

ancient medicine. King provides key insights into various aspects of ancient medicine, particularly about sex and gender. Another point of interest for modern readers is her constant attention to the continuing connections between ancient and modern medicine: King sheds light on the profound changes that started affecting medical theory from the Renaissance onwards, until the recent genetic “mapping out” of the human body (2003). She also explains how current medical practice is indebted to the Hippocratic approach to the patient. Readers, however, may feel slightly frustrated, as all these points are made *en passant*. Nevertheless, this will certainly encourage further reading on the issue of the survival and ongoing relevance of ancient medicine.

The second section, devoted to medicine and iconography, makes the book stand out among the handbooks on medicine: few are the volumes offering so many quality illustrations with insightful discussion of their significance. Véronique Dasen uses here some of her favourite material, like the medieval picture of Siamese twins separated by Byzantine doctors. Her comments reveal the interest of ancient pictures for our understanding of the ancients’ vision of the human body: pictures involving Greek sacrificial rituals, in particular, provide an interesting point of comparison with our early texts on anatomy. Religion, to some extent, shaped the classical medical approach to the human body. Dasen comments on Greek vases as well as votive objects and manuscript illuminations, in a clear and lively style. The last section of the book includes ten texts from ancient medical authors, five by Hippocrates, one by Celsus, one by Aretaeus, two by Galen and one by Gargilius Martialis. This part of the book is perhaps less convincing, as a selection of texts should include much more in order to provide a significant insight. Dasen, however, justifies her choices in a brief preliminary description of the selected items, regardless of the pre-eminence of a given author: it is, in a

way, a brave decision to include only two short passages from Galen’s massive works. The point of this book, anyway, is not to be exhaustive, but to give a taste of ancient medicine to students and a lay audience. Overall, this very pedagogical introduction to medicine reflects rather well recent research tendencies in ancient medicine, and lays a welcome emphasis on the authors’ shared interest in representations of the body and gender in medical history. It will bridge a gap in the French-speaking literature on the subject, where considerations of this sort are rarely seen outside the pages of specialist articles.

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Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (eds), *Astro-medicine: astrology and medicine, East and West*, Micrologus’ Library, 25, Florence, Sismel–Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2008, pp. xii, 280, €46.00 (paperback 978-88-8450-300-8).

This book contains eleven papers on the theme of the relationship between astrology and medicine in the ancient and early modern world, most of which were given at a Warburg Institute conference in 2005. For those unfamiliar with this field, it is important to know that ancient astrologies were significantly different from their modern counterpart, as were the ancient scientific frameworks they were situated in. This means that ancient astrologies could have a different and much more interesting relationship to medicine from that which we see today. So while I happily dismiss modern western astrology as utterly irrelevant to modern western medicine, there is a considerable fascination in seeing how different relations between astrology and medicine were mediated in the past. That we see astrology as, for example, magical or

irrational or unsupported by evidence does not mean that it has always been seen in this way. That there was a substantial body of thought concerning how the heavens related to health and to disease is something which is amply demonstrated by this book. In particular, there were thought to be significant astrological links to how a disease might progress in a specific case and what the best times to administer treatment might be, as several of the papers address. If we want a full understanding of medical theory and practice in the ancient and early modern world, we can no more dismiss astrology from the history of medicine than we can from the history of astronomy.

I have been careful so far to refer to astrologies in the plural, for there were many of them. One of the great strengths of this book is that some of the papers examine the relationship between astrology and medicine in the Babylonian, Arabic, Chinese, Indian and Tibetan cultures as well as dealing with the more familiar Greco-Roman tradition and its manifestations in the medieval and Renaissance west. Here it is interesting to see how ubiquitous astrology was, and how it took variant forms in different cultures. The same can be said for some conceptions of the human body and its health, either in terms of some form of the humoral theory or as a microcosm in some way related to the heavenly macrocosm. It is also interesting to see how theology plays a role here, particularly in respect to how strongly deterministic astrology was taken to be, notably less so in Christian contexts where free choice between good and evil was thought important.

The papers in this volume are very good at explaining not only the nature of astrological belief in various cultures and its relation to medicine; they are also good at placing those beliefs into the social contexts of those societies. Arguments against astrology are considered as they arose in those cultures, which allows a far more interesting insight into

the nature of belief in astro-medicine than a blanket dismissal of such ideas from a modern standpoint. This book also demonstrates an excellent example of co-operation between scholars of different ancient cultures fostered by the Warburg Institute.

This book has been very well produced, and is well illustrated with useful and clearly reproduced figure and tables. If you are just starting out on investigating ancient astrology and its relation to ancient medicine, this is probably not the best place to begin—I would suggest Tamsyn Barton's *Ancient astrology* and the first few chapters of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* for an introduction—but this is an excellent book for anyone wishing to further their knowledge about the relation of ancient astrology and medicine and in particular to broaden it to cultures outside the Greco-Roman tradition.

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Alex McKay, *Their footprints remain: biomedical beginnings across the Indo-Tibetan frontier*, International Institute for Asian Studies series, Amsterdam University Press, 2007, pp. 312, €47.00 (paperback 978-90-5356-518-6).

Alex McKay has written a useful and inspiring text on the arrival and reception of biomedicine in the Indo-Tibetan region—a topic that has no book-length precedent. His focus is not on any and all European medical practices in the region, but specifically on the form of biomedicine emerging primarily in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His geographic net is also extensive, focusing on the Tibetan regions of the Himalayas, including Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, but not exhaustive, excluding Nepal and Ladakh. Using British