

Yaron Perry and Efraim Lev, *Modern medicine in the Holy Land: pioneering British medical services in late Ottoman Palestine*, International Library of Colonial History, No. 8, London and New York, Tauris Academic Studies, 2007, pp. xi, 243, illus., £52.50 (hardback 978-1-84511-489-3).

Modern medicine in the Holy Land is an interesting and valuable contribution to studies in colonial medicine, as well as to research on the history of medicine in Palestine/Israel. The book documents the introduction of modern medicine into Ottoman Palestine with the arrival of British missionaries in the middle of the nineteenth century. Yaron Perry and Efraim Lev begin by outlining the political, social and medical environment that was late Ottoman Palestine, and then go into the earliest initiatives of the London Jews Society, giving detailed accounts of the English Mission Hospitals that sprang up around the country, as well as biographies of the physicians who came to Palestine as part of the British mission. In these opening sections, the authors detail British activities in the fields of medicine, hygiene, pharmacology and scholarly research. The ensuing chapters are dedicated to analysing the impact that these early initiatives had on the region, and the Catholic, Muslim and Jewish endeavours that followed in the tracks laid by the initial British missionaries.

One of the main topics is the mutual relationship between religion and medicine. The authors describe clearly the politics of medicine as used by the missionary doctors to promote Christianity. This proselytization was so linked with medical care that one could never know if helping the sick in the Holy Land was the actual mission or whether medicine was only used as an instrument to promote the religious vision. This is a critical point for understanding the interests behind the development of modern medicine in nineteenth-century Ottoman Palestine. Thus, *Modern medicine in the Holy Land* leaves the reader with a heightened understanding of the

complex motivations behind the European colonial powers' promulgation of modern medical care.

The book describes in detail the scientific and medical work of early physicians such as Edward Macgowan, a pioneer medical practitioner in Jerusalem and the founder and director of the first modern hospital in the Holy Land; Thomas J Chaplin, Ernest William Gurney Masterman, both scholars and researchers of the Holy Land; Walter Henry Anderson, the individual responsible for the establishment of the Safed hospital, and Percy Charles Edward d'Erf Wheeler, a notable medical missionary.

Modern medicine in the Holy Land also deals with subjects such as the differences between the various "generations" of British physicians in Jerusalem and the internal conflicts regarding their professional identity, for example missionaries versus practitioners. In addition, the book clarifies the issue of the extent to which the missionary medical doctors influenced the initiatives of the Jewish community to establish its own medical services. As Perry and Lev clearly show, these initiatives arose mainly out of the Jewish community's concerns that the missionary activity among the Jews might lead to conversion to Christianity and weaken the control of the Jewish leaders over their people.

The joint research efforts of specialists from two different academic disciplines have come together to present the reader with a compelling picture. Yaron Perry is an historian specializing in the history of the Land of Israel and its links to nineteenth-century Europe in general and to British activities in particular. Efraim Lev, on the other hand, is an expert in medical practice and the medical history of the Middle East in general and Palestine in particular. Their joint research has brought us, for the first time, a wide spectrum of information about traditional medicine and practices used by local healers, as well as a list of the materia medica that was used in the holy land during that period.

Book Reviews

The book is written in a manner that is both engaging and accessible. Perry and Lev manage to bring the period to life with vivid descriptions of living conditions as well as the personal experiences of the physicians and the local population. *Modern medicine in the Holy Land* is sure to be a valuable resource for

researchers of colonial medicine, as well as students of British, Ottoman, Palestinian and Israeli history.

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