

Book Reviews

MEDICINE IN CHINESE CULTURES:

Comparative Studies of Health Care in Chinese and Other Societies. Kleinman, A., Kunstadter, P., Alexander, E.R., and Gale, J.L. (editors), Department of Health, Education and Welfare, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1975. pp. 803. U.S. \$11.

THE BOOK is a compilation of papers and discussions contributed to a conference, *Comparative Study of Traditional and Modern Medicine in Chinese Societies*, sponsored by the University of Washington and the Fogarty International Centre, National Institutes of Health, and held in Seattle, Washington, February 4-6, 1974. It has a total of 49 chapters grouped into five interconnected sections covering the following subjects: medical systems in Chinese societies; medical systems on the periphery of China; demographic and epidemiological aspects of medicine in Chinese culture; research implications of both the study of medicine in Chinese societies and of comparative medical studies; and practical implications of these twin subjects for health care systems in developing countries and the United States.

As was intended, the book reflects the interdisciplinary mix of the conference participants the largest group of whom were anthropologists. Other contributors included several sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, epidemiologists, historians, and physicians. The consequently broad approach is

laudable but the intended desire to bridge interdisciplinary differences is only minimally achieved. Many of the contributions are heavily weighted with disciplinary prejudices and approaches.

Another major limitation of the book, as well as the conference which it reflects, is the almost total dominance by participants from the United States. With the notable exception of one sociologist from Hongkong, none of the "native" Chinese either from the People's Republic of China or from the overseas Chinese who were the focus of the conference and of the book were included. It cannot be said that there were no qualified Chinese "natives" in the several disciplines brought together at the conference. Surely out of the more than 600 million Chinese in Asia that would be inexcusable. As noted by the editors, participants from the PRC were invited but did not participate. Contributions from the other Chinese in Asia would have enriched both the conference as well as the book.

In spite of these major weaknesses, this book represents a major collection of contributions in health care in Chinese societies. Because of its interdisciplinary approach it is particularly unique, yet difficult to read. Each reader must select what is useful to him from the mass of contributions contained in this 803 paged source book.

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