

The influence of the ‘Father of Tibetan Medicine’ otherwise known as ‘Elder’ Yuthog Yonten Gonpo. The *gSo-rig Kuns ‘Dus* states he was born June 25, 708 A.D. Carrying on the prior lineage based medical system, he began his training early and was said to be remarkably accomplished in theoretical knowledge by the age of ten. Having debated other eminent physicians and scholars, Yuthog was considered as an emanation of Sangye Menla, (Medicine Buddha) himself early in his life. Though also appointed as the king’s physician, he traveled extensively to India several times to study with eminent physicians as well as China. He established Tibet’s first medical college, Tanadug at Kongpo Manlung in the south of Tibet in the year 763 A.D. That medical school is no longer in existence however. Yet through lifetime of dedication to the propagation and promotion of Tibetan medical sciences, his lineage continues on to this very day.



Scholarly debate aside, typically physicians attribute the compounding of *rGyud-bZhi*, The Four Tantras, to Sangye Menla, the Medicine Buddha who is ultimately an emanation of Shakyamuni Buddha. Yuthog Yonten Gonpo is considered to either be an emanation of the Healing Buddha himself, or at the least, an extraordinary being who had capacity to travel and receive teachings in Medicine Buddha's realm. Accomplished in theoretical knowledge by the age of 10, he was considered early in his life as an emanation of Sangye Menla, (Medicine Buddha) himself. Thus, the attribution of the *rGyud-bZhi* when you buy any current published form of the Four Medical Tantras, you will see the author listed as Yuthog Yonten Gonpo. Written in question and answer format the Medicine Buddha's mind emanation and speech emanation gave a discourse among an audience of four classes of beings.

In the 2010 PhD dissertation by venerated 21st century Tibetan doctor Yang Ga, his extensive research argues that there is not just one source of root text for the Four Medical Tantras, but rather "There were several early works that were important during the time of Yuthog Yonten Gonpo, and it also identifies his own influential works that function as draft versions of the *rGyud-bZhi*." ¹

Regardless of historical or scholarly discernment, the line of highly realized masters of medicine trained in lineage fashion continued and is well documented and continues to this day. While modern regulatory systems are now being introduced, the ancient parent to child, or uncle to nephew or niece types of training have now faded in this current generation. Yet, the text and theories remain unchanged since the 8th Century when the cohesive system was instilled. Particularly affluent times were the 8th Century as Buddhism entered Tibet and the 11th-12th century attributed to the 'Junior' Yuthog Yonten Gonpo, (1126-1202 A.D.).

Again, up for some scholarly debate, yet most variants text put 'Junior' Yuthog Yonten Gonpo between the 10th and 12th Centuries. None-the-less, it was a very productive time in Tibet's medical history when the Junior Yonten was said to have begun his studies at age eight, quickly becoming a prolific student, scholar and Buddhist master.

Junior Yuthog studied in India at least six different times and sought both scholarly and religiously pertinent pursuits in other countries. Uḍḍiyāna (also spelled Oḍḍiyāna) was considered 'North' and the birthplace of Guru Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche) whom

¹Ga, Y. (2010). The sources for the writing of the "rgyud bzhi", Tibetan Medical Classic (dissertation). ProQuest LLC, Ann Arbor , MI. (Pg 8)

brought Buddhism to Tibet. This is a small region in early medieval Gāndhāra, in Swat district of modern-day Pakistan. Likewise, Persia, Nepal and Sri Lanka were also documented in various texts and commentaries in which Junior Yuthog states his trips to India were in specific pursuit of studying various early medical texts. He in fact listed specific foreign medical texts. Some of these texts are attributed to the Buddha himself, as well as Nāgārjuna's famous medical text known as White and Black Moonlight, *Zla Zer Dar Nag*, Vāgbata's treatise on Astāngahrdayasamhitā, which is "one of the most important works on Old Indian medicine (āyurveda), is unattested in Central Asia."² Such visits, said ages he pilgrimaged on these trips, and the text names are given in the *Shog Dril Skor Gsum* text,³ all which ultimately helped to shape the Four Medical Tantras as we know it today.

The above historical accounts and commentary is written by Nashalla G Nyinda TMD Menpa, Ma Acu. Taken from "Brief history of Traditional Tibetan Medicine". I confess any mistakes or omissions as my own. It is with the interest in informing the general public the authentic and unbroken lineage of the Sowa Rigpa Tibetan Medical system that I give this brief history. References texts mentioned are given below and the information on Chagpori in India is provided by the Institute itself. For further information please see: www.chagpori.org

² *Asian Medicine*, 4(1), 113-173. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/157342108X381241>

³ Ga, Y. (2010). The sources for the writing of the "rgyud bzhi", Tibetan Medical Classic (dissertation). ProQuest LLC, Ann Arbor , MI. (Pg 99-100)