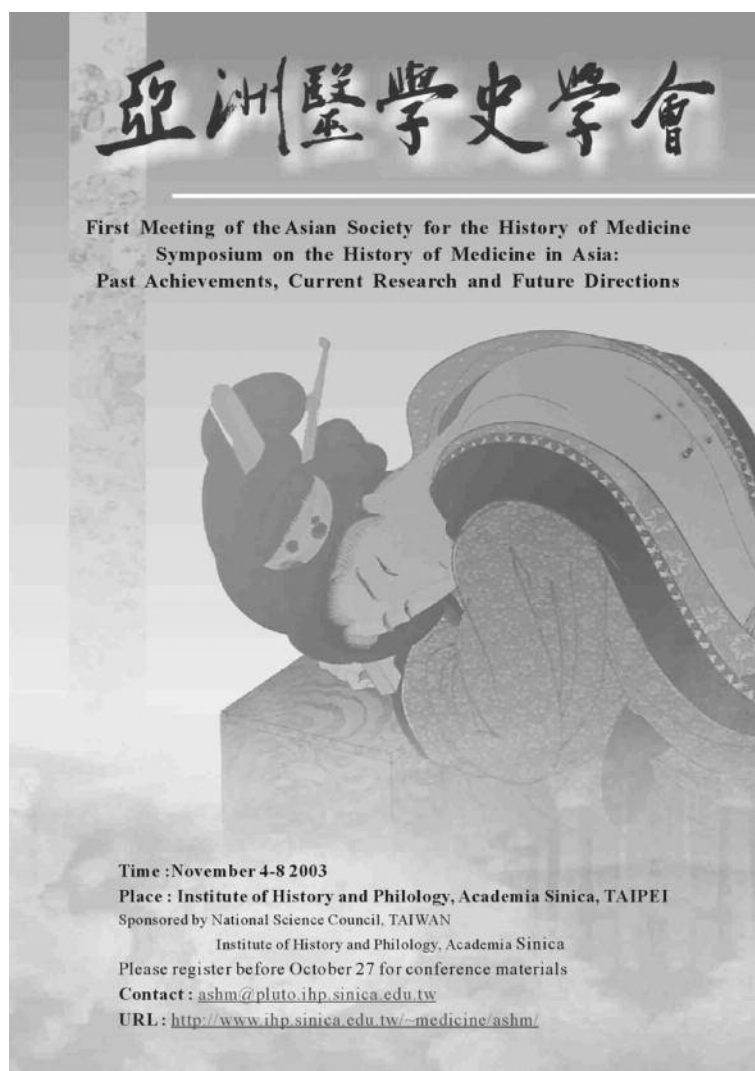


The Past as a Foreign Country:
Recent Research on Chinese Medical History in Taiwan



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“The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there.”^①

Chinese medical history is a new and flourishing field in Taiwan. A majority of the publications in this area have appeared in academic journals only in the past ten years, and the community is fairly small. Nevertheless these scholars have circulated quite a few reflections on their own research and their works have undergone a number of reviews in different occasions.^② This may have several reasons, ranging from the activeness of the participants to their needs to clarify and to defend their research interest in the academic community at large. Since most of the pioneers are trained as historians, and their followers are junior scholars in the field, they face challenges not only from their more conventional colleagues but also from medical professionals, who often consider physicians the best qualified to do medical history. Shengkun Chen (1951-1989), a medical doctor with a master's degree in history, claimed just that in his publication, which stimulates a historian's

① “The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there” is the opening sentence of L.P. Hartley's novel *The Go-between* (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 1953/1996). David Lowenthal, a British historian, uses the phrase for the title of his book, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), which focuses on the way modern people make use of historical material to their present interest, especially in the Anglo-American civilization, and the author's somewhat disapproval of it. This review, although not disagreeing with Lowenthal's assessment on modern history and historiography, applies the novel's opening sentence to denote another dimension in historical research in which the foreignness of the past is taken seriously enough that historians feel compelled to conduct an anthropological observation in order to overcome the difficulties of understanding those who lived in the worlds before us. This foreignness and the efforts involved to overcome it may have and perhaps should have existed in historical research in general, but they are, as will be shown in this review, particularly evident when scholars in Taiwan work on the history of Chinese medicine.

