

Ayurveda in Mongolia from Antiquity to 1937

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Abstract

We have studied the history of the introduction of Ayurveda medicine in Mongolia. During the periods of the Hunnu (400 BC-200 AD), Ikh Nirun (400-600 AD), and Uigur Dynasty (800-1,000 AD), Ayurveda (Indian Medicine) was introduced to Mongolia along with Buddhism from the Middle Asian countries Kushan, Khotan, Sogd and Uigar. Ayurveda was fully introduced to Mongolia under the deep influence of Tibetan Buddhism from the 13th century. Mongolia's first Medical School, following the Tibetan tradition, was established in 1662. In Mongolia more than 40 Medical Schools were established from 1662-1937. 26 Ayurvedic treatises were translated into the Mongolian language and published in 1742-1749. Since the 14th century Mongols have been translating Tibetan Medical books into the Mongolian language, of which we have today found more than ten. Over the centuries, Mongolian scholars have written many commentaries to these medical texts.

Key Words: Ayurveda in Mongolia, Tibetan Medicine in Mongolia, History of Mongolian Medicine

Introduction

Traditional Mongolian medicine has its own systematic theories, diagnoses, treatment methods and has developed for many centuries among the different Mongolian ethnic peoples. The theoretical background of Mongolian traditional medicine is based and developed on Ayurvedic medicine. The influence of Ayurveda in Mongolia has developed with the influence of Buddhism. There have been no scientific studies about the history of the introduction and development of Ayurveda in Mongolia. The Russian Pozdneev A.M and a Buryatian scholar started to study Mongolia's traditional medicine and to translate original medical texts into western languages in 1908^{1,425}. Since then, W Heissing (1954) from

Germany^{2,3-5}, Filliozet (1964) from France^{3,17}, academic Haidav Ts (1975) from Mongolia^{4,74-120} and Bhagvan Dash (1985) from India^{5,2-3}, Batorov S.M and Yakovlev G.P (1985) from Russia^{6,5-6}, Jigmed B from China^{7,1-234}, and finally Bold Sh (2005)⁸ from Mongolia have referred to the history of Mongolian traditional medicine in their works.

The Background of the Study

The above mentioned scholars did not study the history of the introduction of Indio-Tibetan Medicine in Mongolia. There have not been any other major studies and any scientific articles on this subject. Therefore, it was our intention to study and publish a historical review of the development of Indo-Tibetan medicine in Mongolia, which is a part of Mongolian traditional medicine.

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Materials and Methods

We have compared and analyzed historical records in old Chinese, Tibetan and Mongolian scriptures with modern scientific data related to Indian, Tibetan and Mongolian medicine and history.

Goal of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to give a brief history and overview of the spread of Ayurveda from India via Tibet to Mongolia.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the ancient traces of the introduction of Ayurveda in Mongolia, 2. To study the ancient medical schools of Mongolia, 3. To make a complete record of known Ayurvedic works in Mongolian language, 4. To make a complete record of known Tibetan Medical treatises in Mongolian language, 5. To study the Mongolian commentaries of Tibetan Medical Treatises.

Results and Discussion

1. Ancient traces of the introduction of Ayurveda in Mongolia:

1) The Hunnu Dynasty:

At present, scholars view Mongolian history in connection with the Mongolian ancestors, the Hunnus, who were influential in Asia during their period of history^{9,15-20; 10,13, 91-94. 11. 40-41}. "History note" written by the Chinese state historian Sima Tsyang (145-86 BC) and "Script of the Western Khan state" written by Bangu (32-92 AD) both mention doctors of the Hunnu Empire^{12,22; 13,72, 76}. In the part "Suwen" (*Simple Questions*) of the chapter "Yifa Fangui Lun" (*Methods and prescription to cure all diseases*), of an ancient Chinese medicine book titled

"Huandi Neijin" (3rd - 2nd century BC), the author wrote about how the moxibustion method spread from the Hunnus to China with the following words: "The people of the Northern country are remote in the far. Those people drink milk. That land is high, windy, cold, a cold type disease generated from raw food and cold wind is very common, so they use moxibustion to cure it. Therefore, moxibustion came from the North"^{7,29}.

