

# A Brief History of the Development of Hui Medicine

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## Abstract

The Hui Medicine in China, as an important part of traditional Chinese medicine, has a long history. It originated from the unique medical knowledge and practices of the Hui ethnic group and impacted the health of people of all ethnic groups in the whole nation. Over time, it has continuously absorbed and integrated the essence of various medical systems. In ancient times, Hui doctors made important contributions with their superb medical skills. They passed on their medical wisdom from generation to generation. In modern times, with the development of science and technology, Hui Medicine has also been constantly evolving and innovating, combining modern medical concepts and technologies. It has played an active role in protecting people's health and promoting medical progress in China. Although facing challenges, it still strives to inherit and develop, showing strong vitality.

## Keywords

Hui Medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Cultural Heritage, Health Preservation, Modern Innovation

## 1. Hui Medicine and Arab Culture

Hui medicine is the product of the “east-west combination” of traditional Chinese medicine and Arab-Islamic medicine, and is the crystallization of the exchange of medical cultures between the East and the West [1]-[3]. Hui Medicine is an important part of traditional Chinese medicine, and it also shows a deep connection with Arab culture [1] [2]. It not only has the characteristics of its own ethnic medicine, but also is influenced by the medical culture of other ethnic groups, thus forming a medical culture of one and multiple bodies [1] [2].

With the communication of the Arabs with their neighboring countries, the cultures of the neighboring countries then permeated among the Arab countries and complemented each other, and the same was true in medicine [1]-[3]. The founder of Islam, Muhammad, once said: “Even if knowledge is far in China, it should also be sought.” Sino-Arab friendly exchanges were officially established in 651 AD, and the exchanges in the field of medicine also flourished at this time [1] [2]. Therefore, many Arab scholars, especially some philosophers, continuously summarized the medical practical experience of their own nation, and at the same time translated the medical works of other countries into Arabic [1] [2]. Hui Medicine not only absorbs the essence of Arab medical knowledge but also combines it with the characteristics and needs of the Chinese context. It has formed its own unique diagnostic and treatment methods, emphasizing the balance and harmony of the body [1] [2].

Arab culture has had a profound influence on Hui Medicine [4] [5]. Through historical exchanges and migrations, many medical concepts and practices from the Arab world were introduced and integrated into the development of Hui Medicine [2] [5]. The use of certain herbs, therapeutic methods, and health preservation concepts in Hui Medicine can trace their origins to Arab medical traditions [1] [2] [5]. In addition, in the field of pharmacology, Hui Medicine has made important contributions. It has a rich variety of herbal medicines and prescriptions, some of which have been passed down through generations [2] [5]. These medicines reflect the wisdom and experience accumulated over time [2] [5].

Arab culture’s influence on Hui Medicine also extends to the spiritual and philosophical aspects [1]. It emphasizes the importance of holistic health and the connection between mind and body. This concept has had a positive impact on the treatment and health care concepts of Hui Medicine [1] [2]. The relationship between Hui Medicine and Arab culture is a fascinating aspect. It shows how different cultures can interact and blend, resulting in the enrichment and development of medical systems. Exploring and understanding this connection can help us better appreciate the diversity and value of traditional medical knowledge. Hui medicine belongs to the category of Hui culture.

## **2. The Theory of Hui Medicine and Neo-Confucianism**

Chinese Islamic scholars incorporate the objective idealist worldview of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties, so that the “Taiji theory” of the Neo-Confucianists and the doctrine of “recognizing the uniqueness of the Lord” in Islam put forward the basic theory of Islamic theology, “True One Theory” [1] [2]. And this “True One Theory” is regarded as one of the basic theories of Hui medicine. The “True One Theory” believes that “True One” is the root of all things and the ontological body that creates heaven, earth, people and things. Chinese Muslims basically accept the “Taiji theory” of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties and admit that all things are

unified with the five elements, the five elements are unified with the Yin and Yang, the Yin and Yang are unified with the Taiji, and the Taiji is originally infinite [1] [2] [6] [7]. Taiji is just the original fruit of all things, and Wuji is only the original seed of all things. Before these two, there was also an original master of creation, which is “True One”, also known as “True Ruler”, and it is the master of all things [1] [2]. True One has the principles of all differences, and then Wuji has the fates of all differences. Taiji has the natures of all differences, and the two instruments have the forms of all differences. After having these conditions of all things in heaven and earth as described in Volume “Original Teachings Chapter” of “Ceremonial Rites of the Heavenly Square-Selected Explanations”, the True Ruler also “collected the essence of the four elements of Qi, Fire, Water, and Earth” to form heaven, earth, human beings, and living beings [1] [2]. Hui culture is also influenced by Islamic philosophical thoughts.

