

Locating Medical Histories, Caring the Local: A Review of and a Proposal for the Concept of “Locale” in the History of Medicine in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Taking “locale” as the analytical perspective, this article, on the one hand, reviews the characteristics of medical history research in Taiwan since the 1990s, and on the other hand, proposes possible directions for future research. In the 19th century, research on medical history in the West emphasized mainly significant advances in the development of Western medicine and exemplary physicians, and it was carried out to complement the humanistic quality of medical education. In Taiwan after World War II, studies on the history of medicine were initiated only by a few doctors within the medical community, and focused more on introducing the history of Western medicine and less on Taiwan’s medical history. However, the history of medicine in Taiwan had taken center stage since the 1990s under the influence of three research trends. First, with the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica as the main base, professional historians, the majority being scholars on Chinese medical history, launched research on Taiwan’s history of medicine and introduced Social History of Medicine, Cultural History of Medicine, and other academic developments in Britain and the United States into Taiwan. Second, with research on Taiwan history gaining momentum, some researchers turned their attention to medical-related issues, and began in-depth exploration of Taiwan’s political, social and cultural development in the light of discourses on diseases and medical professions. Third, around 2000, the emerging discipline of Taiwan Science, Technology and Society Studies attracted more interdisciplinary researchers to further explore how Taiwan’s unique medical knowledge and practices intertwined with its politics, society, and culture. Although research on History of Medicine in Taiwan became more established under these three academic trends, the studies centered around knowledge production, human resources development, and international assistance of medical centers primarily in Taipei and other

big cities. Research on local medical history remained peripheral. Inspired by reflections on the relative power relationship between the center and the periphery in post-colonial studies, this paper argues that future researchers can delve into the locale-centered History of Medicine in Taiwan using concepts such as “medical market,” “territorial society” and “care”.

Keywords: History of Medicine in Taiwan, Locale, Territorial Society, Post-colonial Studies, Medical Market, Care