Although there may not be direct historical proof, there is a trace in recorded history that suggests that Ayurvedic medicine was brought into the Hunnu state along with Buddhism. The Mongols used camphor powder make up;^{13,14} this plant is a tropical plant and it was used in Ayurvedic medicine. In the "Shi Tsi" ("History note") by Sima Tsyang (145-86 BC), a father of ancient Chinese history, and "Tsyang Hani shu" ("Script of the Western khan state") by Ban Gu (AT 32-92) the following is mentioned: "In 121 BC the Chinese commander Ho Tsei Bin confiscated a golden picture (*Tsin jen* - golden person, portrait) used in the worship of the Divinity when invading the Syute noblemen of the Hunnu, who resided nearby at Huh nuur and Gansu^{13,80}. An interpreter of the ancient Chinese writer Chan Yan (3rd century AD), Yan Shi Gu (581-654), a dissident of Buddhism Tsui Hao (361-450)^{14,109-110} and Japanese scholar Nakai Sekitoku^{13,81} have all noted that the *Tsin jen* picture belongs to Buddhist practice.

Because one part of the Hunnus shifted to the Northern part of India, and had a close relation with the Greek Baktri and Baktri Dasya of the Kushan Empire^{15,62}, the door was opened for Buddhism to be introduced to the Hunnu people.

Hunnu physicians composed and used special recipes for the production of medicine. In Chinese many Medical treatises such as Ge Hun's "Jou hun fan" (3rd century AD), Sun Si Myao's "Bei Ji Chan Jin Yao Fan" (6-7th century AD), "Bei Ji Chan Jin I Fan" (6-7th century AD), "Chan Jin Fan" (6-7th century AD) and "Tu Jin Ben Tsao" (?) recorded many variants of "Hunnu's Nomadic pills". One variant of the Hunnu pill contains medicinal plants such as bonagiin soyo (*aconitum kuznetsova*), gaa (*alpinia officinarum*), gabiriin halis (*cinnamomum cassia*),

sorool (*stellaria dichotoma*), sandui buurtsag (*Cassia fistula* L.), and chuluun khor (mineral-AsS) and was used for the treatment of the cold diseases of the stomach and infections of the intestine^{16,10}. The composition and principles of pharmacy and the preparation of the ingredients of “Hunnu’s Nomadic pills” is very similar to Ayurvedic recipes. This shows that in spite of the absence of incontrovertible evidence, there are many traces of the introduction of Ayurveda with Buddhism.

2) The Ikh Nirun Dynasty:

There is evidence from the Ikh Nirun dynasty period (4-6th century AD) that medicine very similar to the Hunnu’s was used. They did change some raw materials used and also translated medicinal books from foreign languages.

The powerful streams of Buddhism can be observed to have penetrated Ikh Nirun (Mongolia) from two sides - Central Asia and China. It does not exclude the possibility of the direct contacts of Ikh Nirun with the Northern parts of India, especially Kashmere where Ayurveda flourished with Buddhism.

From Chinese sources we know that in the reign of Ikh Nirun (Mongolian) King Jarun (402-410 AD) the Indian monk Dharmapriya came to Ikh Nirun. He was much honored at the Ikh Nirun court. He was given a jade seal to administer Buddhist affairs. He was assigned to be the head of many thousand households and many Mongols were converted to Buddhism^{17,117}.

According to “The biography of the senior gYu-thog Yon-tan mGon-po (708-833 AD)”, by the famous Tibetan doctor Dar-mo Blo-bzang Chos-grags’s (1638-?), in (728 AD) 8th century AD there was organized in Tibet an international conference of doctors from 9 countries including India, China, Persia, and Mongolia. The Mongolian doctor Nalashandir participated and brought his work “The ocean of the nutritions (amritas) of geriatric care (rejuvenation)”. In gYu-thog’s biography it is mentioned that in

Mongolia blood-letting was famous. The ancient doctors Bigudai and Bayahai were handed the knowledge of Mongolian medicine and taught it to their disciples^{18,100-101, 108}. This shows that medicine was highly developed in Mongolia and that Mongolian doctors had already brought into existence their own special school of medicine before the VIII century AD.

3) The Uigur Dynasty:

On the basis of historical facts and archeological findings, we assume that Ayurvedic medicine developed among the different ethnic groups in the Mongolian region during the 8-9th centuries. One of these historical facts is the discovery of the “Golden Light” sutra (“Suvarnaprabhāsasūtra”- Indian Buddhist text) translated into the Uigur language from the ruins of a city existing in the 8-9th century AD in the central part of Mongolia (Arhangai aimag)^{19,15-18}.

250 years before this work was discovered, the Mongolian scholar Bragri Damtsigdorj (1781-1855) in his work titled “Precious Lamp of removing the darkness of mind; the conditions of outer and inner worlds: a brief writing on the origin of a religion” and Sumbe Khambo Ishbaljor (1704-1788) wrote in his “Land of Reincarnations, the origination of holy Dharma, a good precious tree in great China, Tibet and Mongolia” that “Before the Great emperor Chinggis Khan (1162-1227), the Mongols recited Buddhist prayers in the Uigur language”^{20,13}.

