

THE HORSE BOOK OF THE PRINCE OF JHARKOT

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Jharkot is a small village below Muktinath in Mustang district, western Nepal. In this remote high mountain area traditional Tibetan medicine is still practised. Modern Western medicine has hardly penetrated this region. Due to the almost complete lack of modern technical equipment, horses, mules, cows, yak, sheep and goat are necessary for the transport of goods, for the delivery of food and the planting of fields, and are still kept in large numbers.

Most of the veterinarians living in this area are illiterate and practise according to the oral knowledge they have received from an experienced veterinarian, in general their father. One of the few exceptions is mTshams pa Ngag dbang, a medical practitioner in Mustang district. He was taught by his father and studied traditional Tibetan medicine as well. The fact that most veterinarians are illiterate is not peculiar to Tibetan society but typical in the Orient and Occident as well. Veterinary medicine is based primarily on practical knowledge and the veterinarian learns his subject by oral tradition and experience. The texts were written by other professional groups such as philosophers and authors on agriculture.¹

As literate people in ancient Tibet were generally monks, and medical science was taught in a few monastic schools, the first scriptures are likely to have been translated and written by monks. It is a well known fact that

¹ Aristotle for instance wrote in his *Historia Animalum* a short treatise on veterinary medicine.

traditional Tibetan medicine, like other subjects too, is influenced by Indian culture, and documents have been translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Regarding veterinary medicine, the only known book is the one on horses, *rTa'i tshé'i rig byed sha li ho tras bsdus pa shes bya ba*, thought to have been written by the famous Shalihotra, the father of horse medicine in India. This text was rendered into Tibetan by the translator Rin chen bzang po (958-1055) (see Blondeau 1972: 48).

The documents found in Dunhuang are the oldest written sriptures we have on Tibetan hippiatry and hippology in the Tibetan language. They have been translated by Anne-Marie Blondeau in her "Matériaux pour l'étude de l'hippologie et de l'hippiatrie tibétaine" (1972). Her Indo-Tibetan work gives an overview of the Indian tradition. She also translated parts of the so-called Bacot xylograph, reprinted by Tharchin in Kalimpong in 1934. But unlike the Dunhuang documents, which deal with hippology as well, the Bacot xylograph deals only with veterinary medicine.

In recent years a number of manuscripts have been found in Mustang district. All these texts deal with hippiatry and hippology as well. But as none of the texts contains a colophon, in all cases the author and date of composition are unknown. I can only state that these manuscripts are of a much later origin than the Dunhuang documents.

In this paper I would like to give a brief introduction to the text owned by the late dPal mgon po, the prince of Jharkot. The manuscript has been in the possession of the prince's family for three generations, and was most probably written at the end of the last or the beginning of this century.

The manuscript was photographed by Prof. Dieter Schuh in 1990. The text, consisting of 89 folios, is bound into a book, but is incomplete. The first four chapters are missing. The book is worn and the margins of the last pages are illegible. The pages are not numbered. The manuscript includes two titles:

1. *rTa bum mthong ' khol rta nad thams cad 'jom ba'i sman mdo*
2. *Cog ro rje'u khye'u chung gi rta dpyad gsal ba'i sgron me*

The included topics are pharmacology, hippiatry, hippology, divination and magical practices for horse races.

The sections dealing with the treatment of horses are, like the Bacot xylograph, illustrated with drawings meant to clarify either the symptom or the treatment of the disease. All passages are constructed in the same manner. In the beginning of each passage the diagnosis and the symptoms are given, followed by the method of treatment, mostly the enumeration of drugs applied. In the end we find in general the remark that this treatment will cure the disease. But as the diagnosis and the symptoms are not given precisely, the specific disease cannot always be identified.

An impediment to the translation is the poor orthography of the manuscripts. The erratic rendering of plant names in particular leaves open various possibilities for their interpretation. In the following examples I therefore give the Tibetan names of the plants in the translated passages as they appear in the text. The English terms and the correct spellings are given in a short supplement according to Parfionovitch *et al.* (1992).

The transliteration of the Tibetan text follows the Wylie system without any corrections of misspellings. Material presented between asterisks **...** indicates intercalated text; parentheses (...) denote contracted or abbreviated forms in the manuscript. The translation of each passage is followed by a brief commentary on the methods of healing described.