In the historical development process of Hui medicine, its basic theories are influenced by the thought of “Hui Confucianism” and have a strong Islamic philosophy with a Chinese style, such as “True One”, “Primordial Qi”, “Yin and Yang”, and the “Four Extraordinary Elements of Qi, Fire, Water, and Earth” and the “Three Paired Elements of Gold, Wood, and Movement”. And Hui medicine believes that the Primordial Qi gives rise to Yin and Yang, and after the separation of Yin and Yang, there are Four Elements and Three Offspring. Qi, Fire, Water, and Earth are called the Four Elements, and Gold, Wood, and Movement types are called the Three Offspring. The Four Elements and Three Offspring are called the Seven Elements. The distribution of the Seven Elements leads to the formation of all things, revealing the pivot of the biochemical process of forms, Qi, and all things [1] [2].

### 3. Hui Medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine

The relationship between Hui medicine and traditional Chinese medicine is a fascinating subject. Both are integral parts of the rich medical heritage in China. Traditional Chinese medicine has a long history and profound theories, emphasizing the balance of Yin and Yang and the harmony of the body. Hui medicine, on the other hand, has its own unique features and practices, which are deeply influenced by its cultural background [1] [2]. While they have their individual characteristics, there is also a certain degree of interaction and integration. For example, some concepts and methods in Hui medicine may have parallels or be inspired by traditional Chinese medicine. They both aim to cure diseases and promote health, and in the process, they learn from and complement each other. Exploring and understanding this relationship can help us better appreciate the diversity and complexity of medical systems and contribute to the development and application of more effective medical approaches.

In Hui medicine, the insights about the seed of the microcosm and the primordial Qi of the macrocosm, in addition to explaining the relationship between man and nature, also reflect the view of form and Qi from the intangible to the

tangible in the macrocosm and from the tangible to the intangible in the microcosm, which has both similarities and differences with the views of traditional Chinese medicine. Hui medicine also transforms the ancient Greek four-humoral theory into the four fluids of black, red, yellow, and white, and incorporates them into the primordial Qi and the four-image theory for application. In addition, the theory of cold, hot, dry, and wet is transformed into the theories of cold index, hot index, dry index, and wet index, and is coordinated with the four elements as a part of pathology, all of which reflect the historical process that when Hui medicine theory absorbs Western medical and pharmaceutical culture, it tries hard to incorporate it into the Eastern way of thinking and its concepts.

As a natural science, Hui medicine, because it is rooted in the ethnic medicine of the Chinese land, also contains the essence of ancient Greek philosophical thoughts and the components of the integration of Eastern philosophical principles [1] [2]. It is another characteristic of the combination of Eastern and Western cultures. As early as the 7th century AD, Arab-Islamic medicine once ranked among the most advanced in the world of medicine and had a huge impact on Western modernized medicine. In the Middle Ages, the great Arab philosopher, scientist, and medical scientist Avicenna's footprints can be found in large areas of Iraq, Persia, Azerbaijan, and Pakistan [2]. He boldly practiced, devoted himself to research, and widely solicited and studied throughout his life. From 980 to 1037 AD, he completed the masterpiece "Canon of Medicine" which fused ancient Greek medicine, Indian medicine, Chinese medicine, Arab medicine, and philosophy together, becoming the founder of modern medicine and Arab medicine [2]. There were numerous Arabic medical works in the Middle Ages, and many of them have been lost. Including "Canon of Medicine", there are still more than 400 kinds that have been passed down to this day [1] [2].

Hui medicine as a discipline has its own system. In terms of specialization, it involves internal medicine, surgery, gynecology, pediatrics, ophthalmology, mental health, diet therapy, dermatology, orthopedics, etc [1] [2]. Its medical techniques include moxibustion (suppurative moxibustion), cauterization, bloodletting, purging, enema, medicated diet, external treatment for internal diseases, and the combination of medicine and therapeutics. The pharmaceutical preparation techniques include medicinal dew, pill coating, syrup (rubili), nasal drops, and mouthwash. In surgery and orthopedics, there are techniques such as joint dislocation reduction, hemostasis, craniotomy, and plastic surgery. The Hui people are good at using fragrant medicines, and the fragrant medicines come from the "Hui people". The appearance of fragrant medicines has opened up a unique path. It has played roles in promoting the development of prescriptions, promoting the reform of dosage forms, broadening clinical applications, improving the treatment of severe and critical cases, deodorizing, insect control, anti-corrosion, purifying the environment, prevention and health care, prevention and treatment combination, etc. The fragrant medicines have been included

in the national pharmacopoeia and passed down to this day, enriching the treasure house of traditional Chinese medicine, and its contributions cannot be ignored. Hui doctors pay attention to medical ethics when practicing medicine. Their medical ethics thoughts follow the teachings of the fundamental Islamic classics, the “Quran” and the “Hadith”, and are combined with the thoughts of the traditional Chinese medical ethics “Great Physician’s Sincerity and Perfection”, forming the “Hui medical ethics” with Chinese characteristics [2] [8] [9].

