



**Speaking of Epidemics in Chinese Medicine:  
Disease and the Geographic Imagination in Late  
Imperial China (Needham Research Institute  
Series)**

*Marta Hanson*

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## Speaking of Epidemics in Chinese Medicine: Disease and the Geographic Imagination in Late Imperial China (Needham Research Institute Series) Marta Hanson

This book traces the history of the Chinese concept of "Warm diseases" (*wenbing*) from antiquity to the SARS epidemic. Following *wenbing* from its birth to maturity and even life in modern times Marta Hanson approaches the history of Chinese medicine from a new angle. She explores the possibility of replacing older narratives that stress progress and linear development with accounts that pay attention to geographic, intellectual, and cultural diversity. By doing so her book integrates the history of Chinese medicine into broader historical studies in a way that has not so far been attempted, and addresses the concerns of a readership much wider than that of Chinese medicine specialists.

The persistence of *wenbing* and other Chinese disease concepts in the present can be interpreted as resistance to the narrowing of meaning in modern biomedical nosology. Attention to conceptions of disease and space reveal a previously unexamined discourse the author calls the Chinese geographic imagination. Tracing the changing meanings of "Warm diseases" over two thousand years allows for the exploration of pre-modern understandings of the nature of epidemics, their intersection with this geographic imagination, and how conceptions of geography shaped the sociology of medical practice and knowledge in late imperial China.

*Speaking of Epidemics in Chinese Medicine* opens a new window on interpretive themes in Chinese cultural history as well as on contemporary studies of the history of science and medicine beyond East Asia.

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