1. rta la gnams khris btabs na / skad gnam du 'tsher mig gnam du
lta sbangs kyang sbangs su 'chor ba gnam mkhris btab*s* pa yin
pas / la cha lham khrad snying pa gu gul rnams kyi bdud pa snar
bsdugs / lham kyi nang shun bkhus pa'i khu ba khar blug / drod pa
'phus bstabs pa la mig gi bzugs bris la / mda' (rgyag) pa' i tshul
byed / des nges par 'phan no / zab ithi /

Translation

If the horse is struck by the *gnam khris*-[disease], it neighs to the sky. If it runs galloping, it is struck by the *gnam khris*-[disease]. Therefore one fumigates the nose with smoke [prepared from] *la cha*, an old sole of a shoe and *gu gul*. One pours the liquid [that has been used] to wash the inside of a shoe into [the horse's] mouth. One inflates a stomach, draws the outline of eyes on it and pretends to shoot it with an arrow. This definitely helps.

Commentary

This passage shows three different kinds of treatment: the fumigation, the oral application of a remedy and a ritual in order to heal the horse. For the fumigation the ingredients are chopped up coarsely and mixed. This mixture contains plants and the old sole of a shoe, a remedy of the so-called Dreckapotheke. The medication given is here only prepared from the liquid which has been used to wash the inside of shoes. The latter indicates that Tibetan veterinary medicine is influenced not only by Indian but by Chinese medicine as well, where these kind of remedies were used frequently (see Driesch and Francke 1992: 133).

Magical performances are quite frequently used in Tibetan veterinary medicine. But these ideas are not unique to Tibetan or Oriental medicine. They are found in the Occident too, for instance in the German veterinary literature, the so-called Rossarzneibücher from the 17th century.

2. rta la chu byis smug na / gang smugs sar srang yong bas / gla rtsi shu dag gnyis byis pa lo (brgyad) pa'i chus rta la sbyar 'byugs / khong du mthar nu / re (lcags) spru ma mtshan a ru ra rnam / btang ngo / rtsa rnam gtar / chu bya'i ro snyed na rab / brad pas nges par 'phan par 'gyur ro / yang gcod lug cig la byi bas gang (smugs) sar tha la / thang gron me shur gyis (bkrag) bkor (rgyag) pas 'phan thag chod / dge'o /

Translation

If the horse is bitten by a water rat, at the place where [the water rat] has bitten a swelling appears. Therefore one mixes *gla rtsi* [and] *shu dag* with the urine of an eight-year-old child as a base and spreads [this ointment] on [the swelling]. Internally one gives *mthar nu*, *re lcags*, *spru ma mtshan*² [and] *a ru ra*. All the veins are bled. If one finds the carcass of a water-rat, this is excellent. If one scratches [the swollen part with the carcass], that helps definitely.

² The terminus *mtshan* is questionable. It either means the name of a remedy or that both *spru ma dkar po* and *spru ma nag po* have to be given to the horse.

According to another method of treatment, the edge of the place where the rat has bitten is circled fast³ with a pine-fire by singeing the swelling. This helps certainly. This is good.

Commentary

Throughout the history of veterinary medicine we find the description of a bite of the so-called water rat. It is already mentioned by Aristotle. According to Prof. von den Driesch of Institute for Palaeoanatomy of the University of Munich, the term *chu byi* could denote *Rattus rattus*, *Suncus murinus* or *Suncus montanus*.

In this section five different forms of treatment are described: the external and internal application of a pharmaceutical medication, bloodletting, a magical performance and circling with fire.

For the external application, i.e. the preparation of the ointment, urine of a child is used as base [*sman rta*) with plants as further ingredients. For the external and internal application as well, all ingredients are first pulverised. For the internal application they are either simply mixed with a base such as water, *chang* or molasses or else boiled with water and then given to the horse.

Bloodletting (*gtar ba*) is a very frequently applied method of healing for any kind of disease. It is often carried out on a vein near the diseased organ, the jugular vein or on all the veins. In the West too, it was a very common method of treatment and recommended for almost every ailment.