② These reviews take various forms from correspondence notes in academic newsletters to review articles in conference and academic journals. For instance, Cheng-sheng Tu, “A note on medical history as social history: introducing the achievements of the ‘disease, healing and culture’ research group,” *New History* 6:1(1995), pp. 113-151. Cheng-sheng Tu, “Medicine, society and culture: an alternative perspective on medical history,” *New History* 8:4(1997), pp. 143-172. Jianmin Li (review of and co-author with Jinsheng Zheng), “Origins of medical history in modern China,” *The Continent Magazine* 95:6(1997), pp. 26-35. Jianmin Li, “Probing a new area of study: how the study group on life and medical history at the Institute of History and Philology came about,” *Disquisitions of the Past and Present* 1(1998), pp. 59-62. Pingyi Chu, “A prospect of researches on history of science, technology, and medicine in Taiwan: an analysis of a contemporary Taiwan's scholarly community,” *Taiwan Historical Research* 4:2(1999), pp. 157-174. Most recently, Chia-Feng Chang, “A General Review on the History of Chinese Medicine in China and Taiwan, 1919-1999,” paper presented in the International Workshop on Médecine en Chine, Techniques de Santé et Histoire Sociale, Paris: CNRS/EHESS; et l'Institut des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Collège de France (2000), 14pages.

long and thorough review article on his works as well as his assumptions.^③ Before his premature death, Chen researched Chinese medical history and interacted with medical historians in the academy on many occasions, both aided with and confined by his knowledge of modern medicine.^④ There are other physicians since Chen who have devoted themselves to the study of traditional Chinese medicine, and their major goal lies in the integration of Chinese and western medicine in clinical applications.^⑤

For most of the historians in recent Taiwan who work on China's medical past, however, neither clinical values nor a degree in medicine typify their research or their affiliation.^⑥ Some of them may not even consider themselves primarily "medical historians."^⑦ Their scholarship includes so many subjects and their convictions involve such diversities that that which holds the scholars together as a community can only be recognized through comparison with other groups of researchers. To this reviewer, what characterizes these scholars is their anthropological approach toward the Chinese medical tradition, which is still very much practiced in contemporary Taiwan.

③ See Jianmin Li, "A Reappraisal of traditional medical historiography: perspectives on *The Collection of Dr. Sheng-k'un Ch'en*," *New History* 3:3 (1992), pp. 123-148.

④ For the merit and limitation of Shengkun Chen's application of modern medicine in his historical research, see Jianmin Li, "A Reappraisal of traditional medical historiography: perspectives on *The Collection of Dr. Sheng-k'un Ch'en*," pp. 123-148.

⑤ For Taiwanese doctors' efforts to integrate Chinese and western medicine through the study of medical history, see Chia-feng Chang, "A General Review on the History of Chinese Medicine in China and Taiwan, 1919-1999".

⑥ That is not to say, however, that their works do not originate from or reveal their concerns for medical practices of their society. It is that the inspirations are treated with more sophistication and the suggestions are expressed in indirect manners. This is the position taken by Sean Hsiang-lin Lei when he concludes his research on doctor-patient relationship of the early twentieth century. See Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, "Accountable doctor and loyal patient: transformation of doctor-patient relationship in the republican period," *New History* 14:1(2003), pp. 45-96. This attitude may be taken by some scholars as part of the conventional ideas about "scientific and objective" historiography, but it is also strongly inspired by a new understanding of historical research as a constant revisits and reconstructions of the past.

⑦ Some see themselves as social or cultural historians who apply medical documents in research while others may consider history of science their primary subject and medicine is only one section of it.

