

Book Reviews

LUIS GARCIA BALLESTER, *Medicina, ciencia y minorias marginadas: Los Moriscos*, Universidad de Granada, 1977, 8vo, pp. 163, 300 pesetas.

Reviewed by Vivian Nutton, M.A., Ph.D., Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BP.

The Moriscos, the Mohammedans turned "new Christians" of sixteenth-century Spain, were expelled from their homeland by royal decree in 1609. Dr. Garcia Ballester, in this thought-provoking study, shows how from an organized medical system with diplomas and licences, medicine among this oppressed and largely peasant minority came to be practised by unlicensed healers relying on traditional, often orally preserved, herbal remedies.

This decline was not uniform. In Aragon and Castile, the Arabic language died out swiftly: in Granada, from 1530 to 1750, the university willingly accepted Moriscos into its faculty of medicine; in Valencia, higher education was effectively barred to them, and massive discrimination ensured that for the most part they remained ignorant and illiterate. Even when they succeeded in becoming doctors, ecclesiastics frowned on them giving pastoral advice and assistance to "old" Christians, and, once converted, they became immediately liable to the serious charge of heresy, even for possessing a book written in Arabic. They were always open to accusations of sorcery, astrology, and carrying out unlawful circumcisions; and a spectacular cure, even one made on good Galenic authority, could result in hostility from Christian doctors and suspicion of a pact with the devil. But the low level of medical assistance available especially to the poor gained them patients even from the "old" Christians, and a consequently increased surveillance from the Inquisition.

Inevitably, given the type of evidence so far available, the overall picture is impressionistic: there is no clear account of the place of the doctor, as opposed to that of the healer, in the Muslim community, and the opposition, the Christian physician, remains in the shadows. This is a pity, for the question of doctrinal antipathy to traditional Galenic/Arabic medicine is important, especially as the physicians of the University of Valencia were early supporters of Vesalius and the new anatomy. Nor are we sure what medicine was available to the rural Christian poor: Cipolla's studies of seventeenth-century Italy have revealed a much higher ratio of doctors in the community than had been thought possible *a priori*.

There is a full bibliography but no index: the map, p. 124, should have been given much earlier; the notes to pp. 118–120 are wrongly numbered; and the ferocious monk, Bleda, p. 99, probably wrote that the Moriscos sowed Muslim impiety under pretext and cover (colore) of healing the body.

This sadly-moving monograph achieves its aim of describing a cultural confrontation between two societies: and we look forward to the author's promised work on the medicine of the previous centuries, when the Galenic synthesis was accepted and developed by Arab and Christian alike.

A. SHARF, *The universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*, Warminster, Wilts., Aris & Phillips, 1976, 8vo, pp. viii, 214, illus., £7.50 (£4.95 paperback).

Donnolo of Oria in south Italy (913–982) was a doctor who compiled a herbal

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with over a hundred prescriptions. It is the earliest extant medical text in Hebrew of European origin, and the earliest Italian medical text. Donnolo is said to have been concerned with the founding of Salerno, and wrote extensively and most importantly on cosmology. The latter established Donnolo as a Byzantine Jewish scholar, and this study of him and his world illuminates the culture and relations of Byzantine Jewry. It also provides information on the most opaque part of medical history, the Byzantine period (pp. 94–110). In addition to a detailed and well-documented survey of his life, times, and writings, nine texts on cosmology are reproduced in Hebrew.

As tenth-century medicine was closely allied with astrology and cosmology, there are references to it throughout, and Donnolo's cosmology was compounded of mystical Judaism, Christian culture, and Arabic astronomy. Thus Sharf's excellent book will be greeted enthusiastically by a wide variety of scholars.

HELNY ALSTERMARK, *Das Arzneibuch des Johan van Segen*, (Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholmer Germanistische Forschungen, 22), Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell, 1977, 8vo, pp. 177, illus. (1 facsim.), Sw.kr.53.00.

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This is a pharmacopoeia of 1487 printed from MS medic. XII 114 at the Royal Library, Stockholm, written in Low German, with some Central German admixtures. It contains 547 prescriptions, generally divided according to the medium in which the medicines were to be administered, such as plasters and ointments. Occasionally a head to foot arrangement seems to start but soon peters out again. There are also a few paragraphs on bloodletting and urinoscopy and pieces of advice on how to protect oneself against the plague. From the arrangement, the introduction, and the commentary it is clear that this is a compilation from earlier sources. Apart from the Introduction on the manuscript and its sources (6 pp.), there is a study of Johan van Segen's language and the forms used by the scribe against the background of the dialects of the time (14 pp.). There is a Commentary comparing each prescription with versions by other authors or compilers (20 pp.). The text itself comprises 90 pp. Finally, there is a glossary translating fifteenth-century Low German and Latin words into modern German (30 pp.), and a useful bibliography (6 pp.). The manuscript must have been referred to by practitioners when in doubt, but as the glossary is a modern addition by the editor it must have taken the doctor a long time to find the right remedy unless he became very familiar with the text.

HENRY K. BEECHER and MARK D. ALTSCHULE, *Medicine at Harvard. The first three hundred years*, Hanover, New Hampshire, University Press of New England, 1977, 8vo, pp. xv, 587, illus., [no price stated].

The aim of this book is to present an assessment of the contribution of Harvard Medical School to medicine from its establishment to 1782 up to 1965. Thus it is concerned more with the sequence of outstanding individuals working in it rather than with the institution itself. Using the criteria of innovation, leadership, the