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Professor Unschuld's latest work on medicine in China is a gorgeous volume. It is large, handsomely produced, and contains a multitude of vivid photographs and illustrations. The book also includes informative, wide-ranging essays on the theoretical, social, and cultural contexts of medicine in China. Laymen seeking an introduction to Chinese healing history will be well served by this volume. It is the sort of work that one could enthusiastically recommend (with the addition of only one or two caveats) for the enlightenment of colleagues in Western medical history. Specialists in the history of Chinese healing traditions will also find this an extremely valuable work, primarily delightful and only mildly disappointing on a few points.

The first one hundred pages of the book contain six essays written by Professor Unschuld and nicely translated into English by Sabine Wilms. The essays provide overviews of 1) Chinese medical theory and history; 2) the high and low textual traditions; 3) drugs and pharmacies; 4) physicians, patients, and the social context of healing; 5) healing, magic, and popular religion; and 6) medicine in art and literature. Professor Unschuld has written on many of these topics before, but even those familiar with his work will appreciate the compact comprehensiveness of these essays. Particularly useful are sections on folk healing and religious healing, which include extensive excerpts translated from diverse sources. Here the reader will find engrossing passages such as speaking points from an itinerant doctor's dialogue book on how to convince patients to part with their money, or personal dedications to Sun Simiao that have been written on slips of paper and tucked in the back of statues of the Medicine King. There will be disagreement on the terms used in the translations (a point discussed in the essays). The lack of notes to the translations may also make some passages sound like so much balderdash to those unfamiliar with Chinese medical theory. Nevertheless, on the whole, both specialist and layman alike will find the essays quite useful — as long as the layman supplements this book with other works on the terminology of Chinese medicine.

The value of the essay section is enhanced by the presence of numerous medically themed black and white images, ranging from unreconstructed Mawangdui yoga illustrations to stills from the 1922 Shanghai film, *A Laborer's Love*. Portraits of itinerant doctors, photographs of pharmacies, scenes from
illustrated fiction, and reproductions of cheaply printed pharmacy handbills give an excellent sense of the social context of healing in late imperial China. The sequence of images and text are nicely coordinated. Readers will also be delighted to find that almost all of the Chinese text contained within the images, or images of texts themselves (handwritten manuscripts, talismans, etc) are translated into English. This is a rare and tremendously helpful addition which makes these images a unique resource for the teaching of Chinese medical history.

The overall utility of the work (particularly for the lay reader) could be improved with the addition of guidance on how to look at specific images. Traditional Chinese images do not speak to the modern viewer in a directly comprehensible 'language,' or rather, the modern (not just Western) viewer brings an entirely different set of expectations to illustrations than those possessed by the viewer of late imperial China. This is particularly the case with images of the body and representations of the body's functions. To the modern viewer, Chinese illustrations of bodies appear asymmetrical and overly schematic, devoid of muscles or organs. Diagrams representing the pulses appear as so many incomprehensible dashes and dots. Particularly for readers in the field of western medical history, these images will simply confirm long-held suspicions that the Chinese resisted standardization, could not see the obvious, and 'just didn't get it' about anatomy. Here insights from recent work by Shigehisa Kuriyama would be instructive. Pulse illustrations can be seen as important advances in the thorny problem of how to standardize tactile sensations. The acupuncturist was more interested in the relative distances between key points than the symmetry or 'accuracy' of the overall representation of the human figure. Chinese physicians were very keen observers of the body, but they looked for different things, such as surface colors or hues that would reveal the workings of invisible processes below the skin. As for muscles, it is the modern eye that has been tutored to expect them in 'realistic' illustrations of the body — when in reality they are, for the most part, invisible. Without any such attempt to guide the modern eye, it is possible that some images here will be seen primarily as exotic representations of the inferiority of Chinese medicine.

The last one hundred pages of the book are marvelous plates, mostly color, of Chinese medical artifacts. In a move that may surprise lay-readers, the most frequently represented artifact in the book is not the acupuncture needle or the acupuncture chart, but the lowly 'pharmacy delivery bottle,' the tiny porcelain containers that held the healing pills and powders of Chinese medicine in pre-revolutionary China. Indeed, the jacket cover depicts forty-six little vials, each bearing the name of the issuing pharmacy or the name of the medicine contained within. Because of the marked presence of these vials — and other modest artifacts such as mortar and pestles, scales, nose-pickers, and tongue-scrappers — the book gives us a marvelous sense of the everyday material culture of Chinese medicine as experienced by consumers, artisans, and peddlers on the street, not just in the hushed studios of the Confucian doctor. For those of us who spend far too much time pouring over the often austere texts of Chinese medical theory,
these artifacts are a welcome reminder that the Chinese healing experience was full of things.

Indeed, these vials — and to a certain degree, the medicines within them — remind us of Lothar Ledderose’s “ten thousand things,” mass-produced and yet at the same time slightly customized for both aesthetic appeal and maximum marketability. Painted with decorative scenes, bearing removable labels boasting of their medicine’s effectiveness, vials came in collect-them-all sets and could be recycled by loyal customers for use as snuff-bottles, flower-vases, or tea-tins. Many of the artifacts displayed here demonstrate that healing was an integral part of the larger matrix of lively commercial exchanges that constituted late imperial society. Indeed, if one also considers the numerous examples of commercially printed medical manuals, advertisements, and charms pictured here, together with the commodified dried herbs, horns, roots, bones, pills, and powders that made up Chinese pharmacy (curiously not pictured within), then one might conclude that medicine itself constituted an impressive portion of the late imperial marketplace. As Sherman Cochran’s recent work reminds us, medicine in China was big business. Medicine in China: Historical Images and Artifacts makes this important point tremendously apparent.

Historians will find it curious that many of the objects are pictured without dates, and that among those artifacts bearing dates, there is a preponderance of things from the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. Some discussion of the problems of dating medical artifacts and the nature of the collections from which the artifacts came would be helpful. While Professor Unschuld’s essays masterfully summarize the question of change within continuity in Chinese medical theory, the presentation of images seems to suggest a timeless tradition of practice. To what extent did the material culture of healing in China change over time? This is a question that remains to be puzzled through.

With its sumptuous design and art-history catalogue quality, Medicine in China: Historical Artifacts and Images is certainly destined to grace the coffee tables of numerous M.D.s who wish to demonstrate their cosmopolitan curiosity about oriental medicine. But the work here is too important to be relegated to the display cabinet. Specialists in East Asian science and medicine should use this book. It will not only be a boon to teaching, but will also inspire further research on many long-neglected but essential topics in Chinese medical history.