



Chinese Medicine in Contemporary China: Plurality and Synthesis (Science and Cultural Theory)

Volker Scheid

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As a traditional healing art that has established a contemporary global presence, Chinese medicine defies categories and raises many interesting questions. If Chinese medicine is "traditional," why has it not disappeared with the rest of traditional Chinese society? If, as some claim, it is a science, what does that imply about what we call science? What is the secret of Chinese medicine's remarkable adaptability that has allowed it to prosper for more than 2,000 years? In *Chinese Medicine in Contemporary China* Volker Scheid presents an ethnography of Chinese medicine that seeks to answer these questions, but his ethnography is informed by some atypical approaches.

Scheid, a medical anthropologist and practitioner of Chinese medicine in practice since 1983, has produced an ethnography that accepts plurality as an intrinsic and nonreducible aspect of medical practice. It has been widely noted that a patient visiting ten different practitioners of Chinese medicine may receive ten different prescriptions for the same complaint, yet many of these various treatments may be effective. In attempting to illuminate the plurality in Chinese medical practice, Scheid redefines-and in some cases abandons-traditional anthropological concepts such as tradition, culture, and practice in favor of approaches from disciplines such as science and technology studies, social psychology, and Chinese philosophy. As a result, his book sheds light not only on Chinese medicine but also on the Western academic traditions used to examine it and presents us with new perspectives from which to deliberate the future of Chinese medicine in a global context.

Chinese Medicine in Contemporary China is the product of two decades of research including numerous interviews and case studies. It will appeal to a western academic audience as well as practitioners of Chinese medicine and other interested medical professionals, including those from western biomedicine.

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