



ASIAN MEDICINE

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Study of Traditional Asian Medicine

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EDITORIAL

A new IASTAM council has now been constituted (see the section on "Getting to Know the New IASTAM Council Members"), following the earlier call for nominations of candidates. As is appropriate for an international network such as IASTAM, the new members come from a wide range of disciplines and national backgrounds, which is bound to facilitate scholarly exchange and institutional (and individual) networking on Asian medicines. This is of particular importance in the run-up to the next International Conference on Traditional Asian Medicine. Also, I am sure that the new Council members would, like me, appreciate any ideas and suggestions from IASTAM members about what could or should be done in our field. Please take this as an invitation to make the Council aware of relevant or contentious or just simply interesting issues. You may also wish to contribute to future issues of the newsletter. Letters to the Editor, like those in response to the last Editorial on the meaning of "traditional medicine" in the "global age" (see section in this issue) are most welcome. However, information on new projects or networks, on new approaches or

the enduring value of old ones, are equally encouraged.

Having got carried away a bit, at my desk as well as in the kitchen, when reading about soups and meat broths in the Mongolian, Chinese and Ayurvedic medical traditions (see *A Soup for the Qan* and *The Aroma of Meats* in this issue), I would be interested to hear if other scholars and practitioners, too, have been intrigued by the fact that in some medical traditions the boundaries between a *medical* recipe and dietary prescriptions are not as clear as seems to be the case in modern Western biomedicine. When is food merely a square meal, a luxury feast or gluttonous excess, and when is it an aide to better health? Even in Western countries the role of diet in disease prevention has lately gained an increasingly high profile and professional dieticians have come to join public health care teams and general practitioners' surgeries.

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SOURCES ON SENNA IN TRADITIONAL INDIAN AYURVEDIC MEDICINE

By Dominik Wujastyk

Senna is prepared from cassia. There are several members of the Senna/Cassia family, probably mentioned in Sanskrit ayurvedic texts from about the beginning of the common era (2000 years ago). Cassia *absus L.*, *C. auriculata L.*, *C. fistula L.*, *C. occidentalis L.*, *C. tora L.*, *C. alata L.*, *C. glauca, Lam.*, *C. mimosoides, L.*, *C. obovata, L.*, *C. obtusifolia, L.*, *C. siamea, Lam.*, and *Senna sophera, (L.) Roxb.* (= *C. eoromendeliana*) are all apparently present in the texts. I say "probably" and "apparently" since of course there is the historical problem of matching up a 2000-year-old Sanskrit name with a more recent Linnean name.

Of these, *C. fistula L.* is really the only one which plays a major part in the old traditional Indian materia medica. English names for it are golden shower tree, purging cassia, Indian laburnum, and pudding pipe tree. The Sanskrit name is "*aragvadha*", with many synonyms. In many recipes from the earliest period it is used, as one would expect, as a laxative (pulp of pods) but also for skin diseases, for example ringworm (leaves, stem bark), and for fever (leaves).

Other relatively old plants, but not commonly used, are *C. absus L.* (Sanskrit names: *kulatthika, caksusya*), which is used especially for eye conditions, and *C. tora, L.* = *Senna obtusifolia (L.) Irwin & Barneby* (Sanskrit names: *cakramarda, prapunnata*).

Some other Cassia/Senna plants have apparently been cultivated in India since about the sixteenth or seventeenth century, but as relative newcomers they have no well-established Sanskrit names. These include *Senna alexandrina Mill.*, "True

Senna", or "Alexandrian Senna" (which is probably the same as *C. lanceolata, L. & Forsk.*). This is the plant best known in western herbal medicine as an effective laxative under the simple name "Senna". The English names used in India are Tinnevely Senna or Indian Senna. But there is no really old Sanskrit name for this plant (although some recent sources call it "*svarnapatri*" i.e., 'gold leaf', a name also used for *C. fistula*). Therefore it may have been introduced to India by Arab or Persian physicians in the last few hundred years, during the time of the Delhi Sultanate or the Mughals ("Senna" is originally an Arabic word, *sana*). Nowadays it is mostly cultivated in South India. The leaves used as a purgative.

C. occidentalis L. (= *Senna occidentalis L.*) has the following English names: Coffee Senna, Negro coffee, Stinking Weed, or Styptic Weed. The Sanskrit name is "*kasamarda*". It is used in many recipes, but especially to quell coughing and wheezing. Although this plant has a Sanskrit name, *Senna occidentalis* is another fairly recent import to India. However, there is evidence that in the eighteenth century the term "*kasamarda*" was applied to *Senna sophera (L.) Roxb.* But again, *S. sophera* is a South American plant in origin and would not have reached India before the sixteenth century. So ancient "*kasamarda*" could be any similar plant that was present in India in ancient times.

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INTERNATIONAL TRUST FOR TRADITIONAL MEDICINE KALIMPONG, NORTH- EASTERN HIMALAYAS, INDIA - A PROFILE.

