

Comparative Study on Miao Medicine and Bamboo and Silk Medicine

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Miao medicine is the precious medical heritage of China, and with constant development, it has formed its own characteristics. There are also many records about medicine in the unearthed bamboo and silk slips. By studying on them, we can find out some similarities in the historical patterns between traditional Chinese medicine and Miao medicine, which provides certain references in studying on the history of Chinese medicine.

Keywords: Miao medicine, bamboo and silk medicine, comparative study

A Briefly Introduction of Miao Nationality

Miao nationality has a long history with hardworking, brave and intelligent people. According to historical documents and folk custom materials, there is a inheritance relationship between Miao tribe and ancient “Jiuli” tribe, “SanMiao” tribe, and “Jingman” tribe. History researchers have proven with a large number of facts that Miao is a great and ancient ethnic which has a history of more than 5,000 years. Miao has developed into an international ethnic, whose population, besides China, have been distributed in Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar in Southeast Asia, even in Europe, USA, Australia, etc.. Miao is also a cosmopolitan nation with a population of about 10 million. China is the birthplace of Miao as well as the main domicile. The population of Miao ranks fourth in minorities in China, mainly in Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Hunan, Guangxi, Hubei, Chongqing, and other provinces. The population of Miao is 7,398,035 according to the fourth census in 1990, of which 3,686,900 is in Guizhou, accounting for 51.3% of the whole Miao population in China, and 11.38% of the whole population of Guizhou, so Guizhou is the province having the largest number of Miao people (Bao & Ran, 1999).

A Briefly Introduction of Miao Medicine

Miao medicine has a long history, although Miao has no written records on it, it appears in early Han history books. *Shen Long Ben Cao Jing* is known as the earliest Chinese medicine book, which according to Ou Zhi'an's research statistics, contains about one third herbal medicines recorded by Miao language. In addition, there are 17 kinds of Miao medicine in the first volume of *Compendium of Materia Medica* written by Li Shizhen in the Ming dynasty, and 27 kinds in the second volume (Ou, 1984). Besides, *Compendium of Materia*

Medica also records many morphology, collection and use of Miao medicine. For example, there are more than 20 kinds of medicine which have the similar pronunciation and same meaning with Miao medicine, such as chrysanthemum, whose name is recorded as “Jiehua” (a name of a plant) in Miao language by Li Shizhen. Besides, when introducing *acorus calamus*, it quoted Susong’s *Tu Jing Ben Cao* that “... leaves born in spring, about two feet in length, there is ridge in leaf center, as shape as a sword; it has no flower or fruit; it was collected on May 5; its roots are circle, and one have about 3-4 branches, as big as a whip, the branches are dense, ...Guizhou and Sichuan people often take *acorus calamus* with them, to treat suddenly heartache”. And it also pointed out that, “those born in wild valley are particularly good, those grown by people can also be useful, but not as good as the wild ones after dried. These are all about stone *calamus* in medical use”. All these records show that the application of the Miao medicine *Acorus calamus* and *Acorus gramineus* has a long history, and was used to treat with the heartache by the so-called “barbarians”. Besides, the wild ones grown in Miao mountain were considered to be of high quality.

Comparison on the Features of the Unearthed Bamboo and Silk Medicine With Miao Medicine

