

Chinese Herbal Secrets: The Key to Total Health

Stefan Chmelik

Avery Publishing Group (March 1999)

\$18.95 (192pp)

978-0-89529-986-4

Pilgrims hiking the paths of the seven sacred mountains of China are apt to stumble upon merchants selling an odd array of souvenirs— deer antlers, rose hips, garlic and ginger root. Similar wares are found displayed under glass in apothecaries across the land. Crossing oceans and cultures, many of these same remedies are finding their way to Western health food store shelves, sporting interesting sounding names such as Dong Qui or Dan Shen. Traditional Chinese medicine, used interchangeably and along-side modern drugs by countless Chinese, has become increasingly popular with others as well. This book is a captivating guide to the basic philosophy and traditional herbs of this holistic approach to restoring and maintaining the balance between the mind and body.

Absolutely as valuable as the knowledgeably written text is the plethora of crisp and colorful, high-quality illustrations and photos. After an artfully-illustrated table of contents, the guide commences with a section devoted to understanding Chinese Medicine; progresses through the “eight conditions,” a diagnostic toolbox, treatment, herbs, non-herbal health practices like Qi Gong (pronounced Chee Gong—a series of physically and spiritually-strengthening movements and postures); discusses medicinal wines and teas and even addresses what to expect when visiting a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine, among many other topics.

As a resource for understanding the relationship between the five elements (water, metal, wood, fire, earth) the secrets of self-diagnosis (for minor ailments) or distinguishing Jin Yin Hua from Ju Hua, it might be challenging to find a more thorough yet readable guide.

Although Chmelik is not Chinese, he’s well-qualified to author such a text having studied acupuncture and Tui Na at the London School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine and herbal medicine at the London Academy of Oriental Medicine, interning in Nanjing, China, and, at the time of this writing, is president of the UK Register of Chinese Herbal Medicine.

While this book will appeal to students of holistic health practices, it shouldn’t be overlooked by interested travelers to China as a way to learn what all those strange-looking roots, seeds, teas and other mysterious items displayed and sold all over China might be and their practical applications. Worth the purchase for its visual appeal alone, it’s also a book with substance.

PATRICIA VOICE (September / October 1999)

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