-made and natural have tested the resiliency of Chinese civilization and society to the limits. There have been some 25 different dynasties during the last three millennia which means, on average, the rise and fall of a dynasty every 120 years. The transition between dynasties has frequently been marked by heavy casualties from rebellion and war. During its long history, China has also suffered thousands of serious natural disasters such as floods, drought and earthquakes. With an average of one major natural disaster occurring every three years, a sophisticated understanding of medicinal treatment for disease and injury is essential. It's enough to make one pause and wonder if Chinese civilization could have survived to the present day without materia medica, or would it have withered away and disappeared as did the Maya, the Incas and others?

Materia medica has been a friend in time of need for countless generations of Chinese. When a young woman becomes pregnant, herbal medicine is included in her daily diet to enhance the health of both the mother and the baby. When a baby is born, the mother traditionally prepares a small pillow filled with herbs — the so-called “ear pillow”. An ear pillow looks like a cuddly plaything in the shape of a little frog or a miniature tiger, but it is actually filled with several types of herbs effective in preventing illness common to infants. The baby is put to sleep on its side with its ear facing a small hole in the pillow. The herb-filled pillows are sometimes also called a “holding pillow” because its familiar scent is reassuring to an infant, especially when its mother is away.

Herbs are part of life and death in China. At a traditional funeral the body of the dead is washed with an herbal solution and embalmed with herbs, and herbs are also placed in the coffin of the deceased.

The Chinese character for medicine, “*yao*”, is comprised of two parts; one is “*cao*” (which is a pictographic character referring to plant life), and the other is “*le*” meaning happiness. Thus one way to understand the pictograph for medicine is “happiness from and with plant life.” Unlike other Chinese characters that can be read in a number of different ways, there is nothing in the roots of the written term for herbal medicine that makes reference to the strange, unlucky or frightening.

According to Confucianism, all of nature is One. The essential element is “*qi*” (vital energy). Both the heaven and the earth are said to be subject to the same unified natural law known as “*li*” (the law of existence). According to this traditional worldview, diversity in the world is held together by an underlying unity.

Thus nature is a harmonized and integrated whole, with mankind a part of nature. As a part of the whole, man reflects the integrated whole and is at the same time subject to it. Thus the structure and framework for human society is related to nature, yin-yang and the five elements. This philosophy acknowledges that mankind is at a high position in terms of natural evolution, but mankind cannot override nature, nor is man more important than nature. Instead, mankind needs and must be integrated with nature.

One way of describing the highest state of spiritual enlightenment is “forgetting both nature and oneself” (i.e. not being conscious of what nature is, what oneself is, eschewing any concept that differentiates the two). Similarly, the highest level of morality means accepting that “all people are my kin and all things are my kind.” This philosophy urges one to experience nature, approach nature, enjoy nature and protect nature.

Accordingly, heaven and earth are my home, the beasts are my friends, and the fish of the sea give me pleasure. A passionate poet may feel sadness as the moon waxes and wanes following the lunar cycle. Since ancient times, poets have prepared food and drink and invited the moon to join them as a way to relieve sadness. Traditionally a girl will not just cry over flowers as they wither away with the spring, but she will bury them so they are not blown away.

It is even said by the ancients that plant life has a mind, while metals and stones have emotions. Intellectuals in ancient China showed the deepest respect for bamboo, orchids, chrysanthemums and plums, calling them the four gentlemen. Stone-gazing too was an ancient art. Practitioners often put stones of all sizes in their courtyard or on their desks for enjoyment, and those especially fond of stones went to the mountains to look for their favorite kinds, considering the encounter with a good stone almost like visiting a good friend. These are just a few examples that illustrate the depth of the relationship between Chinese people and nature. The plants and herbs used in traditional medicine are highly respected and treasured.

The vast body of literature on *ben cao* includes a number of literary works, including poetry, which were created for the purpose of popularizing herbal medicine. Some poems were mnemonic devices used to commit to memory the content and application of herbal medicine. One can also find examples in literature, including novels and drama, where writers personified herbs, making materia medica and man change places and combine as one, thus singing praise for the herbs and plants which contribute to human health.