From this information and the above mentioned archeological finding of “Golden Light” in the Uigur language, we can state that prior to Chinggis Khan’s reign (i.e. 1162 AD), Ayurveda flourished along with Buddhism in Mongolia. In its 24th chapter, titled “Chapter on pacifying disease”, there is information relating to Ayurvedic Medicine. From this we can infer that, to a certain degree, during the 8-9th centuries, Ayurvedic Medicine was known to Mongolians.

2. Ancient Medical Schools in Mongolia:

In 1244 AD, the Grandson of Chinggis Khan, Godan, invited a Tibetan Sakya head lama Sakya Pandita Gungagyaltzen (1172-1251) to the Khukh nuur region (at present part of Chinese territory) where they became student and teacher. The lama was known as the “Dharma teacher”^{21,133}. This was the point when Mongolians started to study in Tibet and invite Tibetan teachers to Mongolia in order to study Buddhism. Furthermore, Khans such as Khubilai (1215-1294), Ulzit Tumor (1295-1307), Haisan Huleg (1308-1311), and Buyant (1312-1320) continued to do the same which resulted in a great number of lamas, translators and doctors from Tibet^{22,119-125}.

Khubilai (1215-1294) invited Indian doctors to Mongolia and he built the first Medical Academy in China^[23,30-31]. Of course many Mongolian doctors may well have studied at and graduated from this Academy.

The Mongolian doctor Altai wrote in his book titled “The core root (First Tantra) to the Four Medical Tantras” that “I have written and left this book for the Library of the Medical School of the Altan Serdog Gunbum Monastery”^{24,605}. This is one piece of evidence of the uninterrupted development of Indo-Tibetan medicine in Mongolia. The dedication shows that a Medical School existed in western Mongolia, even though we have no other clear record of such a place. Altai wrote his book in the Mongolian Language with a Tibetan translation. This suggests that he dedicated this book to his Mongolian students, although it is difficult to prove that the Medical School was only Mongolian and not Tibetan.

In 1662, a Mongolian scholar, doctor and astrologist, Lubsandanjanltsan (1639-1705), established the first “Medical school” (Tibetan Menpa Datsan; smang pa gra tsang) named the “Monastery to support others”, following the Tibetan tradition, in the present-day Bayanhongor aimag region^{25,96}, and respectively, the Mongolian scholar Zaya Pandita

Lubsan Prinley (1642-1715) established the “Zaya lower settlement doctor’s school” in 1701^{26,16}. Since then Tibetan Ayurveda spread quickly among the various ethnic groups of Mongolia. In Mongolia more than 40 major Medical Schools were established in 18-20th century^{27,293-294}.

3. Ayurvedic works in Mongolian language:

The Mongolian scholar Sharavsenge translated the “Golden Light” sutra (“Suvarnaprabhasottamasutra”- Indian Buddhist text) into the Mongolian language for the first time in the 1330s^{28,39}.

During the reign of Ligden Khan (1603-1634), the last king of Chinggis Khaan’s ancestry, many Mongolian translators, headed by Gungaa-Odser, translated all of Kanjur’s 108 volumes into the Mongolian language: the work was later edited in 1717-1720 and was published^{29,73}. Many translators, headed by Mongolian Janjaa Hutagtu Rolbiidorj (1717-1786), translated Tibetan Nartan Tanjur’s 208 volumes into the Mongolian language and published them in 1742-1749^{30,20}. There is only one copy of each of the 108 volumes of the Mongolian Kanjur and the 226 volumes of Tanjur’s work in Mongolian script, and at present they are kept in the Central Library of Mongolia³¹.

According to our research, in the Mongolian translation of Tanjur there are 26 works of Ayurvedic medicine, both extensive and short, including the Ayurvedic treatises “Ashtanga-hridaya-samhitā nāma”, “Padārtha chandrikā-prabhāsā nāma ashtanga hridaya vivrti”, etc.^{32,21-23}. In Kanjur’s work in Mongolian, we recorded around 20 chapters containing a history of Ayurvedic medicine, again both extensive and short: myths about medicine, different kinds of prayers, remedies and mantras to treat diseases amongst Buddhist works³³.

