



A Companion to Medical Anthropology

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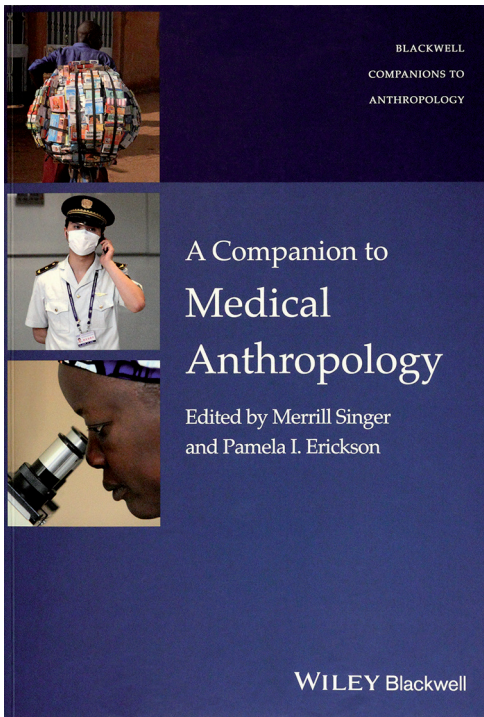
ABSTRACT: Merrill Singer and Pamela I. Erickson (eds.). 2015. *A Companion to Medical Anthropology*. Blackwell Companions to Anthropology. Wiley Blackwell, United Kingdom, 541 pp. ISBN: 978-1-118-86321-3.

A Companion to Medical Anthropology edited by Merrill Singer and Pamela Erickson, both professors in the Department of Anthropology and Department of Community Medicine in the University of Connecticut is a very useful and quite simply, complete compendium of applied anthropology which provide “a clear sense of medical anthropology’s engagement with the world of politics, policy and practice” (Richard G. Parker from Columbia University).

This book consists of twenty six chapters which have been grouped in five parts presenting the key issues and controversies in the field of medical anthropology in the early 21 century, among others: global health; culture and the stress process; the ecology of disease (infectious disease, cancer); nutrition and health; anthropology of reproduction; anthropology at the end of life as well as political violence and war; sexuality and public health.

The first part entitled Theories, Applications and Methods is an introduc-

tion to the interdisciplinary context of medical anthropology. Authors explain the biocultural approaches, research design and methods in this discipline. The second and the third parts are devoted to the contexts and conditions of medical anthropology today. Authors focus on the stressful effects of migration and culture change. They develop a definition of global health “drawing on current thinking on globalization and its intersection with public health and anthropology” and present fundamental biosocial nature of health as well as the ecological-evolutionary approach to human diseases. The third part also concerns epidemiological transition theory. Authors use this theory to demonstrate the importance of social and historical context for explaining changes in the prevalence of infectious diseases. The next chapters of this part concerns sexuality, reproduction and nutrition in human health. The most interesting is the issue concerning the fetal and developmental origins of



life history and the reconsideration of the origins of type 2 diabetes. The following part has provided the discussion about ethnomedicine, biocommunicability and explores “new” important themes for anthropological inquiry at the end of life. This chapter “suggests that particular notions of good death are closely linked to broader definitions of health”.

The last part of the volume (consisting of two following chapters) provides the interesting guide to future trends in medical anthropology and global health research. It is focusing on drawing on insights from critical medical anthropology, ecology and comparative systems analysis of national health systems to address the problem of operationalizing

health rights. In the concluding chapter Authors argue that “the changing ecobi-social face of our world is being shaped by increased crowding, populations migrations and mixing, global urbanization, polluted and resource depletion, growing social inequality and felt deprivation. This listing of changes suggests that in addition to many current areas of focus the medical anthropology of tomorrow will be increasingly concerned with (among others): the health effects of globalism, human impact of our physical environment, new and renewed and resistant diseases (...), the impact of war and violence (...)”.

This book provides a complete overview of the medical anthropology – the new discipline joining the social, culture and physical anthropology. I agree with James Trostle from Trinity College who has noticed that “with its broad scope and accomplished contributors, this volume will be a primary reference for all medical anthropologists and students of the field. Its comprehensive coverage extends both to dominant and emerging themes in the discipline”. In my opinion this book will be useful not only for medical anthropologists but also for professional biological anthropologists, forensic specialists and medical students.

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