

THE EIGHT POTENCIES OF TIBETAN MEDICINE

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Abstract

Generally speaking, most physicians who are practising Tibetan medicine today are using up to 150 different compounds, which are not individually adapted to the individual patients but are prescribed as fixed formulas according to the individual constitution and disease of the patient. This presentation analyzes aspects of potency in Tibetan medicine and pharmacology. Starting with the *nus pa brgyad* (eight potencies) described in Deumar Geshe Tenzin Püntso's (De'u dmar dge bshes bstan 'dzin phun tshogs, born 1672) introduction of his important materia medica text *shel gong shel phreng*, the paper firstly aims to deepen the understanding of the meaning of each of the "eight potencies" through detailed explanations and through examples. The relevance of the "eight potencies" and their description in other Tibetan medical texts, such as the *rgyud bzhi* (Four Treatises), will be discussed. Moreover, based on recent findings from fieldwork in India, Nepal as well as the TAR of China, additional potencies will be presented. Analyzing the "eight potencies" gives a deep insight into the subject of the efficacy of Tibetan medical substances, providing a basis for further discussions on dosage, substitutions, medication administration, possible pros and cons of modern ways of manufacturing Tibetan medical pills, as well as the questions: "What makes a substance in Tibetan medicine 'potent'?" and "Where lays the importance of the application of the concept of the "eight potencies" to Tibetan medicine in the 21st century?" Aspects to be discussed will be among others the contemporary production of medicine and an outlook to the next decades.



Biography

Florian Ploberger (MD, BAc, MA), Austria, pursues international interdisciplinary and university teaching activities. He is president of the ÖAGTCM, and has been entrusted by the Men-Tsee-Khang (Institute of Tibetan Medicine and Astrology in Dharamsala, North India) to translate the most significant work of Tibetan Medicine (*rgyud bzhi*). He is the "Executive Committee Member" of the WFCMS (World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies). Director of "Alliance of Research and Development of Traditional Medicine, Complementary Medicine and Integrative Medicine" of Fudan University in Shanghai. In 2018, he was appointed a member of the Editorial Board of the International Journal of Chinese Medicine.

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