Behind this magical performance, i.e. rubbing with the carcass of the water rat, seems to stand the idea that a performance similar to the incident cures the disease. This concept is also found in German veterinary literature, where for instance worms are given in bread to heal a disease diagnosed as "worms in the belly" (Brebaum 1967: 151). The last mentioned therapy, circling with fire is used for disinfection. Fire has a disinfecting and purifying effect.

³ According to mTshams pa ngag dbang *bkrags* is a synonym for *mggyogs po*.

3. rta'i grod pa srang na / mkhal ma zho sha / (rgya) tshva lga skya /
drod sman hril mo / lcam pa'i bru rnam 'bu ram dang sbyar nas
btong / tshangs ra'i steng du lug mgo 'am / lo ma bya ra gla ril
gang rig kyi bdug byed / chu ser 'tshags / ra tshil gyi bdud pas
bdug go / dge'o /

Translation

If the belly of the horse is swollen, one mixes *mkhal ma zho sha*, *rgya tshva*, *lga skya*, all warming medicine and *lcam pa'i 'bru* with molasses and gives it (to the horse). On the tip of the rump-bone one applies a *lug mgo* or a compress prepared from any kind of [turnip] leaves⁴, used tealeaves [and] faeces of musk deer. One squeezes the pus [out of the swelling]. One fumigates [the swollen parts of the body of the horse] with goatfat. This helps definitely. This is good.

Commentary

The methods of treatment applied indicate that the disease described is not in the interior of the belly but on the outside. Most probably there is a purulent inflammation on the surface of the belly. According to mTshams pa ngag dbang, the swelling has to be cut with a small knife or a lancet (*gtsag bu*) before the pus can be squeezed out.

The application of the so-called *lug mgo* describes in my estimation a typical Tibetan form of treatment and is nowadays still practised in Mustang area. The term *lug mgo* describes a vessel, prepared from roasted barley flour (*rtsam pa*), mixed with tea or water. This is placed on the rump-bone of the horse and hot oil is poured inside for stimulation.

4. rta'i gzhung 'gram / (rgyab) bzhung bzhin srang byung na / tsha
chu dang sa khams pas / chu rtsa chu thag / dug mo rnam kyi
'byug pa byed / rtsib ma'i bar la me (thigs) byed / khong du gnyan
sman gyi khong bsrung gtong / rtsod 'dud / tshos shing 'bri mgo
zhu khan / a ru ra rnam gyi thang btong / des (phan no) /

⁴ According to mTshams pa ngag dbang the term *lo ma* always means *nyung ma'i lo ma*.

Translation

If the back of the horse is inflamed [and] the back is swollen like a feeding trough, one prepares an ointment of *tsha chu*, *sa khams pa*, *chu rtsa*, *chu thag* [and] *dug mo* [*nyung*]. Between the ribs one burns [in form of] a dot. One gives medicaments as internal protection. One gives a potion [prepared from] *rtsod 'dud*, *tshos shing*, *'bri mgo*, *zhu khan* [and] *a ru ra*. This helps.

Commentary

According to Prof. von den Driesch (personal communication), the inflammation of the back described is most probably a wound caused by loading the horse too heavily.

The term *me thig* is not listed in the dictionaries. This treatment is very similar to moxibustion (*me btsa'*) but the burning points are smaller and not as deep. The therapy is based on the idea that the disturbed flow of blood in the meridians can be countered through stimulation. For the moxibustion a cone prepared from plants is burnt down on the skin. Nowadays cauterisation (*me tshugs*) is still frequently applied in Mustang district and used as a general prophylactic. Instead of the cone a heated sharp kind of needle is used. The burning points are behind the ears, in the region of the temples and on the inside of the upper lip. Both therapies are of Chinese origin.

5. rta yi bdrug zos na / kha sbu ong / chu dang lce skrang / 'khun mig mi gsal / sman bong nga dmar po / ldum bu re ral / a ru ra / rnam par myu gu shing rams dang bcas pa zhibs tu brtags / chu dang sbyar ba bstong / mthong kha dang / snying khar chu (sgyag) / de' i steng la ram dang / a ru ra'i thang btang / rtse' u ltar / de nas rtsa (thams cad) rims bzhin (gtar ro) /

Translation

If the horse has eaten poison, foam comes out of its mouth. The lips and the tongue are swollen. It groans. Its eyes are not clear. One pulverizes as medication *bong nga dmar po*, *ldum bu re ral*, *a ru ra*, *myu gu shing* and *rams*, mixes this with water and gives it [to the horse]. The chest and the region of

the heart are sprinkled with water. Thereafter one gives a potion [prepared from] *ram* [and] *a ru ra*. One bleeds the jugular vein. Then all the veins are bled successively.