Traditional Chinese medicine takes a philosophical outlook on illness: disease results from a loss of harmony or balance between man and nature, between man and man, or a disharmony of organs and their functions within the human body. In the final analysis, traditional Chinese medicine charts the relationships between man and nature, between parts and the whole. Traditional medicine begins from the 'whole' in its endeavor to find out and resolve the problem of the 'part'. The study of traditional medicine sets out from the point of nature in its bid to solve human problems and to achieve balance and harmony between man and nature through utilizing plants, animals, minerals — all parts of nature.

A typical example of this is the treatment of beriberi in China during the 5th century. Instead of treating the head when the head aches and treating the foot when the foot hurts, there is a holistic, counter-intuitive approach which aims to solve the issue of imbalance by acquiring nutritional substances from nature. The English scholar, Dr. Joseph Needham, who has written extensively on the history of science in China, has expounded on this and demonstrated this in textual research.

Both the concepts of wholism and naturalism of traditional medicine have their origin in the unified conception of nature. Traditional thinking does not view nature as frightening or as man's enemy. Man is not intended to conquer or lord over nature. The purpose of studying nature is to better understand it, conform with it and be in harmony with it. Knowledge is not a tool of power to wield over nature, nor a means of accumulating wealth.

Given the traditional attitude to suppress material desires, Chinese intellectuals have long been prejudiced against commercial activity. The benefit of such a view is that it has helped man steer a wise course in his relationship with nature. On the other hand, the anti-materialist view was a major factor in the failing of an otherwise highly civilized society to generate and develop modern science and technology.

Needham argues in *Science and Civilization in China* that the most probable cause for the downturn was the appearance of a bureaucratic class, or a class of feudal officials, who received education merely in literature and had no

wish to improve technology. "All they cared about was to suppress merchants. Yet the merchants are the ones who pushed forward technological improvements while tapping new markets."

The historian of science, J.D. Bernal, also studied the enigmatic decline in Chinese technology and posed the question: "Why did technological progress in early China begin with great promise but halt suddenly prior to the 15th century?" He cites the example of the great marine general Zheng He, who led a fleet of a thousand soldiers to the Mediterranean and Africa. While early Ming navigational technology was ahead of Europe by approximately two hundred years, by the end of the Ming the great sea journeys had been permanently halted. One reason for the Ming Dynasty's dramatic turn inward is said to be the lack of motive — China's economy did not require foreign trade and the only memorable import of Zheng He's Africa mission was a giraffe brought home for entertainment purposes. More seriously, Ming officialdom did not want to support such costly journeys and the Emperor was preoccupied with problems at home.

Bernal and Needham were both pioneers in the study of science and technological history. They have illuminated the mechanisms underlying the development of science and technology such as market demand, the driving force of economic benefits, and the environment of security provided by such a system.

The astounding advances made by traditional Chinese medicine in the past contrasts with its apparent failure to advance significantly in contemporary times. The path-breaking work of Bernal and Needham points to some underlying structural problems, but it doesn't answer all the questions. However, shifts in market demand, economic benefit, and social systems are among the root causes of the downturn.

There exists fundamental difference between ancient Chinese philosophy and the modern philosophy of China and the West which helps explain why, despite the significant achievements and literary brilliance of materia medica, herbal medicine has not reached its potential in the modern age.

On the positive side, there are some two billion people in China and other parts of Asia who use traditional Chinese medicine. Millions of families keep books on traditional Chinese medicine and there are millions of doctors who still mix herbal prescriptions. Experiments have proved the efficacy of many herbal prescriptions and thousands of pharmaceutical companies have utilized herbal compounds to develop new products. Hundreds of medical academies offer classes on materia medica; and commercial advertisements flaunt the usage of Chinese herbal medicines. Proctor and Gamble has put out a toothpaste product with a painted leaf attached in its commercial ads claiming the product "contains traditional Chinese herbal elements."

The commercial application of herbal ingredients is sometimes superficial and does not come close to revealing the rich potential of materia medica and traditional Chinese medicine. Many pharmaceutical research institutes worldwide are currently studying how to utilize natural drugs made from herbal compounds.

