

particular condensation of meanings could not have been written in any language but Navajo. On the other hand, Webster cites the comment by Laura Tohe (an extended study of whose work comprises three of the book's six chapters) that her own translation of the word *nihik'inizdidláád* as "luminescence all around" sounds flat because it is noun based instead of verb based, and what the word really means is "this light poured over us or among us" (p. 210). Notably, it was her choice to use a noun instead of a verb in the English version, and light pouring among us is as poetically vivid in English as is luminescence all around. What these examples allow us to contribute to the debate about incommensurability between Navajo and English, and hence to the larger debate about the translatability of poetry and language in general, is to distinguish different senses of the assertion that something "cannot be said" in another language. That is, there is a consequential difference in the implication that

"there is no way you can understand me" and the recognition that something subtle is lost when in one language something can be said with concision that requires circumlocution in the target language.

Webster's book is a pleasure to read for anyone familiar with or interested in contemporary Navajo society and for any student of Edward Sapir, whose words frequently appear as chapter epigraphs. It should also be of interest to students of ethnopoetics and verbal art as performance, sociolinguistics, and discourse-centered analyses of language and culture. More broadly, it is a glimpse of the perennial dialogue between tradition and modernity in the distinctive setting of a fourth-world nation in which modernity both undermines and provides resources for enhancing cultural and linguistic vitality, and tradition is an explicit element in the discourse of modernity.

Other-Worldly: Making Chinese Medicine through Transnational Frames

Mei Zhan. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009. 240 pp.

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Mei Zhan's comparative study of traditional Chinese medicine in San Francisco and Shanghai offers a provocative perspective that suggests her subject may be neither "traditional" nor particularly "Chinese." Rather than assuming cultural difference as the starting point for her analysis, Zhan demonstrates how practices and discourses that comprise "traditional Chinese medicine" are produced through translocal encounters that remake the boundaries between conceptions of tradition versus modernity, Chinese versus American, and cultural heritage versus science.

A decade in the making, the book grew out of Zhan's dissertation research at Stanford. While the heart of the ethnography draws on Zhan's fieldwork at educational and clinical institutions both in Shanghai and the San Francisco Bay Area, she also followed practitioners and students out of their institutional bases to professional conferences and community outreach activities. Her diverse sources include historical texts, biographies of famous practitioners, propaganda posters, herbal prescriptions written for her grandfather, and even a mass-forwarded e-mail parodying Shanghai districts in terms of international relations.

Zhan's sophisticated analysis helps us to rethink the epistemological and ontological status of cultural difference,

reconfiguring a central concern that has occupied anthropologists since our discipline's founding. Zhan draws on Bruno Latour's work to show how the classic oppositions invoked by Bronislaw Malinowski and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (nature and culture, rational and irrational, science and magic) do not exist prior to but instead are made through the asymmetrical construction of Other knowledges. Rather than taking an essentialist view of traditional Chinese medicine as a stable foil to biomedicine, Zhan begins her book with an overview of how Chinese medicine itself has been variously constructed over the past half century as a method of achieving solidarity with the international proletariat of Africa (by the fledgling Chinese communist state during the 1960s and early 1970s) and marketed as a way of capitalizing on the desires of the cosmopolitan middle class in Shanghai and San Francisco (by eager practitioners since the 1980s). Subsequent chapters engage the heterogeneity of Chinese medicine through different theoretical frames: processes of commodification (ch. 2), actor-network theory (ch. 3), cultural translation (ch. 4), and feminist kinship analysis (ch. 5). Zhan fleshes out these "discrepant world-making projects" (p. 34) with rich ethnographic detail to illustrate how practitioners and participants strategically dislodge the hierarchy between biomedicine and Chinese medicine.

Although other anthropologists of traditional Chinese medicine have also highlighted its heterogeneity (e.g., Judith Farquhar, Elisabeth Hsu), Zhan's ethnography extends this scholarship by placing translocality at the heart of her analysis. Zhan presents her work as an

“ethnography of worlding” (p. 22), a concept inspired loosely by Martin Heidegger’s phenomenology. Challenging totalizing narratives of globalization, she illuminates how traditional Chinese medicine involves a collection of emergent and often discrepant “worlds in the making.” Form follows theory for Zhan: her analytical interest in translocality shapes the organization of her ethnography. Throughout the book, she juxtaposes scenes from disparate places, bringing her readers from the grounds of an employee health fair in Silicon Valley to the back of a lecture hall at a traditional Chinese medical college in Shanghai. This peripatetic perspective reveals how varying understandings of traditional Chinese medicine emerge from a wide range of translocal entanglements.

Zhan’s emphasis on “disparate worlding” is simultaneously her ethnography’s major strength and weakness. In her zeal to confront tropes of circulation and flow embedded in theories of globalization, Zhan skips from one disparate scene to the next to emphasize her theoretical commitment to the “multiple spatiotemporalities in and of knowledge produc-

tion” (p. 24). This shifting focus between San Francisco and Shanghai risks losing sight of the deeper sociohistorical contexts in which her ethnographic analysis takes place. Zhan’s approach also runs the danger of overgeneralizing from anecdotes drawn from two uniquely situated cities. What do practices and discourses of Chinese medicine look like deep in the heartland of both China and the United States, away from the glitz of wealthy coastal cities? Zhan’s loose collection of carefully theorized anecdotes provides a compelling testimonial that Chinese medicine must be understood through translocal frames, but this approach also leaves crucial gaps in our understandings of Chinese medicine today.

Zhan’s innovative ethnography is a welcome addition to the growing body of work at the intersection of medical anthropology and science studies. Her sustained engagement with cultural theory makes this book an excellent choice for upper-level anthropology courses with a critical focus on health, globalization, or the politics of knowledge production.