The Triumph of Practicality
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The
Triumph of Practicality

TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN HEALTH CARE UTILIZATION IN SELECTED ASIAN COUNTRIES

Edited by
STELLA R. QUAH
National University of Singapore

Social Issues in Southeast Asia
INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
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Yuet-wah Cheung, Ph.D., is a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His areas of specialization are medical sociology and sociology of deviance. He has published numerous articles in professional international journals such as Social Science & Medicine, Human Organization, Canadian Criminology Forum, Sociological Focus, Medical Anthropology, Reviews in Anthropology, Asian Profile, and the International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice, and contributed a number of chapters in books. His recent publication is Missionary Medicine in China: A Study of Two Canadian Protestant Missions in China before 1937 (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1988).
Rance P.L. Lee, Ph.D., is Professor of Sociology, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chinese University of Hong Kong; Director of the Institute of Social Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong; and Secretary-Treasurer of the Research Committee on the Sociology of Health, International Sociological Association. His major areas of research include interaction between traditional and modern health care systems, problems of high-density living, and stress-coping strategies in Chinese culture. He has contributed over seventy papers in academic journals and as chapters in books. He is also the author of many books, among which are Hong Kong Economic, Social and Political Studies in Development (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1979); Social Life and Development in Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981); The People’s Commune and Rural Development (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981); and Statistical Analysis in Social Research (in Chinese) (Wubei, China: People’s Press, 1987); and the editor of Corruption and Its Control in Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981).

Li Jing-wei is Professor and Director of the China Institute of Medical History and Medical Literature, China Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine; Deputy Director of the Society of History of Medicine, Chinese Medical Association; and Council Member of the Chinese Society of History of Science and Technology. His research interests cover various aspects of the history of traditional Chinese medicine, and he has written extensively on the history of Chinese medicine. He is the chief editor of “Fascicle on Medical History”, Encyclopaedia of Traditional Chinese Medicine (in Chinese) and Dictionary of Historical Figures of Traditional Chinese Medicine (in Chinese); and co-author of A Complete Dictionary of Traditional Chinese Medicine (in Chinese).

Tsunetsugu Munakata, Ph.D., is Director of the Division of Society and Culture Research, National Institute of Mental Health, Japan. His research interests include medical sociology, health psychology, and transcultural analysis. He is the author of, among many publications, Seishin Iryo no Shakaigaku [Sociology of mental health treatment] (Tokyo: Koubundo, 1984) and Kou dokugakukara Mita Kenko to Byoki [Behavioural science of health and illness] (Tokyo: Medical Friend Co., 1987); and

**Stella R. Quah**, Ph. D., is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore and Vice Chairperson of the Research Committee on the Sociology of Health, International Sociological Association. She has published papers in professional international journals and chapters in books in the areas of social policy, medical sociology, and sociology of the family. Among her publications are *Balancing Autonomy and Control: The Case of Professionals in Singapore* (Cambridge: Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1984) and *Between Two Worlds. Modern Wives in a Traditional Setting* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1988). She is the co-author (with Jon S.T. Quah) of *Friends in Blue: The Police and the Public in Singapore* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987) and the co-compiler (with Jon S.T. Quah) of *Singapore* (Oxford: CLIO Press, 1988).

**Santhat Sermsri**, Ph.D., is Associate Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand; and Board Member of the ASEAN Training Center for Primary Health Care Development in Bangkok. His research interests include health services utilization, social impact of health, and social demography. He is the co-author (with J.N. Riley) of *The Variegated Thai Medical System as a Context for Birth Control Services* (Bangkok: Institute for Population and Social Research, 1974); and the author of *Impact of Rapid Urbanization on Health Status in Thailand* (Bangkok: Project of Applied Social Sciences to the Development of Population Activities and Family Planning, Mahidol University, 1986).

**Kyoichi Sonoda**, Ph.D., is Professor of Sociology in the School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tokyo. He has published numerous papers on health and illness behaviour and attitudes in Japan, including the utilization of health services. Among his recent publications is *Proceedings of the Second Asian Conference on Health and Medical Sociology*, which he edited jointly with E. Isomura and others (Tokyo: Japanese Society of Health and Medical Sociology, 1987).
Preface

The idea for this volume began taking shape during the preparation for the session on traditional and modern medicine, which was one of the sessions organized by the Research Committee on Medical Sociology (now Sociology of Health) of the International Sociological Association (ISA) as part of the XIth World Congress of Sociology held in New Delhi in August 1984. I was invited by the Chairman of the Committee, Ray Elling, to organize that session. Three of the papers presented in the session, namely, the paper on Hong Kong, Sonoda’s paper on Japan, and the paper on China, were selected for inclusion in this volume. They appear here, revised and enlarged, as Chapters 5, 3, and 2, respectively. Their contributors, Rance Lee, Yuet-wah Cheung, Kyoichi Sonoda, and Li Jing-wei, had worked extensively on the study of medical systems from
different perspectives and were specially invited to participate in the ISA Congress. For the other chapters, I approached Tsunetsugu Munakata from Japan and Santhi Sermrei of Thailand, prompted by their valuable contributions to the study of medical systems in their respective countries. Sonoda’s chapter provides an overview of the link between traditional and modern medicine in Japan while Munakata centres on the more specific area of mental health, which is a very relevant aspect in the high-technology and rapid pace of life in Japan in the 1980s. One of the main contributions of this book is that it offers the views of social scientists from the countries studied. Of course, we paid the price in terms of time. Indeed, as is common in collaborative efforts, the bulk of the revision work was done by correspondence. However, in the spring of 1988, I had the opportunity to go to Beijing to finalize the chapter on China.

The main aim of this study is to present current documentation on the resilience of the traditional medicine system in Asian nations undergoing rapid modernization and to explore the reasons for people’s persistent combination of modern and traditional medical resources in their everyday life. The intended audience for this book is the growing number of social scientists interested in medical systems, problems of modernization and tradition, and the process of modernization and its consequences in Asia. But the book will also offer useful information, as a reference volume, to modern medical practitioners and medical students, particularly those concerned with public health and working in Asia.

Finally, I am indebted to the kind and valuable inspiration I received from the writings of Professors Charles Leslie and Ray Elling and the ideas I have been fortunate to obtain personally from both of them on various occasions over the years. I wish to express my appreciation to the six contributors for their kind co-operation in putting together this volume. Without their goodwill and scholarly spirit this work could not have been possible.

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Stella R. Quah
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