

## Book Reviews

impossible, it would appear that illnesses associated with poverty, lack of bodily hygiene, bad food, and certain professions were particularly widespread. The second half of the study is an account of the overall development in the eighteenth century of the region's sanitary infrastructure (medical personnel, hospitals, etc.). Towns were less healthy than the countryside, local hospitals were few and of little utility in the fight against disease, there were few doctors and they tended to price themselves out of the reach of most of the population, there was a surprisingly dense network of surgeons (though it still seems rather hasty to talk of *surmédicalisation* [p. 166] and all medical practitioners, in career terms, were avid for employment (attachment to a local grandee, a hospital, etc.), which ensured them a steady income as well as local notability. Many of these findings, in themselves, are relatively unremarkable. And their value would have been enhanced had the author widened his focus to include practitioners of the "alternative medicine", which seems to have been particularly widespread in an area with a distinctive popular culture and folklore. Nevertheless, historians will be grateful for the existence of so useful and readable a study of a region well off the conventional byways of historical scholarship.

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TED J. KAPTCHUK, *Chinese Medicine. The web that has no weaver*, London, Rider, 1983, 8vo, pp. xxi, 402, illus., £8.95.

MING WONG, *Shang-han Lun. Médecine traditionnelle chinoise, traduction et commentaires*, Paris, Masson, 1983, 8vo, pp. viii, 251, illus., [no price stated].

FREDERICK F. KAO and JOHN J. KAO (editors), *Recent advances in acupuncture research*, New York, Institute for Advanced Research in Asian Science and Medicine, 1979, 8vo, pp. xiv, 788, illus. [no price stated].

T. J. Kaptchuk's book is a general work on Chinese medicine, Ming Wong's is the edition of a text, and Kao's shows the practical results of research. Together they provide a good picture. Kaptchuk says: "This book is both, a presentation of Chinese medicine and a commentary on it, by a Westerner committed to a Western perspective who also knows China and is a practitioner of China's medicine. . . . Based on ancient texts, Chinese medicine is the result of a continuous process of critical thinking, as well as extensive clinical observation and testing. It is also, however, rooted in the philosophy, logic, sensibility and habits of a civilization entirely foreign to our own. It has developed its own perception of the body and of health and disease. . . . For instance, Chinese medical theory does not have the concept of a nervous system. But it can be used to treat neurological disorders. Without having an endocrine system it treats endocrine disorders. . . . The Chinese doctor sees a 'pattern of disharmony' and tries to restore balance." The illustrations and diagrams in this textbook of Chinese medicine are very helpful, particularly in the chapter on the pulse where a diagram is given for each of the twenty-eight principal pulses, with the three possible positions, near the skin, near the bone, or in the middle. This cannot be found in Manfred Porkerts *The theoretical foundations of Chinese medicine*.

Ming Wong has translated and edited a work called *Shang-han Lun* by Zhang Zhong-Jing of about AD 150 to 219 – a contemporary of Galen. But, unlike the work of Galen, it has constantly been revised throughout the centuries and is still a standby for doctors. This is possible because there has never been a break in Chinese consciousness comparable to the Western Scientific Revolution. Not even recent events culminating in China's now deplored Cultural Revolution have brought about this break. Body and mind have always been regarded as an organic whole. Any technical innovations were accommodated in the system of relationships which medicine seeks to bring into harmony. The book under review deals with the symptoms of conditions and their treatment, chiefly herbal. There are good illustrations of the circulation of energies in the body and of some of the medicinal plants.

The book edited by Professor and Doctor Kao, father and son, is interesting because it reports on investigations using scientific apparatus of a procedure which cannot yet be explained satisfactorily in scientific terms. Clinical studies with follow-ups are described. Acupuncture here is not only used for analgesia but for the cure of drug dependence, cardiovascular malfunctions, asthma, and other complaints.

## Book Reviews

All three books, two written in the United States and one in France, demonstrate that valid cures can be obtained by means quite different from Western medicine in its present state, that anatomy and disease entities do not have to be the be-all and end-all of medical investigation, and that a system of functions and relationships between energies also seems to work. However, two of the writers have a Chinese background and the third was trained in Macao. Unless one's thinking is based on the Chinese way of seeing the world, the philosophy of yin and yang, and the Tao which will turn each thing into its opposite in due course, one can hardly hope to practise this type of medicine successfully.

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FREDERICK SARGENT II, *Hippocratic heritage. A history of ideas about weather and human health*, New York and Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xlii, 581, illus., \$65.00 (\$25.00 paperback).

Published posthumously, this first historical survey of human biometeorology was written by a leading human ecologist and principal founder of the International Society of Biometeorology. Frederick Sargent traces the evolution of the Hippocratic idea that weather is one of the determinants of health from its ancient origins to the present day. The narrative is built around lengthy sketches of the life and ideas of key figures, and with the unsurprising exception of Paracelsus, these accounts are reliable as far as they go. True to the Baconian spirit that Sargent commends in biometeorological work itself, the book reproduces large amounts of recorded observations and historical material with limited analysis.

The author's main historical concern is with the time lag between the early-modern appearance of measurement and graphic techniques, and their belated application in systematic medical-meteorological investigations. He shows that, despite the enthusiastic inductivism of the medical topographers, it was not until the late nineteenth century that quantitative methods prevailed over impressionistic observations, and that the graphic analyses essential for the discovery of biometeorological correlations were applied. The explanations offered for this delay are the intrinsic difficulty of biological study, lack of experimentation, and the unreliability of contemporary data. It is suggested that the germ theory of disease also retarded progress in the mid-nineteenth century by deflecting interest away from the weather and human constitution, but that biometeorology re-emerged all the stronger for this clarification when the environment again attracted attention in the human sciences around the turn of the century.

The book is more successful on twentieth-century developments, when the author literally comes into his own. A sensitive intellectual biography of Sargent's teacher and collaborator, William F. Petersen ("the American Hippocrates"), forms one-fifth of the volume. The epilogue contains an intriguing content analysis of recent research, revealing a marked divergence between continental and Anglo-American biometeorology. Continental scientists continue to pursue the meteorological causes of disease, an interest exemplified by the provision of medical-meteorological forecasts to doctors and hospitals by the German weather service. Anglo-American work, on the other hand, is now largely restricted to the physiology of human survival in extreme weather conditions. Sargent observes that the rich Hippocratic tradition of Britain and America depicted in his book might conceivably have led to an outcome more like the continental one. It will take a different sort of history – institutional and comparative – to explain why it did not.

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PETER GARNSEY, C. R. WHITTAKER (editors), *Trade and famine in classical antiquity*, Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Volume 8, Cambridge, 1983, 8vo, pp. 127, £12.50 (paperback). (Obtainable from Dr C. Austin, Trinity Hall, Cambridge CB2 1TJ.)

In the last few years, historians of the ancient world have begun at last to investigate the difficult areas of ancient food supplies and deficiencies. This collection of essays, derived as it is