

李時珍

Extraordinary Chinese People

Ancient times

Li Shizhen

李時珍



Stanford
House

Extraordinary Chinese People - Ancient Times Lǐ Shìzhēn

This is an authorized English version published under special agreement with the proprietor for sale in Hong Kong SAR, China; Macau SAR, China and Taiwan, China.

Original Simplified Chinese version
©2023 by Hebei Science & Technology Press
Written and illustrated by LANSEXIAOXIANG

English version
©2026 by Stanford House
Rm 611-612, 6th Floor, Citimark, 28 Yuen Shun Circuit, Shatin,
New Territories, Hong Kong
Tel: 852 2330 2533 Fax: 852 2330 3598

ISBN 978-962893315-0

All rights reserved. No part of this book or its images may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means without written permission from the proprietor.

Extraordinary Chinese People

Ancient times

Lí Shízhēn



*Stanford
House*

Li Shizhen (李時珍)
(1518-1593), a Chinese scholar of the Ming dynasty who compiled a highly influential materia medica, the Bencao gangmu (Compendium of Materia Medica).



Legend says that on the day Li Shizhen was born, his father Li Yanwen (李言聞) went fishing. He caught nothing all day. But in the last net, he pulled up a magical talking stone!





The stone told him,
'Hurry home!' When he
did, he found that a big,
healthy baby boy had just
been born. They named
him 'Shizhen' (石珍)
which means 'Precious
Stone.'

Of course, the talking stone was only a story. In real life, Li Shizhen was born into a family of doctors. In those days, being a doctor was not considered important, and their social standing was very low. Doctors earned little money, and learning medicine was extremely difficult—like rowing a boat against the current.



What does the name 'Shizhen' (石珍) mean?



Li Shizhen's family hoped he would take the government examinations instead of becoming a doctor. At the age of fourteen, he passed the first examination at the county level and became a 'xiucai' (秀才), which meant he was now a scholar. However, he failed the examination at the national level three times thereafter.



Finally, Li Shizhen made a brave decision. He chose to stop taking the examinations and told his father that he really wanted to become a doctor. His father had no choice but to agree.



What brave decision did Li Shizhen make after failing the national examination three times?

His father took him as an apprentice, and before long, his skills improved rapidly. Soon, he was known as a talented young doctor. His reputation spread, and people began to call him 'Doctor Rising Star.'





In 1554, the emperor ordered those outstanding doctors from across the nation be selected to serve in the Imperial Medical Bureau. Li Shizhen had cured the son of a nobleman, which made him widely known, so he was recommended to join the bureau as an officer.



Why was Li Shizhen recommended to join the Imperial Medical Bureau?