For quite a long time and well into recent decades, researchers in China, most often medical practitioners themselves, have borne the burden to make known the enormous discoveries in, or tremendous accomplishments of, traditional Chinese medicine in its progressive history.⁸ Scholars in Taiwan, however, view historical research not as a tool to prove or to discredit the validity of traditional Chinese medicine, but rather as a venue to explore the past. When Ping-chen Hsiung and Angela K.C. Leung, both historians based in the Academia Sinica in Taipei, first published their articles on late imperial Chinese medicine in the late 1980s, their main concerns were not to show the progress of medicine but to tackle issues such as regional differences in population growth and interactions between state and society through medical care.⁹

In 1992, when Cheng-sheng Tu started the “Study Group of Disease, Healing and Culture” with some of his colleagues and students in the Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica,¹⁰ his primary goal was to “put flesh to the skeleton of social history”

⁸ Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has been entangled with China’s nationalism since the early twentieth century, fighting for legitimacy not only against western trained physicians but also imperialism as a whole. Some of the devoted researchers in the trend were categorized either as *fangxianpai* (the group that identifies discoveries) or *chengjiupai* (the group that identifies achievements), and their works bear the responsibility of preserving a nation through its heritage. For these terms and their meanings in medical historiography of the twentieth century China, see Jianmin Li (review of and co-author with Jinsheng Zheng), “Origins of medical history in modern China,” pp. 26-35. Also, see Jianmin Li, “Review of Zhao Hongjun’s *The Epoch of Huangdineijing*,” *New History* 8:4 (1997), pp. 173-186. For arguments and competition between western medical doctors and traditional Chinese medical practitioners, see Sean Hsiang-Lin Lei, *When Chinese Medicine Encountered the State, 1910-1949*, Ph.D. dissertation (Chicago: Conceptual Foundation of Science, University of Chicago, 1999). Recent reviews on medical history in China, however, suggest changes in research subjects but not much in scholars’ background or the ambition to identify the many “firsts of the world” in China’s medical past. See Jingwei Li and Zhibin Zhang, “Zhongguo yixueshi yanjiu liushinian” [Sixty years of study on Chinese medical history], *Zhonghua yishi zazhi* [*Chinese journal of medical history*] 26:3 (1996), pp. 129-136.

⁹ For instance, Ping-chen Hsiung, “Preliminary studies on the regional development of pediatric medicine in Qing dynasty China,” *Proceedings on Regional Studies of Late Imperial China* (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1986), pp. 17-41. Ping-chen Hsiung, “Newborn and infant care in early modern China,” *Papers on Society and Culture of Early Modern China* (Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 1987), pp. 387-428. Angela K.C. Leung, “Organized Medicine in Ming-Qing China: State and Private Medical Institutions in the Lower Yangzi Region,” *Late Imperial China* 8:1(1987), pp.134-166. Angela K.C. Leung, “Smallpox preventive measures during the Ming and the Qing,” *Inquiry on Chinese history* (Taipei: Shihuo chubanshe, 1987), pp. 239-253.

¹⁰ The study group was renamed in 1997 as “Research Group of the History of Health and Healing” and continues to be one of the most active groups in the institute. For its past and current projects, see <http://www.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/%7Emedicine/>

rather than simply identifying medical achievements.¹¹ Although some of his publications since early 1990s have investigated the conceptualization of *qi* and *jingmai*, two of the most important elements in traditional Chinese medicine, his self-reflection in 1997 still claims that both he and his colleagues are not working on the “internal history” of medicine, a task he courteously declares belonged to trained medical practitioners. However, reluctant to categorize the works of his group as “external history” either, Tu settles with a new term, “alternative medical history.”¹²

Since its definition relies more on “what it is not” than on “what it is,” this “alternative medical history” includes subjects and approaches of many kinds. Tu stands by his social and cultural proposal even when he examines the interactions between medicine and the ideas of life in China’s antiquity.¹³ Some of his colleagues, while studying the regional lifestyles and related public policies of early imperial China, take a step further by conjecturing names of parasites and diseases as recorded in historical material, with the help of modern parasitology and pathology.¹⁴ To recruit modern medical knowledge in identifying historical terms is a major approach in medical history since the early twentieth

