

Book Reviews

ELISABETH FINCKH, *Grundlagen tibetischer Heilkunde*, Band 1. Uelzen, Medizinisch Literarische Verlagsgemeinschaft, 1975, 8vo, pp. 107, illus., DM.60.00.

Practically all Tibetan medical works are based on the *rGyud bzi* which probably dates back to the eighth century A.D., itself a Tibetan translation of a lost Sanskrit work. It is therefore desirable that all the four treatises comprising this work should one day be translated into a major European language. Professor Ronald E. Emmerick of Hamburg University has undertaken this task (see p. 57). Meanwhile a modest beginning has been made with the book under notice in which chapters 3 and 6 of Treatise I have been reproduced in facsimile, transliterated and translated into German. The system of presentation used in the *rGyud bzi* is that of a tree with its roots and branches, and this schema is set out here in detail. The book also contains a valuable list of the seventeen most important Tibetan medical authors and translators from the Sanskrit and into Mongolian, and a similar list of fifteen Tibetan works on medicine. In the transliteration which follows the system used by Dr. Michael Hahn of Bonn University in his Tibetan grammar, the use of c for ts is a little confusing for English readers. The biography of gYu thog Yon tan mgon po the Elder announced on p. 23 forms, in fact, the major part of *Tibetan medicine in original texts* translated by the Ven. Rechung Rinpoche, published in 1973 by the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine. This book is mentioned on p. 103 as no. 38. The reason for such discrepancies is due to the fact that Dr. Finckh has been working on her book since, at least, 1962. Herself a practising physician, she has watched Tibetan doctors at work in India. She has the commendable humility to accept and acknowledge help not only from western tibetologists but from Tibetan doctors and scholars, a unique opportunity likely to be lost within one generation of Tibetans in exile. The chief merit of her book is the attempt to establish an exact medical terminology. As the German terms can be easily reproduced in English this ought to be helpful for further translations. According to pp. 82–83, the second volume is to continue this process with a list of medical terms with their translation in addition to chapters 4 and 5 of Treatise I, and volume three is to describe the practice. Let us hope we shall not have to wait for another thirteen years.

THEODORE BURANG, *The Tibetan art of healing*, London, Watkins, 1974, 8vo, pp. ix, 117, £1.50 (paperback).

The German original of this book appeared in 1957, and the present translation is no doubt a reflection of the current interest in the Orient, especially in its mysticism, its medicine, and its occult. However, the author is presenting Tibetan medicine from a proselytising rather than an historical point of view. He believes that Western medicine can derive benefit from a knowledge and incorporation of Tibetan ideas and techniques of therapy. It is possible that psycho-therapeutic methods may be worth studying and, if necessary, adopting, but on the whole one cannot have a great deal of confidence in the author in view of his occasionally peculiar views of Western medicine. And the claim that because we recognize psychogenic illness more readily nowadays “. . . contemporary Western medicine is gravitating towards Tibetan medical views concerning etiology”, will receive little support.

The translator claims to have read widely whilst preparing her translation, but there

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is little record of this in the few footnotes provided. None of the secondary medical literature, much of it historical, is referred to, except the recent book on Tibetan medicine by Rechung Rinpoche which completely overshadows and replaces this one.

RICHARD J. BONNIE and CHARLES H. WHITEBREAD II, *The marihuana conviction. A history of marihuana prohibition in the United States*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1974, 8vo, pp. xiv, 368, illus., \$12.50.

One of the outstanding problems of twentieth-century Western society has been, and still is, addiction to drugs of plant and chemical origin. This book deals with only one of them, and is apparently the first full-scale history of the use, abuse and prohibition of marihuana, also known as Indian hemp or *Cannabis sativa*, in the United States. It has a very long history and over the centuries has provided man with a tough fibre used to make rope, twine, and cloth, with an oil and bird-seed, and with a psychoactive agent used for medicinal, religious, and for intoxicant purposes. The modern problem relates to the last of these properties.

Marihuana was taken into the States early in the present century and since then a continual war has been waged against its addictive use. The extent of present-day involvement, a quarter-million persons arrested annually for marihuana violations and twenty-six millions having smoked it illegally, is a measure of the problem and the need for increasing vigilance. The authors trace this story in detail with careful documentation and judicious selecting from masses of material. Altogether it makes fascinating reading. But, more importantly, it presents the history of a social problem of outstanding significance. Although the actual drug may be less of a problem in this country, the underlying theme is the same as for other habit-forming agents. And also the historical approach, if carried out objectively as is the case with Professors Bonnie and Whitebread, is a most valuable one. As a contribution to the recent history of social medicine, welfare and legislation it deserves a wide audience.

GEOFFREY W. OXLEY, *Poor relief in England and Wales 1601–1834*, Newton Abbot, David & Charles, 1974, 8vo, pp. 159, £4.95.

The author's aim is to present an up-to-date survey of poor relief as it evolved from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, and he correctly argues that it can only be adequately comprehended when studied against the economic, social, political and other ingredients of its general background. This he carries out briefly and effectively with full documentation; the bibliography based on an extensive literature search is especially welcome and is the first of its kind. But, as Mr. Oxley points out, this study must be based on local records, so that more correctly the book is a survey of the history of poor relief in particular parishes. The fact that it operated locally means that the local factors determining its handling must be identified and investigated.

In addition, there is a section on methodology in poor relief research, a discussion of further work in this area and a description of the sources used in it. The book is, therefore, eminently suitable for those studying the social history of medicine, whether student or teacher. It provides an excellent introduction to an important topic and can be strongly recommended.