

Book Reviews

diagnosis, was eventually achieved (in Hess's account) by the Natural History School of Johann Lukas Schönlein, which is discussed in the last third of the book, following on from Johanna Bleker's standard work in this field. In the 1830s and 1840s Schönlein and his pupils developed a methodical concept of seeing disease as an *ens sui generis*, of describing its symptoms, exploring the underlying pathological processes (with chemistry, microscopy, and autopsy), and formulating "nosological units" in view of a future natural system. Under attack from the advocates of a purely physiological medicine (*Physiologische Heilkunde*), such as Carl August Wunderlich, who rejected circumscribed disease entities and understood the ontological element in Schönlein's concept as an unsubstantiated belief in parasitism, the natural history method was transformed into the clinical method. Schönlein's pupils Conrad Heinrich Fuchs, Carl Canstatt, and August Siebert, who all filled clinical chairs in important German universities, used the ontological conception of disease merely as a clinical operational term and finally gave up the aim of a natural system. What was left was the diagnosis and clinical investigation of disease entities in a modern sense.

In following Hess's account one might be tempted to assume a specific German route towards modern diagnosis, that was shaped by ontological ideas stemming from *Naturphilosophie* and comparative natural history and that thus differed from the path mentioned at the beginning. However, a qualification must be made here. This book is a virtually pure history of ideas. It deliberately abstains from exploring the social context of hospital medicine and its effects on medical practice and experience. The results may therefore reflect to a great extent Hess's historiographical approach and selection of sources. Yet even with this reservation his study should be welcomed for adding a new perspective to the historiography of the clinical method.

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Bulletin of Tibetology: aspects of classical Tibetan medicine, special volume of 1993, Gangtok, Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1993, pp. xii, 128, illus., Rs 245.

In this special issue of the *Bulletin of Tibetology* Marianne Winder has edited the proceedings of a symposium held at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London, on 18 April 1986. As pointed out by Rechung Rinpoche in the preface, the volume is dedicated in honour of the late Terry Clifford. The first article, an appreciation of Dr Clifford's life work by Arthur Mandelbaum, has been unintentionally omitted and will appear in the February 1995 issue of the *Bulletin of Tibetology*. Winder's 'General Introduction' (pp. i–ii) is followed by Clifford's own contribution, 'Tibetan psychiatry and mental health' (pp. 3–14). This is a study of three chapters (pp. 77–9) devoted to demonic possession, madness and epilepsy, from the third of the *rGyud bzhi*, the "Four Treatises" which are the foundation of Tibetan medicine. The author argues that Tibetan psychiatry is a complete tradition of aetiology, diagnosis and treatment, as well as a holistic system related to the Buddhist doctrine.

The second paper, 'Diagnosis and therapy according to the *rGyud-bzhi*' (pp. 17–35), by Elisabeth Finckh, deals with 180 terms found in chapters 4 and 5 of the first of the "Four Treatises" concerning diagnosis (observation, feeling the pulse and questioning) and therapy (nutrition, behaviour and medicaments). This traditional classification is illustrated in two painted scrolls appended to Ronald Emmerick's paper in the same volume (pls ES12–3).

In 'Past, present and future life in Tibetan medicine' (pp. 40–52), Trogawa Rinpoche discusses chapters 2 and 7 of the second of the *rGyud bzhi*, dealing with death and birth: presages of on-coming death, the intermediate experience between death and rebirth known as *bar-do*, and physical and environmental circumstances conditioning birth. The author closely relates medical notions to the Buddhist doctrine, and defines Tibetan medicine as "an

interrelated combination of philosophy and practice" (p. 41). When speaking of conception, Trogawa accepts the Western biological notion of the union of semen and ovum (p. 48), which, as pointed out by Nawang Dakpa in his paper, 'Certain problems of embryology according to the Tibetan medical tradition' (pp. 82–95), is unknown to traditional Tibetan medicine (p. 84). Nawang Dakpa deals with some points of embryology according to the *Vaidūrya sngon-po* ('Blue Beryl'), the famous commentary to the *rGyud bzhi*, written in 1678–1688 by the great scholar and lay regent of Tibet, Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho. The whole process of conception and birth is conveniently illustrated by two of the twelve black-and-white plates appended to Emmerick's paper (ES 16).

Emmerick's contribution, 'Some Tibetan medical tankas' (pp. 56–78), is a detailed analysis of sixteen painted scrolls photographed during the author's visit to the Medical and Astrological College of Lhasa in 1983. Emmerick has compared these pictures with relevant Tibetan medical iconographic sources published up to 1988. The paintings belong to a series of seventy-nine scrolls, the earliest set of which was commissioned by Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho to illustrate his *Vaidūrya sngon-po*. Although a set has been recently published by Serindia in *Tibetan medical paintings* (by Y Parfionovitch, G Dorje and F Meyer, London, 1992), Emmerick's contribution is interesting in as much as it shows variants between paintings belonging to different sets, both in the iconography and in the captions.

A place apart is occupied by Charles Bowden's paper, 'Written and printed sources for the study of Mongolian medicine' (pp. 100–25), where the author, besides classifying the literature on the subject, attempts to assess the bearing which the Tibetan medical tradition had upon Mongolian medicine. Biographical notes on the contributors are appended to the volume (pp. 126–8).

It is a pity that the publication of these proceedings should have been delayed for so many years and followed that of *Tibetan*

medical paintings, which have provided so much new information, especially concerning the Tibetan materia medica. In spite of this handicap, *Aspects of classical Tibetan medicine* is a useful contribution to the history of Tibetan medicine and shows that the only possible approach to such a complicated topic is the close collaboration of Western and Tibetan physicians, linguists and historians.

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David Owusu-Ansah, *Islamic talismanic tradition in nineteenth-century Asante*, African Studies, vol. 21, Lewiston, NY, and Lampeter, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991, pp. xii, 253, illus., £39.95, \$69.95 (0-7734-9726-9).

This book comprises the results of the author's research on a large corpus of magical formulae and prescriptions for making amulets, contained in a bundle of Arabic manuscripts brought from Asante, on the so-called Gold Coast of Africa, to the Danish Royal Library in Copenhagen in 1826. The texts are often in poor physical condition, and are in most cases written in halting or primitive hands in bad Arabic. Owusu-Ansah has thus opted—and rightly so—for presenting the Arabic texts in facsimile, which also allows the reader to see the often enigmatic formulae and magical diagrams (*khawātim*) exactly as the scribes had recorded them. The English renderings are organized according to topic, and texts full and clear enough for translation are presented separately from those which only allow for paraphrase. Most of the book, however, is devoted to the author's efforts to interpret this material against the background of Islamic influences and the role of magic and talismanic tradition in Asante society.

A popular herbal folklore provided responses to many medical complaints in Asante, but deeply entrenched beliefs in the supernatural in general, and in the power of pagan deities and deceased ancestors in particular, guaranteed that magic would also