¹¹ Cheng-sheng Tu first proposes the study of medical history in his publication when he reviews the state of field of Chinese social history in 1992. In the article, he evaluates earlier research on social strata and social systems as have displayed only the “skeleton of the society” and suggests more studies of the “flesh” so that a fuller picture of traditional society can be portrayed. To explore the “flesh” of society, Tu proposes several sub-fields and includes the history of diseases and medicine in the category of “history of conceptions and experiences of life.” See Cheng-sheng Tu, “What is ‘New Social History?’” *New History* 3:4(1992), pp. 95-116.

¹² Tu publishes two reflection-reviews on the works of his and his colleagues’, one in 1995, the other in 1997. In the first one, he categorizes their works as social history and in the second, as alternative medical history. See Cheng-sheng Tu, “A note on Medical History as Social History,” pp. 113-151, and Tu, “Medicine, Society and Culture: an Alternative Perspective on Medical History,” pp. 143-172. For his works on *qi*, the vital air, and *jingmai*, the vessels and channels system, see Cheng-sheng Tu, “Body, Vitality, and Soul: the Understanding of ‘Self’ in Chinese Tradition,” *New History* 2:3(1991), pp. 1-65, and Cheng-Sheng Tu, “On the Formation of Traditional Vessels and Channels System and the Historical Status of the Texts on Vessels and Channels from Mawangdui,” *Collection of Research on the Archaeology of Mawangdui Han Tomb* (Hunan: Hunan chubanshe, 1992), pp. 99-106.

¹³ Cheng-sheng Tu, “From venerability to longevity: changes in ancient Chinese concepts of life,” *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 66:2(1995), pp. 383-487.

¹⁴ Fan Hsiao, “The physical environment and endemic diseases in ancient south China and their impact on human activities as viewed from the documents of Han through Song times,” *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 63:1(1993), pp. 67-171. Also, Fan Hsiao, “On a human parasitic disease: Sparganosis Mansonii in Chinese history,” *New History* 6:2(1995), pp. 45-66.

century. This approach is still used by advocates of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and their opponents either to prove the advancement of TCM or to question it. Historians, not necessarily in either of the opposing camps, who apply such methods in research, often feel the need to ascertain “real nosological units” in history. ¹⁵

However, most medical historians in Taiwan seem to have refrained from such an approach, considering traditional Chinese medicine and modern biology two totally different categories of knowledge, which undergo continuous changes that call for historical examination. Shang-jen Li, one of the junior members of the group, expresses his disagreement with this approach in his recent study of leprosy in late nineteenth century China. ¹⁶ He points out the importance of practices, such as the standardization of research tools, training of practitioners and constant revisions of theories, in modern science. Since nosological units are inseparable from these practices, it is both unnecessary and futile to identify modern medical terms in historical materials. ¹⁷ His position is not without precedent. In her study of *li* and *lai*, two of the Chinese terms most often taken as denoting modern leprosy, Angela K.C. Leung examines their conceptual and categorical changes throughout history and demonstrates a nosological world foreign to the germ theory. ¹⁸

Other scholars who work on the history of diseases also find it rewarding to free historical material from modern nosology. Chia-feng Chang examines epidemics in medical texts of early imperial China and portrays a contemporary etiology in which a disorder could be set off by several different causes. Since diseases that appeared to have been “contagious” could also be triggered by reasons such as fatigue or dietary imbalance, the care and cure of patients became diversified. ¹⁹ Fu-shih Lin investigates conceptions of

¹⁵ Paul Unschuld, “Traditional Chinese Medical Theory and Real Nosological Units: the Case of Hansen’s Disease,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 17:1(1985), pp. 5-8.

¹⁶ Shang-jen Li, “British medical studies on Chinese leprosy in late nineteenth century,” *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 74:3(2003), pp. 445-506.

¹⁷ Shang-jen Li, “British medical studies on Chinese leprosy in late nineteenth century.”

