

# Traditional knowledge of therapeutic use of animals by Rongmei Tribe, Manipur, India

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Rongmei is relying on animals and its body parts for curing various diseases like the other tribal communities. Trust of traditional knowledge, distance from modern healthcare, slow recovery and expensive modern healthcare, Rongmeis are largely depending on the traditional way of diseases treatment. Questionnaires were prepared to ask the medicine practitioners and various informants of Tamenglong District to collect the therapeutic use of animals and its parts for treatment of diseases such as stomachache, stone case, skin diseases, sexual dysfunction, diabetes, bone joining, rheumatism etc. The Rongmei tribe used 26 species of domesticated and wild animals in treatment of various diseases. Some of the treatments have been reported to provide miraculous healings in various kinds of ailments. A specific survey was conducted to facilitate health care and to preserve useful animals and its body parts.

**Key words:** Rongmei, traditional knowledge, zootherapeutic,

North-Eastern region comprising of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura is inhabited by a large number of tribals of various ethnic groups and the region is the home of a number of primitive societies like Abor, Garo, Dafla, Khasi, Kuki, Mishi, Rabha, Naga, Apatani, etc. these ethnic communities are rich in traditional knowledge and practicing traditional healing since time immemorial<sup>7</sup>. The Rongmeis, one of the Naga tribes are scattering in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. In Manipur, they are mainly confined in the Tamenglong District. They belong to Mongoloid race and speak Tibeto-Burman dialect. Rongmeis used various animal organs for treatment of diseases.

They strongly believe that the efficacy of the medicines is losing while revealing the names of the animals used.

Although the phenomenon of zootherapy is wide spread, it has only recently aroused interest of researchers. Of the 252 essential chemicals selected by the world Health Organization, 11.1% were from plants and 8.7% from animals<sup>6</sup>. In India, nearly 15-20% of the Ayurvedic medicines are based on derived substances of the animals. The tribal live in an around forests and other difficult terrains. They acquired unique knowledge about the use of many wild floras and faunas. The treasure of

traditional knowledge if subjected to scientific scrutiny could benefit human kinds in many ways<sup>1</sup>. Number of biologists and herbalists has worked on the ethno medicinal practices of the tribes of various parts of the world. But most of their work restricted to the plants only<sup>9</sup>. Ethno zoological drugs of vertebrate origin have great importance to the Ao tribe due to the limited access of allopathic medicines, lack of medical facility, and transportation problems<sup>2,8</sup>. The recent arousal of interest in research on zotherapy is due to the fact that the number of neo-tropical fauna species is declining so rapidly as a result of hunting, degradation of their ecosystems and therapeutic use that most of them are becoming extinct even before they have been studied by science<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, it is necessary to find out all the important faunas for medicinal use and preserve their lives for the future generation. Questionnaires were being prepared for collection of information from the different local medicine men and elders belonging to different locals and compile their practices for the future references.

## Materials and methods

Data were obtained through field survey conducted from October 2015 – June 2016 by performing interview through structured questionnaires with selected people (informants) to collect information about traditional knowledge regarding use of animals and their parts. These informants were local healers, farmers, herbalists and medicine men. Data is presented as animal group, local name of Rongmei tribe (R) and Manipuri (M), common name, scientific name, parts use, disease treated and their prescription (table 1.)

## Results

Animals parts for medicinal uses by Rongmei in various kinds of diseases is summarized in the (Table 1)

Table 1. List of animals and their body parts use for therapeutic purpose by Rongmei Tribe, Manipur, India

S.No.	Animal Group	Local Name	Common Name	Scientific Name	Part Use	Disease Treated	Prescription
1	Mammal	Apang (R), Yongmu (M)	Monkey	<i>Maccaca fascicularis</i>	Bone parts and flesh	Any diseases cause by black arts, TB and stomach disorder	Bone is grinded after drying and out of which one tea spoon is mixed with water to drink  Meat of monkey is to cure TB.
2	Mammal	Jouluk (R), Kheiroi (M)	Flying squirrel	<i>Petaurista petaurista</i>	Urine, bile and flesh	Stone case and Alcoholic addict	Urine/bile is collected in the bottle and drink with water for stone case and a little amount of its urine is mixed with the food item for relieving alcoholic addict
3	Mammal	Chalung (R), Sangai (M)	Antelope	<i>Antilocapra americana</i>	Urine, tongue and bone marrow	Sprain, injury and stomach pain	A drop of Urine is applied on the injured area; Bone marrow is used as ointment for sprain. Two-three drops of Urine is drink for stomach pain

