

ISA REGIONAL GUEST LECTURE

REFORMULATIONS IN SOWA RIGPA

THINKING ABOUT “CLASSICAL FORMULAS,” TAKING THE EXAMPLE OF TIBETAN PRECIOUS PILLS

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Since Tibetan medicine was officially recognized in India as a medical system in 2010 as Sowa Rigpa and part of AYUSH, it has been gearing itself towards compliance with Indian government regulations of standardization. One of the steps involved in this process is the development of a standardized pharmacopeia of Sowa Rigpa formulas, which has only just begun. It is thus timely to think about the nature of Sowa Rigpa formulas and how Tibetan authors wrote about, structured, and categorized them in the past. This lecture analyzes examples of so-called “classical formulas” of complex multicomounds, in this case Precious Pills (*rin chen ril bu*), from Tibetan *menjor* texts and explores their nature, authorship, transmissions, and most of all their inherent flexibility to be changed, adapted, or re-formulated. I argue that, even today, the design of these “classical formulas” necessitates continuity, authenticity, continual interpretation and reformulation in the making of remedies. This poses a challenge for the present codification of formulas into a standardized pharmacopeia as required by AYUSH. Who determines what will become the “classical formula” of a certain remedy, and will the Ayurvedic proprietary model work for Sowa Rigpa? The Tibetan examples offer original data for re-thinking definitions of “classical formulas” and “proprietary medicines” and related practices in the context of pharmaceutical standardization and codification of formulas across Asia.



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