#### **4. The Famous Works of Hui Medicine and Practice in China**

In the classics such as “Huihui Yaofang” and famous works such as “Zhengjiao Zhenquan” and “Qingzhen Zhinan”, relevant records are evident. The medical ethics of Hui doctors are mainly manifested in the medical ethics norms of cultivating the heart with virtue and having reverence for the heart [1] [8] [9]. It teaches doctors to improve creativity, enhance the sense of reverence, and cultivate morality in medical practice, so that doctors become virtuous people, perform virtuous actions, and wholeheartedly contribute to society, and view practicing medicine as a kind act. There is “Establishing diligence in the holy way to fulfill the way of heaven”. To seek a famous doctor, one must first understand virtue. Having knowledge but no virtue is a foolish doctor. In the Yuan Dynasty, the “Guanghui Department” of the Hui medical institution in Dadu regarded “treating those with cold diseases” as its service object. The folk doctors of the Hui people and those who were proficient in medicine in the Hui quarter regarded medical services as good deeds and did it with “kesan” [8] [9].

Hui doctors pay attention to the moral education of life ethics in medical education. They believe that a complete and healthy person must have the ability of theoretical thinking, otherwise, it is equivalent to losing one’s life. “Zhengjiao Zhenquan” points out: “Returning to the truth can recognize the Lord, clarifying the mind can see the nature, cultivating oneself can govern the country. The study of recognizing the Lord is like life and death, the study of clarifying the mind is like food and clothing, and the study of cultivating oneself is like medicine. None of them can be lacking.” The Hui medical ethics thought combines medical administration and ability [8] [9].

In Hui medical ethics, the dedication spirit of doctors is emphasized. The ancient Hui doctors traveled thousands of miles to China, opened Hui pharmacies, wrote books and established theories for future generations, and benefited mankind. They combined Arab medicine with traditional Chinese medicine organically, which fully reflected the spirit of dedication of Hui doctors to society [1] [8] [9]. When Hui doctors practice medicine and ask about diseases, they attach great importance to ethnic customs, avoid using drugs and preparations that the Hui people avoid, and respect the customs of the Hui people, which is one of the necessary ethics for doctors. These ethical norms have cultivated a group of Hui doctors with noble medical ethics and superb skills, making contributions to the health of the Hui people and people of all ethnic groups.

The Chinese Hui medicine indeed contains extremely rich content. It is the summary of the experience of the Hui people in their struggle against diseases during the process of their formation, and it is also a witness to the cultural exchanges between the East and the West. It has a wide mass base especially among the people who believe in Islam in our country. The Hui medical and cultural heritage, with its unique health care and medical experience and self-contained theoretical knowledge, has been passed down collectively by the Hui folk doctors who are a large ethnic minority and scattered throughout the country for thousands of years, showing strong vitality. This is an important part of China's rich medical and cultural heritage.

The main features of Hui medicine include its rich medicinal resources, unique diagnostic methods based on local cultural and medical practices. It emphasizes the combination of prevention and treatment, and pays attention to the regulation of diet and lifestyle. Hui medicine also integrates elements of Islamic medicine and traditional Chinese medicine, forming its own distinct therapeutic approaches and theories [1] [2].

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, Hui medicine has a long and unique history. It originated from the ancient medical practices of the Hui people and has been evolving over time. Hui medicine incorporates elements from various sources, including traditional Chinese medicine, Arabian medicine, and local folk remedies. It emphasizes the balance and harmony of the body and mind, and places great importance on prevention and natural healing methods. Through centuries of practice and experience accumulation, Hui medicine has developed its own system of diagnosis, treatment, and medication. It has made significant contributions to the health and well-being of the Hui community and has also attracted attention and research in the field of modern medicine. Despite challenges and changes, Hui medicine continues to be passed down and developed, preserving its valuable knowledge and practices for future generations [1] [2] [8] [9].

## The Declarations

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## Author Contribution

Junming Luo and Jianqing Zhang designed the research; Xiaolin Wang and Hairui Ma collected data and performed analysis; Junming Luo and Jianqing

Zhang wrote the paper. Qilong Tan critically reviewed the manuscript content.

### Consent to Participate

Informed consent for participation in the study was obtained from participants.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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