By Barbara Gerke

On the fringes of the Darjeeling Hills, a 12 km drive uphill from the river Teesta, at an altitude of about 1250 metres, a small but fast growing township appears on the summit - Kalimpong. The area offers a temperate climate throughout the year, and many nurseries have sprung up on the various hill sides over the years.

Once the seat of Bhutan's ministers, and the gateway to the Lhasa-Kalimpong trade route, the township has attracted many Tibetan and Indian scholars since the 1930s, including Dr. George Roerich, Rahul Sankrityayana and Gedun Choepel.

Inspired by its historical legacy and congenial climate, the International Trust of Traditional Medicine (ITTM) was founded in 1995 by a small group of dedicated researchers and scholars (of Mongolian, Indian and German origins). The Trust's main aspirations are to pursue the study and research of traditional medicine, especially that of Indo-Tibetan and allied origins. The Centre "Vijnana Niwas", 3 km outside of town, offers a natural and scholastic environment for research and intensive group activities on self-renewal and interpersonal effectiveness.

Currently, a medical glossary database is being prepared. The medical terms are based upon the seventh-century Ayurvedic Sanskrit text Astangahrdayasamhita by Vagbhata and its eleventh-century Tibetan translation, along with German and English equivalents.

The library offers a reasonably good collection of original Tibetan medical

literature. From these texts, an annotated bibliography is being prepared. Two young Tibetan Research Assistants, who have been trained at ITTM with the support of Asian Classics Input Project (ACIP), have been working on the input of all available Tibetan medical texts into computers since April 1999.

The garden premises, belonging to the Founder Patron and Trustee, Professor Lama Chimpa, an eminent Mongolian scholar specialising in Tibetan Studies, have been transformed over the past three years into a biodynamic garden. The garden is presently undergoing expansion for the purpose of cultivating Tibetan and local medicinal plants under biodynamic conditions. The project is supervised by a specialist on biodynamic cultivation and a qualified Tibetan doctor.

Both traditions, Ayurveda and Tibetan medicine, require an immense amount of translation, research and documentation in order to find their rightful place within the Western Alternative Health Care matrix. ITTM attempts a modest contribution in this direction.

The Trust publishes a periodical, *AyurVijnana*, with research articles, book reviews and interviews with medical practitioners. Six volumes are available on request, and articles can also be downloaded from the ITTM Homepage at: www.kreisels.com/ittm
All publications are funded by the support of individual(s) and institutional sponsors.

Creating an ambience of healthy learning and unlearning experience that allows intensive research in medical traditions as well as for personal healing and growth has been one of the mainstream activities of the Centre.

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TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

By Warren M. Cochran

The College of TCM exists within the Department of Health Sciences, Faculty of Science, at the University of Technology (until 1985, the New South Wales Institute of Technology) which is a vocational education-based central Sydney university with a student population of about 24,000. A health science degree in acupuncture has been offered since 1992, and in 1996 a degree in Chinese herbal medicine was added. In 1999 the first intake of undergraduates for the new combined four-year degree in both acupuncture and herbal medicine was enrolled. On offer is also a two-year part-time course work Masters degree in Chinese herbalism. The current intake for the latter programme is 40, with about 250 students in total for the College of TCM. This also includes a number of international full-fee paying students.

My association with UTS began in 1995 while I was in private practice as a practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine. I set up a course in the historical development of TCM which I have been teaching, modifying, and developing ever since. The twelve two-hour lectures are currently taught in the second semester of the second year. I also offer the same series

as a guest lecturer at both the Sydney Institute of TCM and the undergraduate programme at the University of Western Sydney. This aspect of the course complements the clinical / practical components of the curriculum, which also contains a thirty per cent Western science module. Most of our graduates end up in some form of private practice.

The clinical requirements of the degree stipulate 700 hours of supervised training in both the college acupuncture and herbal medicine clinics. Our students are also encouraged and assisted to undergo a one-month internship programme in a teaching hospital in the Peoples Republic of China. I was very fortunate to experience three months working in the Red Cross hospital, Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province in 1989. Currently I am running the UTS Herbal Medicine Clinic, treating patients one day a week, as well as teaching herbal medicine to both undergraduate and Masters students. My colleagues are all trained practitioners of TCM and all six of them work regular hours in either of the two clinics. Both are open to the general public.

Last July, UTS hosted the Fifth Australasian Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine Conference, with a total of 20 papers being delivered on all aspects of Chinese medicine. The event alternates each year between UTS and the sister institution, Victoria University of Technology in Melbourne. Although new to the university fraternity in this country, TCM is gradually establishing a research profile. Currently we have seven candidates in the Masters by Research programme with one PhD student so far.