Comparing the Mongolian and Tibetan Kanjurs and Tanjurs, we find in the Mongolian Kanjur and Tanjur some of the peoples and land names of Ayurvedic medicine of India in Sanskrit, while in the

Tibetan Kanjur and Tanjur, devas, buddhas, people and land names in Sanskrit have been translated into Tibetan word by word, and written in Tibetan phonetics. For example, in the Mongolian translation of the Tanjur's "Ashtanga Hridaya" there were written Brahma, Vishnu, Simhagupta and Nagarjuna, while in Tibetan translation of "Ashtanga Hridaya" there were written Tsanba, Chavjug, Gendunsambo and Lhundup^{34,112-113, 515, 762-765}. From this, it is clear that whilst Mongolian scholars and doctors translated original works of Ayurveda from Tibetan (such as Tanjur), they also used Sanskrit texts to check his authority.

4. Tibetan Medical treatises in Mongolian language:

The Mongols translated many Tibetan medical works into the Mongolian language during the 14-20th centuries. According to a calculation made by the German scholar Heissig, during the reigns of Ulzit Tumor Khan (1295-1307) and Haisan Huleg (1308-1311) a Mongolian scholar Choji-Odser translated a major textbook of Tibetan Medicine "The Four Medical Tantras" into the Mongolian language^{4,76}, so providing a favorable condition for the development of Indo-Tibetan medicine among the Mongols. After the "Four Medical Tantras" was translated by this renowned scholar, it was also translated by Zaya Pandita Namhaijantsan (1599-1662) in the 17th century^{35,109}, and by Minjuur Tsorj in 18th century^{36,1-420}: these works are the inheritance of present day Ayurvedic practitioners in Mongolia.

Zaya Pandita Namhaijantsan (1599-1662) in the 17th century^{35,109-110}, therenowned Mongolian doctors Luvsanjants and Gelegjants of the "Doctor's faculty" of the Buddhist Monastery near present-day Ulaanbaatar before 1746, and the Mongolian scholar Chojjants in 1747 all translated the major Tibetan medical textbook "The Additional Method of Secret Oral Root" ("Man ngag rgyud kyi lhan thabs") into the Mongolian language^{37,1-1138}. Since then Mongols

have continued to translate Tibetan Medical books into Mongolian language. We have recorded more than 10 Tibetan Medical textbooks in Mongolian.^{38,142-145}

5. Mongolian commentaries on Tibetan Medical Treatises:

Many Mongolian doctors and scholars wrote commentaries and additions to the "Four Medical Tantras" and "Manag Lhantav". The Mongolian doctor Altai wrote a commentary to the first chapter titled "The Root Tantra to the Four Medical Tantras" in 1612^{24,471-605}. Further commentaries written to the "Four Medical Tantras" include "Clarifying mirror of the complicated meanings of the Root Tantra" by Lubsandanzanjantsan in the 17th century^{39,1-41}; "Commentary to the Explanatory (second) Tantra" by Shadduv Dandar in the 19th century; "Commentary to the Secret Oral (third) Tantra of the Four Medical Tantras" by Ikh Khureenii Lubsandashi in the 19th century⁴⁰; "Clarifying mirror of the names to selected Four Medical Tantras" by Yondon doctor of Said Wangiin hoshuu in the 19th century⁴¹; and "Beautiful ornament of seeds of the complicated words and meanings of the Four Medical Tantras" by Lunrig Dandar of Tariat Khuree in the 19th century⁴².

To the work titled "Man ngag Lhantav" (*Additional method of root medicine*) written by Desrid Sanjaagyatso, the Mongolian doctor Lubsanvanjil wrote a commentary in the 18th century titled "Complicated words of additional method of "Oral Transmissions Tantra"⁴³, and Lunrig Dandar wrote a commentary in the 19th century titled "Savior conquering golden garland of ar-ur of complicated meaning and words of the additional method of (Third Tantra) Oral Transmissions Tantra"⁴⁴.

Conclusion

1. We may say that Ayurveda was known to

Mongolians to a certain degree during the Hunnu Dynasty.

2. Mongolia was further exposed to Ayurveda from India via Middle Asian Countries such as Khotan, Sogd and Uigur in the 3-9th centuries.

3. Tibetan Medicine was introduced to Mongolia under the deep influence of Buddhism from the 13th century. Mongolia's first Medical School, following the Tibetan tradition, was established in 1662. In Mongolia more than 40 Medical Schools were established between 1662 and 1937.

4. 26 Ayurvedic treatises were translated and published in Mongolian language in 1742-1749.

5. Mongols translated more than 10 Tibetan medical mayor books into the Mongolian language between the 14th and 20th centuries.

6. Mongols composed 8 major commentaries and additions to the main Tibetan medical textbooks including "Four Medical Tantras" and "Manag Lhantav".

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