¹⁸ Angela K.C. Leung, “The Historical nosology of *li* and *lai* in China,” *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 7:2(1999), pp. 339-433.

¹⁹ Chia-feng Chang, “The Conceptions of Contagion in Chinese Medicine: a Case from *zhubing yuanhou lun* (610),” *Historical Inquiry* 27(2001), pp. 37-82.

diseases, the body they inflicted as well as the advice solicited both in religious and medical texts and argues that the distinction between religion and medicine in traditional China was hardly decisive.²⁰

Changing nosological systems in various historical periods reveal different conceptions of the body, the nature as well as the society. Since medicine is considered intertwined with the society in which it was practiced, careful studies of a certain historical period instead of general surveys covering thousands years of China's past becomes an important feature in the writings of medical historians in Taiwan.²¹ In order to provide thick descriptions for the many-faced practices of medicine, historians pore over all kinds of materials, not just medical documents, do textual analysis on related issues, and make use of theoretical literature from other fields. For instance, Cheng-sheng Tu pays tribute to the ethnographers of the early twentieth century for his understanding of traditional Chinese medical practices. Such is also the case for Jianmin Li, who acknowledges the influence of anthropological and ethnographical works in his pursuit of medical conceptualization of the body in ancient China. Fu-shih Lin, on one occasion, categorizes the research of his and his colleagues as "historical anthropology." On the other hand, Jen-der Lee's serial articles on women's medicine shows a feminist flavor and dialogue with gender studies. For many of the young scholars trained in the Anglo-American universities, science studies become an important

²⁰Fu-shih Lin, "A discussion of the concept of illness in the T'ai-p'ing-ching," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 62:2(1993), pp. 225-263; Fu-shih Lin, "Epidemics and religions in late Han China," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 66:3(1995), pp. 695-745; Fu-shih Lin, "Shamans and healing in China during the Six Dynasties Period (3rd-6th Century A.D.)," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 70:1(1999), pp. 1-48; Fu-shih Lin, "Medical activities and healing arts of Taoists in medieval China: a preliminary study based on hagiographic material of the Han, Wei-Chin and Northern and Southern Dynasties," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 73:1(2002), pp. 43-118.

²¹This of course could only be the partial reason. Since most departments of history in Taiwan's universities design the curriculum and recruit new faculties based on dynastic periodization instead of specialty of fields, most historians are trained to study and required to publish first and foremost within their specialized dynastic periods. The curriculum is somewhat changed since Taiwanese history and world history become important compartments of the field in the last decade of the twentieth century. But most of the publishing conventions seem to have sustained, although not without merits. For more discussion on the impact of curriculum and recruitment on the development of historiography, see Pingyi Chu, "A prospect of researches on history of science, technology, and medicine in Taiwan: an analysis of a contemporary Taiwan's scholarly community," pp. 157-174.

intellectual resource in their quest of medical history.²² Full of information and arguments, their articles are often loaded with notes.²³

In addition to nosology, scholars also take note of historical changes in different medical areas and are therefore very careful in applying names of modern medical specialties to designate the fields of their research. Without taking the specialization in modern medicine for granted, historians try to place their subjects in a historical context and to grasp the process in which these sub-fields were either born or transformed. In her studies on women's medicine, Jen-der Lee demonstrates how reproductive techniques shifted from the "arts of the bedchamber" to medical recipes, both belonged to the same division of scholarship in early imperial China, and thus not only transferred the reproductive responsibility from men to women but also gave birth to "Chinese gynecology" through a gendered discourse of the body.²⁴ Different conceptualizations of the body reveal different medical systems and vice versa. In his long and winding intellectual journey to explore