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THE ASIAN AGRI-HISTORY FOUNDATION

By Y L Nene

The Asian Agri-History Foundation (AAHF), a non-profit trust, was established and registered in 1994 to facilitate dissemination of information on agricultural history to promote research on sustainable agriculture in the South and Southeast Asia region. This region had generally provided food security to its population for several millennia, with only occasional famines in a few limited pockets (due primarily to drought). Farmers in the region had evolved some of the most sustainable agricultural management technologies suitable for different agro-eco-regions. In recent years, however, South and Southeast Asia have often been projected as food-deficient regions where mass-scale starvation could occur in the future despite the fact that modern technologies have been adopted over large areas. Ironically, in the past few years, the sustainability of agriculture by following modern technologies has been questioned, and with good reason. How can we make the agriculture in South and Southeast Asia sustainable? The trustees of AAHF believe that there is a great deal to be learnt from the traditional wisdom and the indigenous, time-tested technologies that have sustained the farmers of south and Southeast Asia in the past. The historical perspective of gradual development of traditional technologies will provide clues for understanding how farmers adjusted to changing environment in the past, and for developing appropriate technologies leading to prosperous, sustainable agriculture.

Objectives: 1. To disseminate information on the history of agriculture in the South and Southeast Asia region. 2. To stimulate interest in research on the history of agriculture in South and Southeast Asia.

Activities: Publishing an international quarterly journal called Asian Agri-History; publishing translations of old manuscripts/papers into English; encouraging and supporting research in universities and other institutions; promoting inclusion of Agri-History in the curriculum of agricultural universities; organising seminars, conferences, and lectures to promote exchange of information and collaboration among interested scholars; establishing a database and a library dealing with publications on the history of Asian agriculture.

The April 2000 issue of Asian Agri-History (Vol. 4, Number 2) contained articles on 'The Royal Botanic Garden, Calcutta', 'A Future for the Indian Village', 'Agrarian Structure and the Peasantry in Pre-modern India', 'Coconut in the Folk Culture of Orissa', 'A Note on Surapala's Vrikshayurveda', 'Useful Plants of India: Opium Poppy and Tobacco', and 'Kautilya's Artha-Sastra: Forests and Wild Life'. Volume 4, Number 3, contains 'History of "Soma": The Divine Liquor and other Spirituous Liquors of India', 'Biodiversity of Wild Fruits in the Western Himalayas', 'Botanical Insecticides: A Historical Perspective', and other features. The next issue (Vol. 4, No. 4) will be available in October 2000. Topics in that issue will be 'Soma of the Aryans and Ash of the Romans'; 'Exotic Medicinal Plants: Antiquity in Ayurveda and Ethno-medico-botany', 'Methods of Rainfall Forecasting for Agriculture', and 'Trees in Ancient Literature: The Banyan Tree'.

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FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TRADITIONAL ASIAN MEDICINE

2002, HALLE, GERMANY

The 5th International Conference on Traditional Asian Medicine (an IASTAM conference) will take place on 18 to 24 August 2002 in Halle, Germany. Arrival and registration will be on the 18th, the opening ceremony on the 19th, and the closing ceremony on the 24th. The theme for the conference will be "Tradition and Innovation".

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

DUNHUANG 2000: THE MEDICAL MANUSCRIPTS Report on Project & Conference

By Christopher Cullen & Vivienne Lo

With so many Asian, European and American historians and philologists convening on 9th and 10th September for "Dunhuang 2000", the two day conference might have turned SOAS and the Needham Research Institute into twin Towers of Babel. In the event the academic exchanges were so rich and stimulating that the subtle shifts between English and Chinese,

Japanese and French happened so fluently that no one really seemed to notice.

The conference was the culmination of a research trip undertaken by four eminent scholars from the history departments at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Academy of Research into Chinese Medicine, Professors Xie Guihua, Wang Shumin, Zhao Ping'an and Liu Lexian. Their visit to England was to mark the centenary of Sven Hedin's (1865 - 1952) excavation of the first bamboo manuscripts from a Wei/Jin dynasty tomb in January 1901, the find which stimulated a new era of research into ancient Chinese manuscripts. The travel and maintenance expenses for both project and conference were met by a generous grant from The Wellcome Trust. Additional grants were received from the Universities China Committee, the Sino-British Fellowship Trust and the British Academy.

During their stay the four scholars spent nearly three months in the Oriental and India Office Collections Reading Room at the British Library, painstakingly examining the 50 or so Dunhuang Manuscripts related to medicine. We are all very grateful to Dr Frances Wood, head of the Chinese section, and Dr Susan Whitfield, head of the International Dunhuang Project (IDP), for receiving the scholars and looking after their interests in the library. Special thanks are due to Graham Hutt and Colin Chinnery for the tremendous daily effort they put into locating, making available and organising the photography of the specific scrolls requisitioned. The scholars' work involved closely comparing existing transcripts of the manuscripts made on the basis of old photographs and microfilm, with the original paper scrolls. In consequence we will soon have a brand new transcript determined by the best of Chinese medical historians and philologists and this will shortly be available on the IDP website (<http://idp.bl.uk>) (see fig 1: corrections to a