Traditionally such materials were collected by referencing documents, talking to the townsfolk and observing nature. Such informal information gathering has been going on continuously in China for over 3000 years, and much of the accumulated knowledge has been faithfully recorded in materia medica documents. Over the centuries, scholars have pored over this vast amount of information and categorized, studied and organized it.

Today sample herbs and compounds are taken to laboratories for analysis, experimentation, trial production, and safety tests using animals. The ancient Chinese labs, regrettably perhaps, had no modern biological, chemical and physical testing methods. They lacked advanced technology and state-of-the-art equipment, and there were no post-doctorates wearing lab coats and glasses.

The simple fact is traditional materia medica is a gold-mine of information that no amount of fancy testing can substitute for. Traditional Chinese medicine and herbal cures represent the accumulation of voluminous information over a time span of several thousand years tested in the “field” by billions of persons, thus forming an incomparably huge database. This is precisely what modern science, despite obvious technical advantages, is sorely lacking.

The trend towards globalization has helped the situation take a turn for the better in recent years. People of all nationalities are beginning to realize that there is only one planet Earth, and that past efforts to conquer nature ultimately proved to be a punishment to man himself. There is increasing desire to learn how to co-exist with nature, yet Western science and philosophy have yet to provide fundamental solutions to the problems of our age.

After years of neglect, China once again has tried to appreciate and reconsider the philosophy of the ancients. The Chinese too are part of the global trend of returning to nature. As a part of this trend, the study of traditional Chinese herbal medicine is generating much excitement. Traditional Chinese medicines are used to develop natural drugs, beverages, wines, health care products, nutritious foodstuffs, beauty products, cosmetics, intensive care products, and anti-aging products. Despite the obvious commercial success of many of these ventures, few people have access to or realize the importance of studying the source documents.

In 1994, my colleagues and I began our plan to study and sort out the vast body of literature on Chinese materia medica. We are honored to continue the mission begun by two outstanding scholars. One of the scholars is Zhao Yuhuang (1883— 1960), the founder of modern Chinese Pharmacology and a sponsor of the Chinese Pharmacology Association founded in 1908. His career was disrupted and his research impeded by many years of political chaos and turmoil. However, he persisted unswervingly in his studies until near the end of his life, he entrusted his student, Zhang Guozhen (1928—), to complete his work in compiling all the major documents on Chinese materia medica. Two other important influences are Ma Jixing (1923—) and Shang Zhijun (1917—), both of whom have become authorities on *ben cao* in modern China. It took incredible perseverance on their part to keep up their study of historical works on materia medica during the turmoil and difficult years of more recent times.

Although there have only been a handful of intellectuals who devoted their lives to the study of materia medica in this century, they have been essential links in an age-old chain connecting the present with China’s ancient past. This vital link to the past might have been severed were it not for their tenacious efforts. Many of the documents they read and annotated 40 — 50 years ago do not exist today. Documents that were logged as recently as 1984 in the joint library catalogue of the Chinese National Library could not be found this year.

Fortunately there is a growing chorus of voices appealing to rescue existing historical documents on Chinese materia medica and to avoid further losses of such invaluable texts. The importance of collecting all major texts on Chinese herbal medicine and related knowledge seems self-evident. Yet at the same time, there are great difficulties in undertaking such a gargantuan task. Historically speaking, only emperors were in a position to take on large-scale compilations such as that required for a compendium of Chinese materia medica.

Although my colleagues and I have successfully completed many large-scale cultural, academic as well as scientific and technological projects in the last 15 years, putting together *The Complete Collection of Traditional Texts on Chinese Materia Medica* has been an awesome undertaking. Following more than one year of planning and study, we successfully established a project to chronicle and navigate this vast ocean of literature.

This project has two main purposes:

(1) To publish *The Complete Collection of Traditional Texts on Chinese Materia Medica* with 300 copies printed initially for the purpose of preserving such documents.

(2) To establish a document database on Chinese materia medica in order to provide information for Internet users around the globe.

