

Ancient anatomical drawings preserved in Tibet / by L.A. Waddell.

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* 22.1.1959.

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W. W.

Ancient Anatomical Drawings

8. Northmoor Road
Oxford.
5. Oct. 1910

Dear, thank you for the gift of your
album on the Tibetan Enslaved
Draughts. It is of very great interest
to me.

Yours faithfully
H. T. Jones-Bernli



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THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE.



Colonel L. H. Waddell M. J.

The Wise's Nest

11 Helen's Park Pass



ANCIENT ANA
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By L.

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ANCIENT ANATOMICAL DRAWINGS PRESERVED IN TIBET.

BY L. A. WADDELL, C.B.

HITHERTO our information in regard to the medical and anatomical knowledge possessed by the ancient Hindus has been derived almost exclusively from the non-illustrated accounts in manuscripts. In the Temple of Medicine at Lhasa I was fortunate in finding a set of ancient anatomical drawings which preserve in concrete pictorial form the old-world Indian beliefs in regard to the structure and functions of the internal organs of the human body. These pictures, obviously constructed for teaching purposes, have long been lost and forgotten in the land of their origin, yet they are, whilst interesting and curious in themselves, essential to a right understanding of the history of ancient Indian medicine.

The circumstances under which I visited the Temple of Medicine in 1904, and unearthed there these drawings are described and illustrated in my "Lhasa and Its Mysteries," pp. 376-79. A set of the drawings, which I procured, is now deposited in the India Office Library along with the greater portion of the manuscripts and books collected by me in Tibet, numbering about a thousand volumes and comprising very many rare works and many unique and hitherto unknown treatises, including several on medicine.

In Tibet at the present day, as was formerly the case in ancient Europe, the study and practice of medicine is confined to the priests. They are taught this subject in their ordinary curriculum at the monasteries, and those who desire to specialize come to the Temple of Medicine at Lhasa. This fane is dedicated to Buddha. That dispenser of spiritual medicine is here represented as "The God of Medicine," an Esculapius, whose image occupies the chief place in the temple, with the title of "Buddha, the

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Supreme Physician, the King Beautiful as *Baidī^{ur}pya* (beryl or lapis lazuli)." This myth possibly incorporates that of the Assyrian healing (?) deity, Ēnu-rēstū, who is also associated with this stone. In this form he is a favourite object of worship by most modern Buddhists, and is the popular *Binzuru Sama* of the Japanese.* The ancient Buddhist canon contains several treatises on the healing art which are ascribed to the Buddha himself, and these, with their commentaries, form the basis of the art as practised at the present day in Tibet.

The source of this Indian Buddhist medical lore has not yet been clearly traced. Ancient Greek influence probably accounts for some of the analogies exhibited to the old humoral pathology, with its flow of the bile and the phlegm. In Buddha's day, in the fifth century B.C., Taxila, near the modern Rawalpindi, in Northern India, was especially famous as a centre of medical learning, and one of its most celebrated physicians at that time was Jīvaka.

Certainly, one and a half centuries later, after Alexander's invasion in 325-27 B.C., Greek influence was strong there for several centuries before the scriptures of either of the two great branches of Buddhism were reduced to writing. And it was from this neighbourhood that the Sanskrit text of the Buddhist canon, from which the Tibetan version is translated, was first collated and issued.

The Indian Buddhist origin of this particular set of pictures is attested by a painted row of twelve monks at its top, as founders of the art, and bearing Indian names of monks of Buddha's Order. They are divided into two groups, one of which is labelled: "Line of the ancient founders (or compounders)." This group commences with a Śākya, but he does not clearly appear to be the great *Muni* himself, as he bears the title of "the great Abbot," and is surnamed the "mighty," which is used in Tibet as the equivalent of the Indian *Īśwara*, or *Śiva*, an epithet not usually applied to Buddha. The second is called the "King Punya," who

* See my "Buddhism of Tibet," pp. 353-54.

possibly may be the Prince *Punya-bala*, who was apparently a contemporary of Buddha, and in regard to whom there is a tale (*avadāna*) in the Buddhist canon. None of the names of the others, however, are recognizable as those of known personages;* nor are any of those of the second group, which is entitled, "The thread of the pure ones." Among these latter the chief place is given to a monk, figured in the conventional attitude of Tsongka'pa, the founder of the yellow hat sect of lamas, and inscribed: "Sarvajña, the lord of doctrinal teaching." This latter list probably includes some Tibetan teachers.