Profile of Miao Medicine and Medicines Recorded in Bamboo and Silk Slips

The Miao people usually live in mountains with rivers circled. Their communities have a mild climate, with abundant rainfall, and therefore they have a great variety of natural plants and animal species, as well as a large number of mineral resources. Thus Miao medicines have a wide range of sources, including plant, animal and mineral medicine, especially the plant. According to the old man of Miao nationality from Bijie prefecture of Guizhou, “there are 108 kinds of diseases, and there are 3,800 kinds of medicines, among which 3,000 kinds are higher plants related to Miao medicine, and 800 kinds are lower plants not related to Miao medicine”. The first volume of *Drugs of Chinese Nation* (Bao, 1999) contains 40 kinds of Miao medicine and the second volume contains 30 kinds. *Miao Medicine Collection* Contains 163 kinds of Miao medicine. *Medicine Pharmacy of Miao* contains 340 kinds. In addition, there are many researches about Miao medicine in the relevant books and academic papers published in Yunnan, Guangxi and other provinces. According to incomplete statistics, there are about 1,500 kinds of Miao medicine, with 200 kinds are of common use. Some of them are rarely or not used by traditional Chinese medicine and folk grass medicine, but commonly used by Miao medicine, and for the same kind of medicine, Miao medicine used in different parts of body with them. Since Miao medicines have wide sources, they are prolific and are of good quality, the Miao area has always been one of the leading medicinal materials producers in our country. Miao medicines grow in different seasons, parts of them also need to be used in different time, so they need to be collected in different seasons. According to different diseases and different drug efficacy, we generally use flowers and leaves in spring and summer, and use root and stem in autumn and winter. Such as Qing nabai (*aquifoliaceae* plant) is a small evergreen shrub, we use flowers, leaves, and twigs in spring and summer, and root bark in autumn and winter. This method of using medicine, completely conforms to the plant physiology, since effective ingredients exist in flowers and leaves in spring and summer, and exist in root and stem in autumn and winter. We can use fresh medicine and can easily find it, and we do not have to store them. At the same time, some of the fresh medicine effective component will not be ruined in the process of drying and storing. So one characteristics of Miao medicine is using fresh plants. But for those drugs which are difficult to pick in short time, or for the purpose of easy to carry, they will be gathered, washed, chopped and dried and stored. At the same time, according to their own

clinical experience, doctors will process some medicines before formulating, such as frying (frying with wine and vinegar) or calcining. For toxic drugs such as pinellia, aconitum, ChaKu, and centipedes, they must be created first, such as using lime water to soak pinellia, and use the ash to fry the aconitum, and use the wine to soak the centipedes.

At present, there are many unearthed bamboo and silk slips about medicine, such as *Prescription and Other, Prescriptions of Fifty-two Diseases, Wuwei Medical Bamboo and Silk Slips*, the Ancients Dike Prescriptions in Zhangjiajie, Bamboo and Silk Slips of the Qin dynasty about Medicine in Liye, Dunhuang Bamboo and Silk Slips about Medicine, Juyan Bamboo and Silk Slips about Medicine, etc.. From the period of the tombs unearthed and the recorded content, *Prescription and Other* and Bamboo and Silk Slips of the Qin Dynasty about Medicine in Liye are works in the Qin dynasty, *Prescriptions of Fifty-two Diseases* was the Han dynasty works, *Wuwei Medical Bamboo and Silk Slips*, the Ancients Dike Prescriptions in Zhangjiajie was the early stage works of the Eastern Han dynasty, Bamboo and Silk Slips about Medicine in Dunhuang and Juyan was the works of middle Western Han dynasty to the middle Eastern Han dynasty. The medical literature fully demonstrated the drug profiles, using and pharmacy, and fully reflect the pharmacology achievement at that time. Bamboo and Silk Slips about Medicine is rich in content, mainly including name, dosage, production, method and curative effects of the drugs, etc., it has distinct characteristics of the times and the region. Drugs in Bamboo and Silk Slips can be divided into four categories according to the basic properties of drugs, including mineral medicine, plant drugs, animal medicine and implements drugs, and what other parts of drugs referred to needs to be further researched. Except abundant prescriptions of drugs in bamboo and silk slips, they also introduced a lot of weights and measure units to indicate the doses, and they recorded the steps and methods of drug processing, as well as some content of pharmacology, such as the specific method of drugs, effect of description and the price, etc.. These documents provide rich and detailed information for us to explore the pharmacology of ancient times. In Han literature, *Prescriptions of Fifty-two Diseases* collected 247 kinds of drugs besides those recorded in *Sheng Nong's Herbal Classic*, including 21 species mineral medicine, 121 kinds plant medicine and 60 kinds of animal medicine (Shang, 1985). For example, the Miao medicine Pinellia ternata and aconite also above mentioned both recorded in the unearthed literatures, *Dunhuang Bamboo Slips of Han Dynasty No. 563A*, there is record about the use of Pinellia ternata, and Zhangjiajie Ancient Dike Medical Prescription recorded one third of aconite. These showed that they have one common medicine source, and Miao medicine is also a branch of traditional Chinese medicine. But medicine works *Prescriptions of Fifty-two Diseases*, recorded in detail the process besides the collection of prescriptions, including not only application of the term such as “Pao” (roast), “Ao” (boil), “Zhu” (stew), “Zhi” (toast), “Duan” (forge), but also recording of the operation process (Shang, 1982). The morphology is relatively more advanced than Miao medicine.

