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have also adapted to the new institutions; the art of networking in China remains critical to becoming an apprentice to an acknowledged master; diagnostic tests, case histories, needling techniques are all cited as evidence for unique syntheses of a plurality of medical systems and traditions.

There is no doubt that Scheid's work has altered the face of anthropological research into Chinese medicine. He also has a serious message for those practitioners of TCM representing (Scheid's emphasis) traditional medicine in the modern world. "What, ultimately, can be gained from restraining Chinese medicine by means of a rationality blind to its own irrational constitution, and gained for whom?" What does an enhanced appreciation of the nuances of Chinese medicine teach us but the value of the art of synthesis in medical practice?—a lesson not just appropriate to Asian medicine. But will his message be heard? Mindful of the difficulties of writing for several audiences he tries to guide the reader to appropriate chapters according to their interest. Here he may well have overestimated the power of the written word. Even the most reflective practitioners of Chinese medicine may find obtuse and irrelevant the discourses of contemporary anthropology, despite their unanimous dedication to the "agency of *qi*".

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Jeanette C Fincke, *Augenleiden nach keilschriftlichen Quellen. Untersuchungen zur altorientalischen Medizin*, Würzburger medizinhistorische Forschungen 70, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2000, pp. xxxvii, 342, €44.00 (paperback).

Recent years have witnessed a number of happy events in the study of Ancient Near Eastern medicine. One of these was the publication of the book under review, which is a comprehensive investigation of the status, nomenclature, pathologies, and treatments of the eye according to sources written in the

cuneiform script. The bulk of these stem from Mesopotamia (ancient Iraq) and are in Babylonian, but a small number, from Anatolia (ancient Turkey), are in Hittite.

The author, a meticulous and versatile scholar, has digested a large body of relevant scholarly literature, done extensive philological work on primary texts, and also sought to integrate the evidence of the ancient sources with modern medical knowledge. In this, she wisely sought the assistance of the medical profession. The result is impressive, and its value enhanced by the care taken to make the discussion accessible to readers with no previous acquaintance with the civilizations examined. Sources are normally quoted in translation in the main text, and in the original language in the footnotes.

Alongside the medical identifications (which must sometimes be tentative, and may generate debate), the book contains many other valuable thoughts and suggestions, e.g. the idea that the ancients thought coloured vision to derive from the presence of colour in the iris (p. 22). Its discussions of eye-related topics can also be of wider interest. For example, it is shown that Mesopotamians knew an infection could arise from touching the eyes with unwashed hands (p. 48). Further, this is one of the few recent books that tackles Mesopotamian therapeutics, so readers can turn to it for useful information on that topic. The collection and nuanced discussion of evidence for eye operations, a controversial topic, will be read with particular interest. More generally, Fincke's work would constitute an ideal companion to textual editions (which are hitherto lacking), so it is to be hoped that she will publish hers soon.

Throughout, the book has a strong lexicographical bent. In the longest chapter (III), for example, the Akkadian phrases denoting pathological conditions of the eye are examined in alphabetical order (there are roughly 180 of them). Each is translated, discussed, and, so far as possible, equated with modern medical terms. This systematic approach is praiseworthy. Although, inevitably, it involves duplication of the contents of the standard dictionaries of Akkadian, this duplication is fully justified: parts

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of the dictionaries are decades old, and Fincke is able to bring the discussion up to date by incorporating more recent literature and enriching it with her own insights. And even where additions and corrections to the dictionaries are few (e.g. the discussion of the nuances of verbs of seeing in chapter II), her book opens the topic up to readers without access to specialist libraries.

Minor criticisms can be made. The date of *BAM* 393, a source discussed in the introduction, is suspect, because (as copied) it mixes sign forms of different periods. The efficacy of honey and liver (sources of vitamin A) as remedies for certain maladies could have been mentioned. With non-specialists in mind, the discussion of the healthy eye could perhaps occasionally have distinguished more sharply between *bona fide* optical nomenclature and words used as metaphors (e.g. *dekû* “to rouse”, p. 34, regularly used of armies).

This is definitely a book which libraries catering for ancient medicine will want to stock, and students of Mesopotamian (and Hittite) medicine will consult as a matter of course. It is, then, especially felicitous that it should contain excellent indexes (of words in ancient languages, modern medical terms, ancient sources by museum number, and ancient sources by publication).

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Laura Garwin and Tim Lincoln (eds),
A century of nature: twenty-one discoveries that changed science and the world, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. xviii, 360, £17.50, US \$25.00 (paperback 0-226-28415-8)

This book reproduces twenty-one papers published in *Nature* between 1925 (*Australopithecus Africanus*) and 1997 (Dolly the sheep). It covers neither a century, nor necessarily discoveries that have changed the world (Dolly the Sheep? Buckminsterfullerene?). Many of the papers are remarkably short, especially in the earlier part of the century, and indeed the accompanying commentary provided is, a quick scan suggests, in most cases longer. These commentaries are not by historians of science but by distinguished contributors to the fields surveyed. The book thus combines three old-fashioned genres, the reprint of classic papers, the practitioner history, and the anthology from a journal. It is subject to the same criticisms as each of these genres would be individually, without much in the way of compensation. Such books are usually to be dipped into, but in this case this is not so easy because of the lack of clear typographic distinctions between the reprint and the commentary.

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