The date of introduction of these pictures into Tibet is not evident. According to the current tradition of the temple, as related to me by the high-priest, the original of these drawings was brought from India in the remote past; but he could point to no positive evidence in support. This particular temple, although rebuilt and extended by the regent Sangyas Gyamts'o about two hundred years ago, is said to have been founded many centuries before that. Possibly, it seems to me, the picture may have been brought to Tibet in the first half of the eighth century A.D. For we read in one of the best of the native histories† that in the reign of K'ri-lde Tsug-rtan [A.D. 705-755], in addition to certain Buddhist scriptures which were translated by Indian monks from the Sanskrit into Tibetan, "Pichi- (or Pochi-) Chandra Srī translated books on Medicine and Surgery, on Astrology, and suchlike subjects."‡ The Lhasa edict of this King's son, found by me,§ states that his father was the first to solidly advance the civilization of his people;

* The names in this list are, as is usual with Indian names, mostly translated etymologically into Tibetan: (1) mK'an-ch'en Sākya dWang-p'ug; (2) mK'as-mch'og bSod-nams rGyal-po; (3) Rin-sding bLo-bzang rGya-nŋts'o, or "The priceless ^{summit} ~~eminence~~ Sumatisāgara" (?); (4) Drang-srong bsTan-'dsin rgyal-po, or "The *fishi* Sastra dhṛita *fja*" (?); (5) gLing-stong bLo-bzang rGya-nŋts'o, or "The universal nihilistic (*śunyāta*) Suma-tisāgara" (?).

† *Gyal-rabs*, or "Chronicle of the Kings," dated about A.D. 1650.

‡ *Ibid.*, E. Schlegel's edition, p. 52. *pp. 9 of text.*

§ *Jour. Roy. As. Soc.*, 1909, pp. 923-52.

and medicine and the treatment of disease, I found, was one of the subjects which Tibetans specially inquired about.

Here I give a general description of the contents, as a preliminary note; the complete interpretation of the technical details will require the illuminating aid of a Tibetan physician.

The drawing is made upon a sheet of loaded cloth, which rolls up like a scroll or map, 31 inches long and 26 inches across. The chief figures are three in number, delineated in black ink and coloured. The central figure displays the human body standing with outstretched arms, and in its interior are depicted the bloodvessels and bile-ducts, etc., as imagined; also the vertebræ. The two lateral illustrations are respectively those of a man and a woman, to show the internal organs, which are supposed to differ considerably in position in the woman.

The central figure exhibits an interesting attempt to map out the proportions of the human figure with precision, according to a natural unit scale of measurement, by finger-breadths, which are drawn all over the figure in squares. A man's stature is represented as being ninety-six finger-breadths, and the proportions thus defined for the figure and limbs are accepted and followed as a canon by Tibetan artists. The positions allotted to the internal organs are only very roughly approximate, and have manifestly not been ascertained by dissection. The spinal column extends through twenty-five vertebræ to the level of the tip of the external ear, and the spinal cord to the vertex. The central figure bears the following inscription:

“Chart for identification of the internal parts of the body: In the circle of veins of the five [regions], the head, neck, breast or chest, navel and privy parts are 24 superficial ‘veins’ in each. These are the ten sapless vessels [= arteries?] and the ten sap (or ‘marrow’) vessels twenty [in] each, twenty minutely sized ones; [and] the four divisions of the principal [vein], each of which has 25 [subdivisions] which are associated with 500 minute tributary

ones. The vessels of the five orifices, the six sense [organs] and of generation, the blood tract of the excellent intellect, etc. The blood area for blood-letting under and in front of the forefinger for pulse-feeling. The vein which menaces life in plague. The running of the various skin-colours, white and red. The plan of the beating pulses in the head, neck, mouth, etc."

The right-hand figure (female) is inscribed: "The method of disposition, on the right and left, of the five deep veins for ascertaining the cause [of disease], and the superficial middle vein of the mystical circle of the breast." The left-hand figure bears the legend: "Delineation of the inner vessels [showing] the mode of connection of the eight great veins of the hidden systems."

Among these curious notions of anatomy and physiology, I find that of the three classes of bloodvessels, the first bears the name of "the sapless" (*roma*), which recalls the ancient Western conception of the artery as an "*air-duct*" from which our name for it is derived, as in the dead body the arteries were always found empty, and hence were supposed to convey air, a mistake which prevailed even down to Harvey's day. A fantastic result of the notion that the relative position of the blood and bile vessels in a man are reversed in a woman is that the physician feels with his right hand the left wrist for the pulses in a male patient (as the right is supposed to have only bile-ducts); whereas he feels the right wrist of a female, employing for this purpose his own left hand.

This brief note, perhaps, may draw the attention of those interested in the subject to this new source of information on the history of ancient medicine.



