

Book Reviews

R. THEODORE BECK, *The cutting edge. Early history of the surgeons of London*, London, Lund Humphries, 1974, 8vo, pp. xvi, 216, illus., £6.00.

Mr. Beck, an architect by profession and a past Master of the Worshipful Company of Barber-Surgeons, has produced an interesting book. It arose from an investigation of the first Barbers' Hall and from the examination of fifteenth-century material. It has grown into a consideration of surgeons and surgery in medieval London, ranging from the Conquest to the union of the surgeons and barbers in 1540. A vast amount of data mainly concerning individuals has been gleaned from Close and Patent Rolls, the Husting Roll and other documents, and from manuscripts of the works of such surgeons as Arderne, Thomas Morstede, Vicary, and others; in the case of Morstede the author cites extensively from his *Fair book of surgery* (1446) which he claims to have found in the British Museum, but which is already known to scholars. Other priority claims may also be disputed. The conflict and co-existence of the surgeons and barbers is dealt with, and again wherever possible original manuscripts are quoted from.

However, the paradox of this book is that although there is considerable documentation of the primary material, often this is inadequate, and in some cases it is impossible to determine the precise origins of a citation. Moreover, there is almost no reference to the secondary literature, large amounts of which the author must have used. Thus in the case of the biographical references most of them are to be found in Talbot and Hammond's *Medical practitioners of mediaeval England*, to which no reference seems to be made. Whether the author was unaware of this and other secondary material or chose not to cite it is the enigma. Where portions of manuscripts have been copied there are many errors. Another defect, and perhaps a more serious one, is that although Mr. Beck demonstrates a great deal of knowledge of medieval British surgery, his grasp of general principles of medical practice, and of medical concepts is less sure, and he is not so much at home with events outside of Britain, or even London.

But as the author states in the last sentence (p. 211), his hope is that his book ". . . at least, provides a sure foundation for other writers to build on". It certainly will lead future historians to a considerable amount of new data and they without doubt will be most grateful to Mr. Beck for his inspired, amateur excavations.

PIERRE HUARD, ZENSETSON OHYA and MING WONG, *La médecine japonaise des origines à nos jours*, Paris, Roger Dacosta, 1974, 4to, pp. [413], illus., Fr. 180.00.

Whereas a great deal has been published on the history of Chinese medicine, much less on that of the Japanese has so far appeared. This exquisite book by a French, a Japanese, and a Chinese author is sumptuously produced, with wide margins, a large type-face and ninety-nine illustrations, twenty in colour, as well as smaller sketches scattered amongst the text.

The latter is equally impressive. The first chapter deals with the earliest period in Japanese medicine, from pre-history to the fourteenth century, and the second carries the account up to 1868 when for the first time Japan made full contact with the West, until that time the medical influences being mainly from Holland. Chapter three

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considers popular Japanese and Sino-Japanese medicine from the seventeenth century to 1868. Traditional Japanese medicine as depicted in art is treated fully in Chapter 4, and in the last chapter modern medicine from 1867 to 1970 is described. There are copious scholarly notes to each chapter and appendices containing a list of Japanese medical schools, an index of foreigners who visited Japan (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries), a chronology of politics, a chronology of medicine (A.D. 414 to 1971), an excellent bibliography of Japanese medicine, and a list of lengthy illustration legends; there is a name index only.

The medicine of Japan, as well as its industry, is becoming an increasingly important factor in the West and it is therefore important that we should know more of its origins, and the forces and pressures that have moulded it. For instance it seems remarkable that so much progress could have been made since the Japanese emerged from their medieval state only one hundred years ago, and it is fascinating to learn how this has been brought about. The authors and the publishers are, therefore, to be congratulated on producing a book as full of learning as it is pleasing to the eye. It is to be hoped that an English version, comparable to Huard and Wong's work on Chinese medicine, will be available eventually.

NAKAYAMA SHIGERU, DAVID L. SWAIN and YAGI ERI (editors), *Science and society in modern Japan. Selected historical sources*, Tokyo, University of Tokyo Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. xxiii, 337, £10.00.

Since the opening of Japan to the West in 1858 a remarkable advance in science, and in other fields, has taken place there. As in the West, there has been recently a corresponding explosion in the history of science and this book collects together sixteen translated papers written by Japanese scientists and historians of science for a Japanese audience, and dating mainly from 1950 to 1972. They are arranged in three sections: emergent ideologies of science; exploratory research concerns; Japanese scientists and their social context. There are also, 'Biographical notes on contributors', 'An annotated bibliography of English language works on the social history of modern Japanese science', and an index in English and Japanese.

Owing to language problems we have been less aware of the developments in the field of the history of science in Japan than its progress there deserves. This book is, therefore, of considerable importance, and it reveals that the Japanese although naturally concentrating here on their domestic scene are also studying foreign aspects of the history of science. The papers deal mostly with the physical sciences, but there are several which discuss Western and broader scientific issues, as well as historical methodologies, and at least two are concerned with biological topics, Marxism and biology in Japan, and pollution. Throughout, there is an emphasis on the social aspects of scientific and technological achievement.

To understand the Japanese is for us as difficult as it is for them to comprehend us, for apart from the language gulf there is also a very wide difference in cultures. Thus Japanese attitudes to scientific problems often mirror their intellectual pressures and social background, and they are certainly influenced by the special relationship they have to their written language.