

## Editor's foreword

Pasang Yonten Arya's interest in Sowa Rigpa's illustrious history was initially piqued in 1973, when he started memorizing the *Root Tantra* of the *Gyüzhi* as a student at Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala. Eager to find out more about the eight Indian sages listed in the very first chapter (which he later compared with the Ayurvedic text *Carakasamhitā*), he set out on a long journey of discovering the entangled roots and complex development of the Tibetan medical tradition. In this way, he took to heart early on that the Asian medical systems are one big family of brothers and sisters, which are ultimately equal.

Yet, books were scant. Pasang Yonten only saw a block print of Dési Sangyé Gyatso's *Mirror of Beryl* (originally published in 1703) after several years, but this indispensable classical historical account was soon taken up as a foremost reference. As a lecturer and later college principal, he became an avid reader at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. He enjoyed researching sources from different Bön and Buddhist schools, taking care not to discriminate against certain lineages or geographical areas. Continuing along these lines, Tashi Tsering (now at Amnye Machen Institute) brought a journal article titled *The Introduction of Greek Medicine into Tibet in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries* (Beckwith 1979) to the author's attention. Finding out about this ancient connection between east and west further broadened Dr. Pasang's perspective, leading him to study Greco-Roman medicine and the role of the celebrated physician Galen (129-216 CE) who was apparently mentioned by name in Tibetan medical texts. By consulting his longtime favorite English-language book *The Body* (Time Life-Science Library, Nourse 1964) as well as *A Short History of Anatomy from the Greeks to Harvey* (Singer 1957), he realized how dynamic medical traditions are and that one should not be overly attached to specific conceptions of body and mind. Theories are not set in stone. This made it easier to understand, for instance, why four humors are discussed in older Buddhist literature such as

the *Vinayasūtra* as opposed to the threefold classification adopted in the *Four Tantras*.

The brilliant young researcher's focus was not restricted to ancient history or classical texts, however. Keenly aware of the importance of innovation and its necessity in the context of Men-Tsee-Khang's transition to a modern educational organization, he was the first to document the founding years of the Tibetan Astro-Medical Institute. Moreover, as secretary of the scholarly committee of medicine and astrology, Pasang Yonten was in effect in charge of drafting a modified syllabus for the students, setting up a formal examination and diploma certification system, and laying out the structure of the actual certificates. This momentous task was completed when His Holiness the Dalai Lama granted approval in 1984. On March 23, 1987, senior practitioners (including Dr. Tenzin Choedrak and Dr. Lobsang Dolma Khangkar, amongst others) as well as recent graduates all received their respective titles and degrees in an unprecedented ceremony.

Now officially a Menrampa, Dr. Pasang finalized the hand-written manuscript of *Treasury of Tibetan Medical History*, his first and still most beloved publication. The main text was calligraphed by Lhakchung Tsering (then at the library's *thangka* painting school), and Tashi Tsering assisted with the book design and with contacting a printing press in Delhi. The office of His Holiness provided a brief congratulatory statement in 1988. The entire work then appeared in print early the following year with financial support from PADMA, a Swiss pharmaceutical company manufacturing Tibetan herbal formulas. The *Treasury* subsequently won the Best Book in Ladakhi award in the 1989-1990 book competition of the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages. Gen. Pasang Yonten was honored to receive a medal together with a grant of five thousand Indian rupees, a considerable sum of money at the time. A colleague at the Central Institute for Buddhist Studies in Choglamsar, where Genla had recently taken up a position as a lecturer, had suggested the book to the selection committee.

As laid out in the detailed table of contents, which was also translated to English (courtesy of Tenzin Dorje), the main text consists of fourteen parts and sixty-eight chapters that generally proceed in chronological order: from prehistorical knowledge on healing in Tibet and the introduction of Indian medical science, over its flourishing in imperial times (seventh to ninth century CE) and successive disintegration, to the renewal initiated in the eleventh century with the second diffusion of Buddhism and the (re)emergence of the *Four Tantras*, eventually culminating in the propagation of Sowa Rigpa under the Great Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) and his regent Sangyé Gyatso. This sequence reflects that of *Mirror of Beryl*, but Pasang Yonten expanded both the depth of Tibetan medical history as well as its temporal scope. The former by exploring links with the western galenic tradition, for example, the latter by newly covering the foundation of Lhasa Mentsikhang, eighteenth-century medical works, the suppression after the Chinese invasion (1959), and the gradual development of Men-Tsee-Khang in Indian exile.

The importance of lineage is emphasized throughout the book with biographical sketches of eminent physicians, analysis of the major medical schools, and six convenient lineage tree diagrams. Special attention has furthermore been given to the neglected historical contributions of the Bönpo and the revealed treasures of the *terma* tradition. The volume ends by recording the new curriculum and with a comprehensive biographical register of all known Tibetan medical practitioners in exile up to 1988, setting an early precedent for the establishment of the Central Council of Tibetan Medicine in 2004.

The original publication contained eight illustrations. These have all been replaced in this reprint by identical or closely related images of higher resolution, except for the elegant hand-drawn map of the Tibetan empire and its neighboring regions that was kindly provided by Lobsang Tsultrim Jeshong.

This pioneering monograph connects the science of healing that continues to thrive in the Land of Snow and beyond to its aged yet cosmopolitan roots, while also firmly introducing it into twentieth-century modernity. Written in testing times, yet complete with extensive footnotes and a bibliography, it is both a piece of research of lasting significance and a precious yet largely untapped historical resource in itself. Taking this into consideration, I cannot but conclude that this volume is worthy to be called a treasury as well as a memorial of Sowa Rigpa.

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