

Arienne Dwyer
Professor of Linguistic Anthropology
University of Kansas

The Circulation of Medicine and Notions of Healing in Early 20th Century Chinese Turkestan via Network Analysis

Abstract

At the nexus of trade and migration routes between East, South and Central Asia and Siberia, the residents of Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang) up to/in early 20th century had access to a variety of ideas about healing and medicines and amalgamated them freely. Comparing medical formulae within a text and different healing practices between different texts allows us to begin to understand the transmission of medical substances and ideas in premodern Central Eurasia.

Based on a project transcribing and translating 19th and early 20th c. Turki medical manuscripts, this paper reveals that Greco-Arab medical practices were circulation in Chinese Turkestan; these were combined with spirit-mediumship and animism, overlaid with Sufism, while aspects of South Asian and Chinese medicine are also present. I explore the use of network analysis to uncover patterns in the medical-formula data across manuscripts.