“Witchcraft Is Also Doctor and the Witchcraft” in Early Time of Miao, and Ritual and Prayer Recorded in Bamboo and Silk Slips of Chu

The belief that witchcraft and doctor is the same exists for a long time, and it is the real portraiture of Miao medicine. Those who could do the wizard and also cure in Miao, they prayed for the patient, sent a ghost for the patient, such as “Fuliuma”, “Datishen”, “Jiaohun”, “Shaodan” (these are four kinds of Chinese ceremony), etc.. They could provide patients spiritual healing from a psychological point of view, and they could combine witchcraft and medicine with very tacit understanding, they had characteristics of both witch and doctor. Especially in that time, people could not understand disease well, and could only relied on medical treatment,

so the witchcraft used magic with treatment, to let people believe in ghosts and gods, and used praying to get away of the fear from them. After that, the patients could have better mental state and could fight for diseases, then they use drugs to rescue. In this way, using the double effects of psychotherapy and drug treatment, with the belief of the protection of ghosts and gods to make up for the lack of medicine, became one of the characteristics of the Miao medicine.

There are many slips about divination, ritual and prayer in bamboo and silk slips unearthed of Chu, especially the *Baoshan Chu-Tomb Bamboo Slip Contains*. Because one tomb owner was sick, there were a lot of records in the tomb about the doctor for divination, ritual and praying to make the owner get better, it recorded a lot about the owner's disease and curing until his death (Hu, 1991). There are also similar slips in the Wangshan Bamboo Slips and Bamboo slips discovered from Chu tomb in Geling of Xincai, they are records about praying for blessing and abolishing disease for the owner (Bei, 1995; Ji, 2004). In *Prescriptions of Fifty-two Diseases*, the curse disease method was totally used 34 times in 15 kinds of diseases (Yan, 2005), which reflects that ancient physicians thought that some of these diseases were caused by ghosts, so they used this method. It can be seen that using this approach due to the thought of ghosts to expel the disease occupied a certain status in Chu, Qin and Han dynasties, this is also a proof that a wizard was often a doctor in ancient times.

Combined Prescription and Dosage Units in Miao Medicine and Unearthed Bamboo and Silk Slips Medicine

Miao medicine prescriptions were flexible, simple and delicate, and they usually used fresh medicine, one prescription for one disease, rare compound medicine, or used only 1-3 kinds in a compound medicine, rarely used 5-8 kinds. In a compound medicine, they also had primary medicine and secondary medicines, and the Miao doctor called main medicine as "Muyao" (primary medicine), other medicine as "Fuyao" (secondary medicine). This is very different from those medicines in Han slips, there were many herbs in one recipe in Han slips.

Such as in *Dunhuang Bamboo and Silk Slips No. 1177*, a prescription contains *Platycodon grandiflorum*, tortoise plastron, Chinese herbaceous peony, *Scutellaria baicalensis* and other drugs, and in *No. 2012*, it contains 8 kinds drugs, they are ginseng, aster, calamus, asarum, ginger, laurel, Tekka, coracoid. This is a treatment for chronic cough, obstruction, check drainage belly, heart pent-up, typhoid fever.

The dosage units of Miao medicine varied in different places, the Miao doctors just grabbed according to their own consideration, they did not weigh, usually they grabbed with five fingers for adult patients, with three fingers for children patients. For toxic drugs such as the dosage of the hellebore, they used a amount which is as long as the medium section patients' one finger. Others took drugs in coarse grinding bowl several times to control the amount of juice. But with the development of the Miao medicine, they also introduced the international standard unit of measurement for drugs.