We are planning to complete the collection and compilation of *The Complete Collection of Traditional Texts on Chinese Materia Medica* before the year 2000 and to complete its printing and publication by 2001. The establishment of the *Chinese Materia Medica* document database shall be completed in 2003. This database will serve primarily to collect new documents rather than serve as a depository for the published historical documents.

It is estimated it will take 8 to 10 years to translate the primary texts *The Complete Collection of Traditional Texts on Chinese Materia Medica* into English for broader international dissemination and research. The Chinese Cultural Research Committee is the main working body for this project and I have established the *Chinese Materia Medica* Project Working Committee, Academic Committee and Consultant Committee, to steer this project. Five years of steady work have been devoted to a general survey of relevant documents, a study of catalogues, and the collection of documents from more than 130 libraries throughout the world. We have also been engaged in technological research, have determined stylistic rules and layout, and primary editing for the publication has been completed.

On the occasion of the publication of *The Complete Collection of Traditional Texts on Chinese Materia Medica*, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have given kind help and support. However, it would be difficult to mention all their names here as they are simply too numerous, so numerous in fact, that I can only list the names of all our sponsors and supporters in a special volume included in the collection.

Among the above contributors, I would like to make special mention of two persons who have already passed away and who gave sincere support and great assistance in the process of the compilation. Chen Minzhang and Cui Yueli were both members of the Consultant Committee of the *Chinese Materia Medica Project* as well as former Ministers of Public Health.

My thoughts and special thanks also go to two colleagues on the Project Working Committee who gave birth during the long months of putting together the *Materia Medica* project. Their devotion to the project was such that they insisted on working until they were about to give birth, and after the birth of their healthy babies (may the health-giving properties of materia medica be with them!), they energetically resumed their faithful work on the compilation once again.

Life and death is precisely what the study of Chinese material medica is all about. Chinese materia medica has been developed and accumulated within this cycle of death and birth for thousands of years and is the aggregate wisdom of many generations. It is my hope that the lives and wisdom of countless persons embodied in *The Complete Collection of Traditional Texts on Chinese Materia Medica* can be a blessing to mankind now and in the future.

It is important to remind ourselves that behind the numerous great inventions and accomplishments in the course of history there have been numerous unknown attempts and failures. Even though failure also advances collective knowledge in trial and error fashion, the human costs are incalculable.

Today, with technology and human resources, great inventions and intensive capital investment, accomplishments are being realized at an ever-increasing rate. At this incredible moment in history, when mankind is looking forward to a future made brighter by accumulated knowledge and accomplishments, is it not appropriate to look back at the contributions of our forefathers?

It is sincerely hoped this compilation will contribute to a great cultural heritage, bringing together in one collection the most brilliant cultural achievements of an ancient Asian civilization, shedding light on the way of the future for mankind. The underlying theme in many of the texts contained within is nothing less than the history of the relationship between man and nature. Taking a closer look at this age-old tradition that teaches man to co-exist and live in harmony with nature will help us to face with renewed vigor the great environmental problems of our age.

This set of books is also an encyclopedic resource in the history of science and technology, a record of the research and studies accomplished on various disciplines made by the Chinese people over thousands of years touching on anthropology, physiology, medicine and pharmacology, zoology, mineralogy and geography.

And finally, you may take these volumes as a database of resources for research in modern biological science and technology. The enormous amount of empirical data inevitably contains valuable information on under-studied topics and can assist cutting-edge research in fields ranging from genetic engineering to the development of biochemical products. The collection sheds light not just on history, but rather reveals the vital roots of today's living culture. Chinese materia medica is an invaluable resource for the study of both the humanities and the natural world, and it is an essential element of life for the billions of people influenced by China's cultural heritage.

The Complete Collection of Traditional Texts on Chinese Materia Medica is like the source of a great river. Millions and millions of people living downstream are guided by its currents but few, if any, have been to the head of the waters. Why not take a trip to the source and see where it all began? What you find at the mystery-shrouded upper reaches of this vast river of knowledge is up to your own resourcefulness, perseverance and wisdom.

May China's ancient wisdom of *materia medica* continue to cure the world of its woes!

Lu Jun

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