

བདུད་ཚི་ལྷན་གྱི་ངོ་མཚར་གཏམ་རྒྱུད།

མཚན་གྲགས་ལྷན་དཔལ་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་
མཚན་འགྲེལ་རྒྱུད།

Tibetan Herbal Legends

Sgrol dkar skyabs

Associate Chief-physician of Tibetan Medicine

Rin chen dbang rgyal

Pharmacist of Tibetan Medicine



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About the Author



Sgrol Dkar Skyabs, a native of Tibet, whose Chinese name is Zhong Ge-jia, is an associate-professor and practitioner of Tibetan medicine who holds a master's degree in Tibetan Medicine. Under the supervision of many senior Tibetan medical specialists, he studied all of the Tibetan medical classics, including *Rgyud Bzhi* (*The Four Medical Tantras*), *Shel Gong Shel Phreng* (*Crystal Materia Medica*), *Sman Dpyad Zla Ba'i Rgyal Po* (*The Medical Investigations of the Lunar King*), *Man Ngag Rgyud Lhan Thabs* (*Supplements to the Secret Tantras*), as well as various traditional external therapies, such as Tibetan acupuncture with gold and silver needles, moxibustion, therapeutics of the white vessels, medicinal baths, and other techniques. He has been engaged in clinical practice and scientific research for over 20 years, developing his own original viewpoint and accumulating rich experience in the treatment of gastro-intestinal diseases and diabetes. He has published fifteen articles in many national journals, including *Tibetan Studies*, *Gansu Science and Technology*, *China Tibetology* and *Chinese Journal of Medical History*, and regularly participates in national and international conferences to present his articles for academic review.

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Preface

The magnificent Qinghai-Tibet plateau is known as "The Roof of the World", the major part of which lies within China and occupies about a quarter of the country's whole area, with an average elevation of over 4,000 meters above sea level. Because of the unique natural conditions and complex geographical and geo-morphological basis, there is an abundance of natural resources in the Qinghai-Tibet plateau, some of which are the sole or major species of production with physiological and ecological specificity.

Being the home of the Tibetan people, the Qinghai-Tibet plateau is the cradle of Tibetan medicine. For thousands of years, Tibetan medicine has contributed to the growth and development of the Tibetan nationality and other brotherly ethnic groups, to the traditional medical sciences, and to the culture of the Chinese people as a whole.

The development of Tibetan medicine is closely related to the development of Tibetan Buddhism and its culture. Since remote antiquity, Tibetan medical knowledge began to appear and spread among the people in the forms of legends and fairy tales, circulated generation after generation. Such mythological tales are essential to the inheritance, preservation, and development of Tibetan medical sciences when science and culture are not yet popularly formed and circulated.

On the basis of such mythological tales, the author has collected and systematized those related to Tibetan medicine. It is attempt that, through these popular tales, the respects to man and nature paid by the Tibetan people, their embryonic view on nature, and their cultural uniqueness can be reproduced, and the secrets of Tibetan medicine unveiled, so that the readers can penetrate into the mystery of Tibetan medicine and Tibetan culture.

For years, the author has devoted himself to this study through making field investigations into Tibetan grass-root units so as to accumulate first hand materials, and requesting the instructions from Tibetan medical masters in order to check the collated information. The author has read the historical documents at the Library of Nationality Palace, and libraries in Tibet, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Gansu Provinces. The studies and research of pharmacological materials were made through the reading of traditional Tibetan medical classics, including *Rgyud Bzhi* (*The Four Medical Tantras*), *Shel Gong Shel Phreng* (*Crystal Materia Medica*), *Baidurya Sngon Po* (*The Blue Lapislazuli*), *Sman Dpyad Zla Ba'i Rgyal Po* (*The Medical Investigations of Lunar King*), *Zang yao biao zhun* (*Standards of Tibetan Materia Medica*), and *Zhong hua zang ben cao* (*Tibetan Materia Medica of China*). Thus, the whole book is finalized. This book consists of two parts: part I briefly introduces the medicinal principles and diseases in Tibetan medicine; part II offers the legendary tales of 31 kinds of Tibetan medicines.

Cultural differences may cause some hindrance encountered when reading this book. It is hoped that through these short stories, the readers can be brought into contacts with oriental traditional culture and then further interpret some aspects of Tibetan culture, so that the scientific nature of Tibetan medicine from the mythological tales can be clearly interpreted. Certainly, translation of the specific and unique Tibetan terms and nomenclatures might not be satisfactory. Literal translation is adopted for such terms. On the other hand, Tibetan grammar is also applied directly so as to facilitate the search for the relevant materials. Comments and suggestions are, of course, welcome.

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Part One

Introduction to the Marvels of Tibetan Medicine



Medicine Buddha



1. General Introduction

The magnificent Qinghai-Tibet plateau is known as "The Roof of the World". Stretching from the Kunlun Mountains in the north to the Himalayas in the south, and extending from the Karakoram Range in the west to the Hengduan Mountains in the east, its terrain is high and encompasses a vast amount of territory. The major part of the plateau lies in China and occupies about one-fourth of the country's area. It has an average elevation of more than 4,000 meters above sea level. Because of the unique natural conditions and complicated geography and geology, there are an abundance of natural resources in the Qinghai-Tibet plateau, including many that have medicinal value. Among them, there are many species specific to the plateau.

The home of the Tibetan people, the Qinghai-Tibet plateau is the cradle of Tibetan medicine. For thousands of years, Tibetan medicine has benefited Tibetan society, the people of other nationalities, and aided the development of native culture.

The Succession of Tibetan Medicine



Tibetan medicine has a long history with a written record of over one thousand years, and is an important part of the world's natural medical treasure house. Along with the formation on its own medical theories and treatments, there has also been an absorption of the theories and methods from the medical systems of China, Tianzhu (ancient India) and Tazig. Tibetan medicine should be seen as a splendid bright pearl among the ethnic medicines of Asia.

The formation and development of Tibetan medicine began long ago. According to records in the *Blon Po Bka' Thang (Edicts of Ministers)*, ancestors of present day Tibetans in the early centuries B.C. understood the principle, "Where there is poison, there is medicine." At this time, people used butter to heal burns and scalds; applied highland barley wine to soothe aching joints and improve circulation; and burnt the twigs and leaves of cypress, mugwort, and wormwood to prevent and treat infectious diseases.

In 641 A.D., Princess Wen Cheng carried medical books from China to Tibet as part of her dowry, thus promoting the development of Tibetan medicine. These books were translated into the Tibetan language, and were incorporated into the Tibetan medical classics *Sman Dphad Chen Me (The Great Medical Classic)* and *Mi 'jigs Pa Mtshon Cha (Fearless Weapon)*.