²² For the self-claims and reflections of these scholars and their intellectual resources, see Cheng-sheng Tu, "A note on medical history as social history: introducing the achievements of the 'disease, healing and culture' research group," pp. 113-151; Jianmin Li, "A Reappraisal of traditional medical historiography: perspectives on *The Collection of Dr. Sheng-kun Ch'en*," pp. 123-148; Fu-shih Lin, "Historical Anthropology: Old Tradition and New Development," in *Historical and Methodological Reflections on the Development of Modern Chinese Humanities: A Collection of Papers in Celebration of the Seventieth Anniversary of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* (Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 1998), pp. 365-399. Jen-der Lee, "Distinguished women, gender and historical studies," *Bulletin of Women and Gender Studies* 50 (Taipei: Center for the Population and Gender Studies, National Taiwan University, 1999), pp. 19-26. Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, "Techno-science, democracy, and society in transformation: challenges for STS," *Taiwan: a Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* 45(2002), pp. 123-171; and Pingyi Chu, "A prospect of researches on history of science, technology, and medicine in Taiwan: an analysis of a contemporary Taiwan's scholarly community," pp. 157-174.

²³ The lengthy and footnote-loaded feature does not appear exclusively in the articles of medical history. In her review, Chia-feng Chang points out that many of the young scholars from the Institute of History and Philology, "following the traditional spirit of the Academia Sinica, excel at collating medical sources and at delicate textual research." See Chia-feng Chang, "A General Review on the History of Chinese Medicine in China and Taiwan, 1919-1999." For the history of applying footnotes in academic historical writings in Taiwan, see Jen-der Lee, "Readers Dis/Oriented in Historical Writings: Footnotes in the *BIHP*," *Disquisitions of the Past and Present* 9 (Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 2003), pp. 35-50.

²⁴ Jen-der Lee, "Reproductive medicine in late antiquity and early medieval China: gender discourse and the birth of gynecology," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 68:2(1997), pp. 283-367.

Chinese medicine, Jianmin Li explains the significance of *shushu*, the techniques of numbers used in ancient China to conceptualize nature, the world and the human body.²⁵

Since the body was understood through references different from what it is in modern medicine, the precious record of dissection in China's antiquity will be better interpreted, according to Jianmin Li, as a display of power instead of the foreground of "Chinese anatomy."²⁶ Likewise, as Chung-lin Chiu impressively shows in his studies, the "cutting of one's flesh to heal one's parents," allegedly practiced by generations of filial youngsters since the 7th century, concerns more than a few issues ranging from the political economy of health care to the widely held notion of the body as medicine.²⁷ Therefore, rather than finding faults in classical ethics, Daw-hwan Wang suggests the lack of anatomy in China's long medical history requires scrutiny from within the medical conceptualization of the body, which still influenced what Chinese doctors would have seen in early modern times, when they finally opened the cadaver.²⁸

In fact, the interaction between traditional Chinese medicine and its western counterpart is understood neither as a lineal progression nor as competitive relation. Pingyi Chu's research on the seventeenth century contact suggests constant reconstruction of political and religious ideas through medical discourse for both the Jesuits and their Chinese followers.²⁹ Toward the end of the imperial period, doctors and patients in the highest echelons engaged in a therapeutic tug of war, as informatively illustrated by Che-chia

²⁵Jianmin Li, *Mai and the Development of Medical Knowledge in Early China* (Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 2000, December 2001 third edition), 435pages.

²⁶For the meanings of dissection in early China, see Jianmin Li, "The Body on Display: Human Dissection in Han China," *New History* 10:4(1999), pp. 1-30.

²⁷Chung-lin Chiu, "The human-flesh as medicine and the idea of 'vitalism': the medical idea of the behavior of 'cutting flesh to heal parent' from Sui-Tang dynasty to modern China," *New History* 10:4 (1999), pp. 67-116.

²⁸Classical ethics that forbade a filial son to harm his own body, not even his hair or skin, was once easily picked up as the reason for the lack of anatomy in Chinese medicine. For early modern Chinese doctors' experience in human anatomy, see Daw-hwan Wang, "Wang Ch'ing-jen on Human Anatomy," *New History* 6:1(1995), pp. 95-112.

²⁹Pingyi Chu, "The Flesh, the Soul and the Lord: Jesuit Discourse of the Body in Seventeenth-Century China," *New History* 7:2(1994), pp. 47-98; and Pingyi Chu, "Medicine East and West: Wang Honghan's Synthesis of Medicine, Christianity and Confucianism," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 70:1(1999), pp. 165-201.

