



Chinese Medicine Masquerading as Yi

Rhonda Chang

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In this book Rhonda Chang reminds us that before the introduction of Western medicine into China, medicine was Yi. Then Yi became Zhong Yi (Chinese medicine) as opposed to Xi Yi, which was Western medicine. Beginning in the 1950s, the Chinese government made concerted efforts to reformulate Yi with modern western science and developed a Chinese new medicine which would use herbs, acupuncture and still manage to discourse with some of the old terminology of Yi. How this new medicine was created was by stripping away the traditional theories of yinyang and wuxing and replacing them with a concept called bianzheng lunzhi which hoped to mimic a Western biomedical approach to the body and healing. This new medicine nevertheless would masquerade as traditional and Chinese but the methods of matching pseudo-traditional diagnosis and ancient formulas with modern biomedical categories of disease has only been a prescription for failure and incoherence.

As well as outlining the historical substitution of Yi by contemporary Chinese medicine, Chang argues that this medical substitution was fundamentally a process of self-colonisation, the result itself due to western imperialism and colonialism, and also in line with a long list of practices and ideas that twentieth century intellectuals in China rejected for being backward, feudal and unscientific.

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