In the bamboo and silk slips of Qin and Han dynasties, except for some small shape and liquid using "Sheng" (litre) and "Dou" (a unit of dry measure for grain), they used original measurement such as "Ba" (grasp), "Shu" (bunch), "Ke" (grain), "Chi" (a unit of length), etc.. Only a few prescriptions use weight unit, such as two liang realgar and less half mercury. In part of the prescription, there is no unit dose, only dose rate (Zhang, 1979). They also used fingers as weighing method such as "sanzhichuo" (grab with three fingers), this is the same as Miao medicine "shuishouzhua" (grab with hands), "grab with five fingers for adult patients, and

with three fingers for children patients”. Such as bamboo and silk slips in Liye and Zhoujiatai, *Liye Bamboo and Silk Slips of Qin No.8-1221* recorded that to treat ill suddenly and violently heartache seriously, you could use in duplicate the fruit cracked of “XIming” (a name of a plant), one “Kuijiang” (a name of a plant), one “Jungui” (a name of a plant), making these three things together, take “sanzhichuo” (grab with three fingers) to the second joint of the finger. The volume of “Shou” (hand) in *Shuo Wen* said that one “Chuo” (grab) is four “Gui” (pinch), or to say “Liangzhichuo” (grab with two fingers). Duan Yucai commented that it was better than other physicians’ statement that four “Gui” (pinch) could be used as one “Chuo” (grab). Guifu’s *Shuo Wen Yi Zheng* pointed out that two fingers should be three fingers, using two fingers to pinch was called “Nian” (pick up (with the thumb and one or two fingers)), using three fingers to pinch was called “Chuo” (grab). The volume of “Shou” (hand) in *Yu Pian* also said that “Chuo” (grab) was to use three fingers to pinch. The original text 3 which is the part of *Prescriptions for Fifty-two Diseases in Mawangdui Ancient Medicine Books Explanation* recorded that using three fingers is “Chuo” (grab). Ma Jixin noted that using three fingers which were the thumb, forefinger and middle finger to pinch was one way to take drug powder, and it was a very ancient medicinal dosage unit. *Prescriptions for Fifty-two Diseases* mentioned the measurement unit of bulk agent, such as “Sanzhichuodaojie” (grab with three fingers to the joint), “Sanzhidachuo” (grab as much using three fingers) and so on. In *Ma wangdui Prescriptions for Fifty-two Diseases*, there were some common unit including “Sanzhichuo” (grab using three fingers), “Sanzhichuodaojie” (grab with three fingers to the joint), “Sanzhidachuo” (grab as much using three fingers), “Sanzhichuoyi” (grab using three fingers), “Sanzhiyichuo” (grab with three fingers), “Daojie’er” (grab with three fingers to the second joint) meaning taking drugs with three finger to pinch to the second joint of finger. As well as Miao medical computing unit of quantity, “Chuo” (grab) was widely used before the Han dynasty. In *Inner Canon of Yellow Emperor*, it recorded about treating wine wind by using the method of “sanzhichuo” (grab with three fingers). This method was also common in Mawangdui medical book, but in *Wuwei Medical Bamboo and Silk Slips* of Han dynasty, “sanzhichuo” (grab with three fingers) can only be used only when treating the keel.

Some Clinical Curing Methods of Miao Medicine and Unearthed Bamboo and Silk Slips Medicine

