

Mikel Astrain Gallart, *Barberos, cirujanos, y gente de mar: la sanidad naval y la profesión quirúrgica en la España ilustrada*, Madrid, Ministerio de Defensa, Secretaría General Técnica, 1996, pp. 240, illus., no price given (84-7823-497-7).

Barberos, cirujanos, y gente de mar is a comprehensive examination of naval sanitary policies and their impact on the process of professionalization of the medical practitioners working for the navy during the eighteenth century. It covers the period from the end of the War of Succession to the defeat of the Franco-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar in 1805—the beginning of the decline of Spanish naval power. The definitive ascension of Felipe V to the throne in 1712 brought about the creation of a new model of the navy through the imposition of the principles of centralization and professionalization which the new dynasty sought to impose on all spheres of state administration. In 1714 the existing multitude of different fleets was replaced by the Armada Real, or Royal Navy. The administrative and operative unification of the armada had important repercussions for health care provisions in the navy, as did the fact that the aim of securing a competitive navy, capable of defending Spanish interests in the colonies, became paramount to all the enlightened governments. The progressive expansion of the numbers of ships and the need for surgeons on board led to the Bourbon monarchy financially and ideologically supporting the art, and increasingly the science, of surgery. Astrain Gallart explores and contextualizes the process by which surgeons (or more precisely the elite of surgeons, those working in the navy), who initially occupied the same rank as barbers and blood-letters, came to hold a status and social position similar or even superior to that of physicians during the eighteenth century.

In tracing this process, Astrain Gallart delineates the changing legislative framework from 1712 until 1805, by which the duties, rights and training of naval surgeons were regulated. Furthermore, he explores the creation and nature of the Surgical Corps of the

Armada Real, as well as how the life of surgeons on board and their relations with the rest of the crew were affected by their changing status. Another area which the author explores in detail are the developments in the theoretical and practical training of naval surgeons. With the backing of the Bourbon monarchy and its enlightened ministers, important changes occurred in the training of surgeons throughout the century. Traditionally, surgeons were either trained through apprenticeship or in universities (the first chair of anatomy and surgery had been founded in the University of Valencia in 1502). In the early eighteenth century, barber-surgeons, commonly present in ships, were replaced by qualified surgeons. In 1748, a Royal College of Surgery was founded in Cadiz, and followed in 1764 by another in Barcelona. This meant that surgeons' education was removed from the scholastic environment of the universities, resistant to change. Whereas physicians' education continued to depend on the old university structures, naval surgeons were educated in newly created institutions with flexible curricula, capable of modernization so as to meet the demands of the Royal Navy. The increasing adoption of medical subjects by the Royal Colleges, which supplanted the traditional subordination of surgery to medicine, increased underlying tensions between the medical and surgical disciplines. With the support of the monarchy, the battle was decided in favour of surgeons when in 1791 an ordinance was approved which stated that surgeons of the Armada Real should be trained in and practise medicine and surgery. Hence, as Astrain Gallart shows, in Spain the state played an important role in the professionalization of surgery. On the whole, this monograph constitutes an interesting and carefully researched case study which will be of considerable interest to naval historians and historians of medicine and science.

Katharina Rowold,
London Guildhall University