

Pamela H. Smith, *Entangled Itineraries: Materials, Practices, and Knowledges across Eurasia*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019, 396 paginas.



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This book was conceived from the perspective that following the routes of materials, people, techniques, and practices (both esoteric and exoteric), modes of knowing, and epistemological systems encoded across Eurasia would reveal continuity of knowledge transmission between Europe and Asia. Taking as a starting point the conceptual framework of knowledge as being constituted also by movement – considering it circulates – which leads to its appropriation in whole or in part in another part of the world, and to its transformation by its own dynamics into something new after a specific itinerary, this book shifted the idea of *Silk Road*.

The first global route was made by sea, but Eurasia continued to be crossed by foot, horse or camel. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Eurasian world was integrated into the global earth by Muslims and Jesuits. The concept of a singular *Silk Route* falls against reality as there were so many entangled itineraries for silk trade. In this book, silk roads are used to explore Eurasian transmissions of medical knowledge. Based on a series of manuscripts, known as the Dunhuang manuscripts, found in a cave in Gansu province (China), dated from a thousand years ago, and dispersed by Parisian, British, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese libraries, this book highlights the delicate boundary between medicine, ritual, religion, divination, magic, and mythical epistemology.

The option was to tell a history of looping itineraries rather than linear narratives – a story of knowledge transfer into different geographies, but also different languages, cultures, and systems of knowing. In this book, Pamela Smith added *Moving* to her 2014 book *Making & Knowing* and how through that circulation the objects and ideas were transformed into something new, following Kapil Raj’s conceptual framework on the topic. Hence, this edited volume approaches Eurasian continuity of knowledge transmission by looking at European and Asian material in a comparative approach, and by discovering specific interactions.

The book is divided in four parts: the first offers an overview of routes of exchange in Eurasia and its nodes of convergence; the second on the different methodologies used to analyse entangled itineraries from medical manuscripts to craft knowledge; the third tackles the prevailing materials in these routes from silkworms to inkstones; and the fourth conveys new objects of knowledge, such as wooden skeletons.

The circulation of ideas presupposes the circulation of people and/or books. Therefore, the goal of many chapters was to offer the reconstruction of the processes of knowledge transmission. Cross-cultural exchanges were made by translations, transliterations, bilingual texts, glossaries, books for travellers, and diplomatic embassies all over Europe and Asia.

This book also expresses the idea of movement through an array of images. Maps of itineraries, from Barcelona to India, are also envisioned as maps of cultural nodes discovered through the analysis of travel records and travel memories. This volume lays down an eccentric pathway through the history of *materia medica*, including chemical experiments, scientific illustrations of plants, and a compilation of medical masterworks and curiosities, such as the making of miracles.

In the Portuguese colonial city of Malaca, a child's death that turns into a story of healing was considered a miracle as it was so unexpected. Moreover, the story covers the miracles related to women and childbirth, a moment of pain and uncertainty in women's lives. This research revealed the misattribution of curative power or the misinterpretation of the mechanisms of efficacy of curative substances as it aimed at understanding how substances gained value in the consumer's perception.

The authors have also showed how mutable materials, technologies, and practices moved across cultural, religious, and geographic boundaries. Based on the history of the Assam Company in the nineteenth century, the translation of the art of tea from China into European countries is addressed. Although tea had arrived in the United Kingdom in the seventeenth century, this episode allowed to observe the transplanted of Chinese tea-manufacturing skills to British India, and to analyse the procedural sequence based on the structure of technical processes that go into the production of tea.

From artifacts to maps, from activities to objects, *Entangled Itineraries* reveals more routes of continuity than of rupture. As promised, the authors of this edited volume offer compelling new perspectives and some

striking revisions of the enormous secondary literature of economic, social, and intellectual values and practices on the run between Europe and Asia. The kind of case-studies clearly reveals the editor's goal of reaching a novel and much larger public in Asia.

These entangled itineraries revealed the existence of a large interconnected community of scientists, physicians, botanists, thinkers, poets, artists, and religious scholars, all on the move.

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