Chang, which involved all sorts of prescriptions and their political as well as cultural ramifications.³⁰ For modern historians, the encounter between the east and the west in the early twentieth century is an even more sophisticated network in which the nation state, cultural heritage, and professional communities were formed, transformed and translated. As Sean Hsiang-lin Lei points out ingeniously, when Chinese drugs were singled out by western trained physicians and opponents of traditional Chinese medicine as the best representative of TCM, Chinese doctors, for fear of their own exclusion from the whole scene, began to found societies, to embrace “experience” as their expertise and to debate about the embarrassing essentiality of the two-thousand-year old medical theories.³¹

Through an unpredictable process of changes, traditional Chinese medicine, as we understand it today, in the end wears a different face from how it existed in earlier historical times. Research on the “modernization” and “scientification” of Chinese medicine in the last century gives a vivid example of how medicine is not just “embedded in” society nor does it simply “interact with” culture. It is in fact, through different sets of time-specific and place-specific practices by different people, a certain kind of society and culture.³² To view medicine from such perspective, scholars find it not only useful but also crucial to conduct anthropological observations of the subjects under study.³³ Just like research on any other subjects in the history of science, the “internal” and “external” division of medical history becomes insignificant, and the humbly self-declared “alternative medical history” may now discreetly move to the front.

³⁰ Che-chia Chang, *The Therapeutic Tug of War - The Imperial Physician-patient Relationship in the Era of Empress Dowager Cixi (1874-1908)*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Pennsylvania, 1999).

³¹ Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, *When Chinese Medicine Encountered the State, 1910-1949*; Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, “From Changshan to a New Anti-Malarial Drug: Re-Networking Chinese Drugs and Excluding Chinese Doctors,” *Social Studies of Science* 29:3(1999), pp. 323-358; Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, “How Did Chinese Medicine Become Experiential? The Political Epistemology of *Jingyan*,” *Positions* 10:2(2002), pp. 333-364.

³² Chia-feng Chang also argues for this understanding of medical history in her review. See Chia-feng Chang, “A General Review on the History of Chinese Medicine in China and Taiwan, 1919-1999.”

³³ Sean Hsiang-lin Lei proposes this from his knowledge in science studies. See Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, “Technoscience, democracy, and society in transformation: challenges for STS,” pp. 123-171.

Interestingly, the dismissal of the internal/external division of medical history in Taiwan coincides with the time when some young scholars join the community, only a few years ago. They come from different backgrounds but have something in common: their first degrees are not history, but are those from either medical school or college of sciences, and they often receive their Ph.D. from an Anglo-American academy with a focus on either science studies or history of science. Some of them regularly write in English and submit their papers to academic journals of science studies and history of science in the west. They aim at intellectual exchanges not only with Sinologists but also with historians of science and medicine in other cultural heritages. Encouraged by scholarly communities of STS (Science, Technology and Society) on the Internet and aided with the recent promotion of both local history and world history in Taiwan, this small group of medical historians so far seems to have found no difficulties in lively intellectual conversations and collaborations.³⁴

In Taiwan, traditional Chinese medicine never leaves people's daily lives, yet China's medical past is researched as an anthropological topic from the onset and now this approach has been transformed in part into a new development of science studies. The subject under research is so familiar as if it required a certain intellectual distance to see it clearly. Nevertheless, the recognition of its foreignness has so far served the historians well and has enhanced curious exploration and thorough examination. Hopefully, this attitude toward our past will continue to work as a motive for inquisitive studies and also as a promise to continuous growth of not only medical history but also Taiwan's historiography in general.

³⁴The STS website set up by Daiwie Fu at the National Tsinghua University (Xinzhong), which started out as a mailing list in 1998, has now become a virtual community constantly filled with lively input from young scholars on all kinds of STS subjects related to Taiwan, China and beyond. See <http://sts.nthu.edu.tw/>

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