

Without a doubt this work usefully furthers our understanding of American neurology and psychiatry in the post-war period. While other contributions on American neurology and psychiatry are more exciting, the fact remains that few have provided us with information about institutions that focused their attention on neurological and mental diseases. The book is therefore an informative resource, but it is not particularly stimulating.

**Stephen Casper,**

The Wellcome Trust Centre for  
the History of Medicine at UCL

**Joseph S Alter** (ed.), *Asian medicine and globalization*, Encounters with Asia, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, pp. vi, 189, £29.50, US\$45.00 (hardback 0-8122-3866-4).

Given that medical traditions are intrinsically dynamic and open to innovation, as scholars have recognized since at least the time of Charles Leslie's classic *Asian medical systems* (1976), nationalist categories of medicine are to a great extent, artificial. To use the term "western medicine" requires the qualification that there is nothing specifically "western" about it, and that its development may equally derive from people or initiatives in the "east", or indeed the "north" or "south". Similarly, terms such as "Chinese medicine", or "Tibetan medicine" may be convenient and in themselves both indicators of and factors in the systemization of various regional traditions and practices, but they are far from historical. What is now Tibetan medicine, for example, is a systemized development of a variety of practices and understandings primarily deriving from the elite textual tradition of *sowa rigpa* ("the science of healing"), a branch of Himalayan Buddhist learning within which might be isolated not only indigenous traditions and practices but also those of India, China, Persia, and even Greece. Terms such as "Chinese" or "Tibetan" medicine were not indigenous, but derive from European classifications, albeit suited to the interests

of, and rapidly adopted by, those nationalist interests.

Given the artificiality of such constructions, and the implicit and often explicit claims of virtually all medical systems to universal validity, a tension arises between national and transnational conceptions of regional medical systems. This volume seeks to explore the issues arising from that tension in the context of the globalization process, as ("western") biomedicine is indigenized in Asia and Asian medical systems and related practices such as yoga are adopted in the west. The majority of the articles thus examine the character of "national" traditions in exile, and the transformative effects of medical encounters with other cultures, understandings, and laws.

Alter's own critical introduction should be required reading for students in the field, problematizing medical communications and encounters from the earliest period, when medical knowledge belonged not to place or nation, but to "a particular person with clearly manifest skills" (p. 14), a Galen or a Caraka—the ability of such individuals to attract patronage—a little studied aspect—was surely crucial to that determination. Indeed patronage, individual or state, is fundamental. Any consideration of Āyurvedic Acupuncture (*sic!*), the subject of Alter's paper here, or "traditional Indian" treatments for HIV/AIDS, as discussed by Cecilia van Hollen, requires consideration of consumer cultures and economies, and the strategies by which such constructions appeal to those elements. Martha Ann Selby's wonderfully entertaining, albeit brief, account of New Age Āyurveda makes such strategies plain.

While consideration of Japan is lacking, Deepak Kumar, and S Irfan Habib and Dhruv Raina, discuss process and modernization in colonial India, while three papers are concerned with these issues in China. Susan Brownell's discussion of plastic surgery there engages with political and class conflicts, as well as military medicine and concepts of identity and the "body". Nancy Chen examines the popular healing practice of *qigong* and its relationship with the communist state (without however, sustained linkage to the transnational focus of

the collection), while Vivienne Lo and Sylvia Schroer outline the classical textual understandings of the concept of *xie* (the “deviant airs” of the essay title), and bring out the attempted excising of its demonic associations by the modern Chinese state and its formulation in western practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

This work will stand as a valuable corollary to studies of specific medical traditions located in a nation and will be of interest to all those whose work is concerned with regions and cultures that cross modern nation-state boundaries. While seemingly rather slim, at just 150 pages of text, conciseness is here a virtue and the additional notes contain much that is of interest. Accessible and stimulating, it may be recommended to both specialists and students.

**Alex McKay,**

The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at UCL

**J Lourdasamy, *Science and national consciousness in Bengal 1870–1930*, New Perspectives in South Asian History, no. 8, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2004, pp. xii, 259, Rs 550.00 (hardback 81-250-2674-6).**

Over the last few years, the history of science in India has been explored through a wide range of issues. This has been in association with an equally varied and dynamic interest in empire and science. The present book is a timely addition to this growing literature. The central proposition in Dr Lourdasamy’s study of four individuals from early-twentieth-century Bengal is that their engagement with western science was not a nativistic project of identifying an exclusive “Indian” science, but was a “confident” and “positive” engagement with a universal modern science. The book provides a long and well written account of the political and intellectual setting for these men and their ideas. The first protagonist, or “interlocutor” as the author designates him, is Dr Mahendralal Sircar, a prominent practitioner of homeopathy in Calcutta and the founder of the Indian

Association for the Cultivation of Science (1876). Sircar established the institution to promote scientific research among Indians, a project which fed into the emerging nationalist movement of the day. The physicist Jagadish Chandra Bose, Lourdasamy argues, sought to infuse elements of Indian culture into western science from a conviction that science was a “global heritage” (p. 141). The chemist P C Ray, who not only contributed to modern chemistry but also wrote the *History of Hindu chemistry* and established the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works (1893), contributed to the best of metropolitan science while relating to the illiterate mass at home. The last protagonist is Asutosh Mookerjee, an educationist, a judge of the Calcutta High Court and Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, who, according to the author, successfully combined in his work elements of the Swadeshi movement, Indian culture and university and science education.

The work falls largely within a diffusionist framework highlighting the agency of Indian scientists in their pragmatic and selective adoption of western science and enmeshing it with the nationalist ideology. The problem with this book is that it lacks a critical engagement with the ideas of the scientists. It is largely a descriptive account of the individuals’ lives and careers and thus leads to a reiteration of their propositions rather than a critique of it. We are not informed what shaped their ideas about either western science or Indian culture and nationhood. Moreover, the different projects discussed seem to merge seamlessly into an unfolding of a progressive and grand narrative of nationalist science in modern India.

To give one glaring example of where crucial nuances and fissures are overlooked, Lourdasamy sees the project of Mookerjee, the last protagonist in his study, as a simple progression from that of the first, Sircar (pp. 230–1). But the fact is that they had very different motivations. While Mookerjee was the foremost proponent of university education, Sircar had serious reservations about it. Science was a *moral* force to Sircar in his search for nationhood (often interchangeable with manhood) and the attainment of it had to be