Miao medicines have accumulated rich experiences in clinical practice in the long-term medical activities. They divided all diseases into two categories, namely cold disease and fever, and further developed two therapeutic principles of which is use thermal methods to cure cold disease and use cold methods to cure fever. The specific treatments for the disease were mainly “internal treatment” and “external treatment”, and “external treatment” had rich treatment methods, fully embodying the strong national characteristics and local flavor. Such as fumigation therapy and hot iron therapy in the external treatment. Fumigation therapy is divided into whole-body fumigation method and partial fumigation method according to the illness: (1) Whole-body fumigation method: Dig a deep hole in the ridge, above which put a few sticks, and put a pot under the sticks, put some drugs in the pot, put a moderate amount of water in and burn the pot. At the bottom of the fire, put many squirrels at the top of the stick, patient sit on a pine, with a mat or cloth around the block and head outside, heating solution to produce a large amount of steam, until the patient get a sweating body; and (2) Partial fumigation: Get the medication after boiled on the fire, put the solution into small basin and fumigate the affected part just fumigate directly to the medicine jar, depending on the disease. Besides, some patients with respiratory system diseases can directly breathe the drug steam with nose and mouth in front of the drug pot. Fumigation therapy is to operate with both the heat and the efficacy of the drugs, heat will make pores

accelerate the blood circulation system, let the skin and mucous membrane can breathe the drug steam, thus can achieve therapeutic effect more efficiently. This method can be used in many indications, such as all meridians muscle joints, muscles and skin of the upper respiratory tract diseases. Stir-fry therapy is to fry granular salt to hot, then put into the bag, and iron belly button, chest, vest and other lesions with the hot bag.

And *The New Juyan Bamboo Slips* No. E.P.T50:26 recorded that put hot water under the “Kang” (a heatable brick bed) in the morning to heat up the wound for three to four days, and then heated again. SunQibing and SuJianbing considered the meaning in the bamboo slips is to use drug steam fumigation affect diseases. This kind of treatment should be external treatment. This is a relatively special bamboo slips, and is very precious, since this method cannot found in Juyan bamboo slips and Dunhuang bamboo slips of Han dynasty. At the same time, it also illustrates the use of traditional medical treatment has a long history as early as the Han dynasty (Sun & Su, 2002). Since the skin has a very large area, and many pores, and is the largest organ of the human body, the fumigation method therapy has effects of against the attacks of protection, and also many other functions, such as secretion, absorption, seepage, discharge of sensation. Chinese medicine fumigation treatment therapy is to use the physical properties of the skin, make the drugs go through the skin to absorb permeate cuticle and dermal transfer into blood circulation and pharmacological fully effect.

In addition, there is “iron hot” in the No.8-1620 *Bamboo of Liye Bamboo Slips of the Qin dynasty*. “Iron” is using warm material (including heated drugs) to stimulate the body treatment in order to achieve the purpose of a kind of external treatment, also known as warm iron, medicine iron and poison iron. In *Prescriptions for Fifty-two Diseases*, it not only recorded the prescription in the treatment of the rabies bite, and also prescription for the treatment of dog bite injuries. It can be seen that the author of *Prescriptions for Fifty-two Diseases* have realized the difference of dog bite and wild dog “Nie” (bite). Under the title of the rabies bite, the doctor included three prescriptions in *Prescriptions for Fifty-two Diseases*, the first prescription was external treatment, the second and the third were internal treatment. In the third prescription, the stone used belongs to the highly toxic drugs. *Mawangdui Medical Books Explanation* warned that since no scientific experiment, please do not have a try. *Xiang Dukes 17th Year in Zuo’s Biography of the Spring and Autumn Annals* recorded that people chasing “Zhi” dog, it ran into HuaChen’s residence. *Ai Dukes 12th Year* recorded that the mad dog of the country all would bite person. “Zhi” dog is mad dog, it can be seen that people in the spring and autumn period of China already had a full understanding of the rabies hurting people and tried explore the corresponding treatment. There is prescription to treat wild dog bites in the Miao medicine too, and treatment is relatively simple: beat water hyacinth and a section black bamboo, then cook porridge to eat together.

Conclusion

Through the above comparative analysis with bamboo and silk unearthed medical literature, we can get some information about the Miao medicine’s development in the history. Although some form of medical excavated are more advanced than Miao medicine, it is helpful to rebuild the history of Miao medicine.

In addition, the Miao medicine is precious medical heritage in China, through constant development; it has formed its own characteristics. With comparison with the slips medical literature, we can confirm some historical form of traditional Chinese medicine, and find the similarities between them, which is also useful for us to continue the further researches.

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