



A Flourishing Yin: Gender in China's Medical History: 960-1665 (Philip E. Lilienthal Books)

Charlotte Furth

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This book brings the study of gender to Chinese medicine and in so doing contextualizes Chinese medicine in history. It examines the rich but neglected tradition of *fuke*, or medicine for women, over the seven hundred years between the Song and the end of the Ming dynasty. Using medical classics, popular handbooks, case histories, and *belles lettres*, it explores evolving understandings of fertility and menstruation, gestation and childbirth, sexuality, and gynecological disorders.

Furth locates medical practice in the home, where knowledge was not the monopoly of the learned physician and male doctors had to negotiate the class and gender boundaries of everyday life. Women as healers and as patients both participated in the dominant medical culture and sheltered a female sphere of expertise centered on, but not limited to, gestation and birth. Ultimately, her analysis of the relationship of language, text, and practice reaches beyond her immediate subject to address theoretical problems that arise when we look at the epistemological foundations of our knowledge of the body and its history.

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