4	Mammal	Rou (R), Warak Uchi (M)	Bamboo rat	<i>Canomys</i> <i>badius</i>	fat	Treatment of wound injured caused by the thorn in the body	Fat as ointment for treatment of wound and the injured parts caused by the thorn and later on the thorns automatically come out
5	Mammal	Chagam (R), Shawom (M)	Bear	<i>Selenarctos</i> <i>thibetanus</i>	Bile and fat	Cough, typhoid, stomach disorder and boil	Mixed bile with water and drink Fat is used as ointment for boil
6	Mammal	Joukuang (R), Sabou (M)	Porcupine	<i>Erethizon</i> <i>dorsatum</i>	Stomach	Stomache, malaria ,dog cough	Piece of dried stomach is boiled in the water and drink
7	Mammal	Joutangui (R), Ikaithibi (M)	Slender Loris	<i>Loris</i> <i>tardigradus</i>	Hand/pa lm	Unconsciousness or epilepsy	The already dried palm is allowed to touch the whole body
8	Mammal	Atih (R), Kheiroi (M)	Oriental tree squirrel	<i>Callosciurus</i>	Penis	Stomache,	Grind and boil in water and drink

9	Mammal	Aram (R), Sanamba (M)	River otter	<i>Lontra canadensis</i>	Hair	Burnt	Its Hair is touched on the part of the fire burnt to get relieve
10	Mammal	Lamtuaie (R), Shekpi (M)	Bat	<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>	Whole Body	Frequent urination, male impotency	Flesh is Cooked and eaten for curing frequent urination and male impotency
11	Mammal	Phou (R), Kakcheng chaba (M)	Pangolin	<i>Manis crassicaudata</i>	Bile, bone	Pregnant woman (suspect be pregnant)	Make in the form of powder and mixed with water and drink
12	Mammal	Banthipui (R), Uchi macha (M)	Mole	<i>Talpa europaea</i>	Bile	Boil	Crushed and mixed with water and drink
13	Mammal	Ajiu (R), hameng (M)	Goat	<i>Capra aegagrus</i>	Bile& leg	Cough, stomach disorder	Bile is Mixed with water and drink Leg is cooked and eaten

14	Mammal	Mansei (R),Mi (M)	Human	<i>Homo sapiens</i>	milk	Any foreign body on eye and eye pain	Milk drop is applied on the as eye to relieve eyeache
15	Aves	Raeng (R), Ucheklang meidong (M)	Hornbill	<i>Buceros bicornis</i>	Fat	Bone joining	Applied on the injured bone area to regenerate bone
16	Aves	Phina (R), Lamkhunu (M)	Pigeon	<i>Columba livia domestica</i>	Body	weakness	Meat is cooked and eaten to relieve general weakness
17	Aves	Tiangpare ng (R),Chong alaba (M)	Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Bone, flesh and whole body	White discharge in women, stone case, erectile dysfunction and Urinating problem	Bone is grind and boil in water Cook or boil with water
18	Reptile	Rui (R), Lin (M)	Snake	Different species	Fat	Any kind of skin diseases	Cook and eat

19	Reptile	Sakse (R), Numit yungbi (M)	Tokay gecko	<i>Gekko gecko</i>	Body	Skin Cancer	Cook and eaten
20	Reptile	Thaan (R), Lairen (M)	Python	<i>Python reticulates</i>	Fat	Burn, bone joint and boil	Fat is use as ointment
21	Amphibi- an	Gou kana (R), hangoi (M)	Frog	<i>Rana tigrina</i>	Whole body	Bleeding	Cook with some amount of water
22	Mollusc	Taninang (R), Tharoi (M)	Snail (common snail)	<i>Helix aspera.</i>	Whole body	Eyes problem	Snail is boiled in the water and used as eye drops.
23	Insect	Hiangda (R), nachan (M)	Millipede	<i>Archispirostr eptus gigas</i>	Whole body	stomache	Live Body is put in the alcohol and drink

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24	Insect	Tak (R), Ma (M)	Bed bug	<i>Cimex lectularius</i>	Whole body	Unconscious/epilepsy	whole body is eaten
25	Insect	Khoidai (R), khoi biningthou (M)	Giant bee	<i>Apis dorsata</i>	Body	Unknown disease, joint pain	Alive bee is Put in the alcohol and drink
26	Insect	Khoi (R), haying khai (M)	Honey bee	<i>Melifera indica</i>	Honey	Coughing and wound	Honey is used for treatment of cough and healing wounds

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## Discussion

The study revealed that faunal resources used for zootherapeutic purpose consist of twenty six animal's species, out of which there are fourteen mammals, three birds, three reptiles, two amphibians, one mollusk and four insects. A major chunk of Rongmei tribe is confined to far flung hilly belts and depending on the natural resources for treatment of different diseases.

Similar practice has also been reported in many other tribal community from the Indian subcontinent<sup>5</sup>. Noteworthy is the observation that some of diseases particularly rheumatic joint pain, typhoid and stomach disorder were cured miraculously. In the present study, it has been observed that the Rongmei tribe is habituated for over exploitation of animals for delicious flesh. This feature has posed a serious threat to the existence of many precious wild animal species used for medicinal purposes.

There is a need of proper scientific investigation to find out the fact of its uses for the healthcare of all generation. And moreover, this compilation is not inclusive of all the animals used. Therefore, further research is required to

get all the animals used for the treatment of diseases by the Rongmei tribe.

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