Commentary

Sprinkling with water activates the circulation of blood and is one of the oldest forms of therapy, already described in the papyrus of Kahun in Egypt, a document about veterinary medicine dating from the 19th century B.C. (Driesch 1989:133).

Summary

The different therapies described can be summarized as follows:

1. **Pharmacological therapy**
 - 1.1. Internal administration
 - 1.2. External administration
 - 1.2.1. Fumigation
 - 1.2.2. Ointment
 - 1.2.3. Compress
2. **Bloodletting**
3. **Moxibustion and cauterisation**
4. **Minor Surgery**
5. **Further Therapies**
 - 5.1. Circling with fire
 - 5.2. Sprinkling with water
 - 5.3. Rituals or magical performances

The methods of treatment show clearly that Tibetan veterinary medicine is not only influenced by Indian but by Chinese medicine too. Except *lug mgo*, which seems to be a typical Tibetan form of treatment, similar or the same procedures are found throughout the Orient and the Occident and are not unique to the Tibetan medical system.

List of remedies

Tibetan name	Latin/scientific name	English name
<i>gu gul</i>	<i>Balsamodendron mukul</i>	frankincense
<i>rgya tshwa</i>		Sal ammoniac
<i>lga skya (sga skya)</i>	<i>Kaempferia galanga</i>	galangale
<i>lcam pa'i 'bru (lcam pa)</i>	<i>Malva verticillata / silvestris</i> or <i>Althaea rosea / officinalis</i>	marsh mallow
<i>chu dag (shu dag)</i>	<i>Acorus gramineus / calamus</i>	sweetflag
<i>chu rtsa</i>	<i>Rheum emodi</i>	Himalayan rhubarb
<i>mthar nu (thar nu)</i>	<i>Euphorbia wallichiana / kansuensis</i>	Chinese spurge
<i>dug mo (dug mo nyung)</i>	<i>Holarrhena antidysenterica</i>	kurchee
<i>ldum bu re ral</i>	<i>Drynaria propinqua, D. quercifolia</i> <i>d.v. (acc. to Meyer 1981)</i>	
<i>spru ma (dkar po)</i>	<i>Heracleum wallichii / candidans / millefolium</i>	white cow parsnip
<i>spru nag</i>	<i>Heracleum dissectum / Aralia atropurpurea (Franch) / Angelica</i> <i>sp.</i>	black hogweed
<i>bong nga dmar po</i>	<i>Delphinium densiflorum</i>	red wolfsbane / red aconite
<i>'bri mgo ('bri rmog)</i>	<i>Onosma echoides</i>	hairy onosma
<i>myu gu shing (smyug (ma) cu gang)</i>	<i>Bambusa arundinacea (Gamble)</i>	bamboo pith
<i>rtsod (btsod)</i>	<i>Rubia cordifolia</i>	Indian madder
<i>(gtsod)</i>	<i>Pantholops hodgsoni</i>	Hodgon's antelope

<i>tshos shing</i>	<i>Butea monosperma</i> (acc. to Dash 1985)	flame of the forest
<i>zhu khan (zhu mkhan mchog)</i>	<i>Symplocos crataegoides / racemos</i> (Roxb.)	lohd tree / sweetleaf
<i>zhu mkhan dman pa</i>	<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i> Roxb.	lohd tree / Japanese medlar
<i>ram(s) (ram pa)</i>	<i>Indigofera tinctoria</i>	indigo
<i>re lcags (re lcag pa)</i>	<i>Stellera chamaejasme</i>	chickweed
<i>sa khams (sa kham)</i>		brown earth (acc. to mTshams pa ngag dbang)
<i>a ru ra</i>	<i>Terminalia chebula</i>	chelubic myrobalan

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