

## Book Reviews

PAUL U. UNSCHULD, *Medicine in China. A history of pharmaceuticals*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1986, 4to, pp. xiii, 366, illus., £40.50.

This volume ought to be called *A history of pharmacopoeias in China*. It is not concerned with the actual practice in the past, accounts of which might be found in letters, diaries and chronicles, even less with the industrial production of remedies; but with books enumerating and categorizing remedies, and the items of materia medica from which these are prepared. It is a translation of the author's German book on the subject, enlarged by a chapter on official Chinese pharmacopoeias published during the twentieth century in the Republic of China, that is, Taiwan, and in the People's Republic, that is, the mainland of China, and by information based on archeological discoveries made during the 1970s.

A margin of nearly half the text area in this handsomely-produced volume accommodates delightful woodcut illustrations and bibliographical details of the pharmacopoeias described. Equivalents in Chinese characters, transliterations, and literal English translations are given with each title. The same appear in extensive indexes of persons, book titles, and materia medica (called "drugs", in the American fashion) which are fortunately also provided with Latin equivalents.

The first reference in China to collecting plants for medicinal purposes can be found in the *Huai-nan tzu* of the second century BC. Many of the pharmacopoeias mentioned are no longer extant, but are quoted by title and, often, author in later pharmacopoeias. Great numbers of whole passages were quoted in later works. In fact, the composition of Chinese pharmacopoeias was for a long time bedevilled by a respect for tradition going so far that everything known to an author from earlier pharmacopoeias had to be incorporated in his own work, even if the reported facts contradicted one another and the author's own findings, for instance on the taste and action of a plant. As historical documents these compilations are interesting, but for practical purposes they must have been confusing. After around AD 1600 authors became more critical and selective. In the 1953 official Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic, Western-style methods were used. Its second edition of 1977 is divided into two volumes: the first contains the traditional animal, mineral and vegetable materia medica and its application; while volume two is devoted solely to substances and medications used in modern, Western-style pharmacy, including appendices on the analysis of the substances by such methods as spectrophotometry and chromatography. It is as if the latest British Pharmacopoeia were using Grieve's *Herbal* plus a book on animal and mineral remedies as its first volume: a state of affairs which perhaps seems less absurd than before to members of the profession in the 1980s.

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VIVIAN NUTTON, *John Caius and the manuscripts of Galen*, Cambridge Philological Society, 1987, 8vo, pp. ix, 117, illus., £10.00 (paperback).

Dr John Caius (1510–1573) is called many things in the college at Cambridge which bears his name. Textual critic is not one of them. In this monograph, Dr Nutton examines Caius' philological career as a Galenist. It is a tricky task; the famous doctor is associated today more with reaction than with progress, and he has fared rather badly at the hands of the moderns. Caius was an operator, and a ruthless one, it would appear. But his respect for Galen knew few bounds. In many ways it parallels Galen's respect for Hippocrates, and just as Galen organized much of his work around commentaries on Hippocratic writings, so Caius continued the tradition with Galen.

Nutton's research into his merits as critic and interpreter is centred on the marginalia in Caius' own working copy of Galen, now in the library at Eton. Yet his account is not as dry as that might make it sound. Caius' peregrinations around Europe in search of new editions and manuscripts are documented in detail; along the way we are introduced to many of the most important names in the history of Galenic scholarship. Two chapters cover the fate of Galen from AD 1000 to the Basle edition of 1538; these alone form an invaluable introduction to Galenic textual history.