

## Book Reviews

LEONARD F. PELTIER, MD, *Orthopedics: a history and iconography*, Norman Orthopedic Series No. 3, Norman Surgery Series No. 6, San Francisco, Norman Publishing, 1993, pp. xxvi, 305, illus., \$225.00 (0-930405-47-1).

This companion volume to *Fractures: a history and iconography of treatment*, by the same author and publisher, is equally well researched and produced. In addition to 332 illustrations of patients, apparatus, x-rays, instruments, operative procedures and practitioners, there are apposite quotations, often lengthy, from authors who advanced the speciality of orthopaedic surgery. This well-balanced selection of material offers a coherent portrayal which will appeal to a wide readership and should be obligatory study for all trainee orthopaedic surgeons.

As Dr Peltier indicates, "orthopedics" may not be an appropriate title because of its special association with children. This deformed adjective used as a noun is more clearly "orthopaedic surgery" or more concisely "orthosurgery", that is rectifying or corrective surgery which spans all ages. Claimed to be "a history orientated towards the patient and disease rather than toward the physician", there are many observations and photographs of actual patients, yet inevitably long sections are devoted to discoveries and discoverers, accompanied by brief biographies and usually a portrait.

The introductory chapter surveys "crippledom" across many centuries, and the second an eighteenth-century origin for orthopaedic surgery, attributing unproven influence to Nicolas Andry who in 1741 introduced the word "orthopédie", which remained dormant for almost a century, and whose treatise, written exclusively for parents, lacked any substance for surgeons. Before Ludwig Stromeyer's pioneering minimally-invasive subcutaneous tenotomies in the 1830s, undue credit is bestowed on Jacques-Mathieu Delpech for a procedure he never performed, for his was an open heel tenotomy utilizing two incisions, undertaken once and never repeated. Subsequent chapters focus on pathological themes, embracing congenital deformities, deficiency diseases, infections (including tuberculosis and poliomyelitis), neurological problems, arthritis and tumours.

The frontispiece reproduces a procession of thirty cripples by Hieronymus Bosch which includes twelve amputees, highly unrepresentative of orthopaedic ethic and practice. In similar vein, the rationale of circumventing amputation by joint exsection, arthrodesis, excision arthroplasty, trephining for chronic bone abscess, malignant tumour resection and skeletal replacement is not emphasized. Curiously neither the spectacular metallic prostheses which have transformed the lives of adolescents with sarcomata, nor joint prostheses which have revolutionized arthritis are illustrated.

These points apart, Dr Peltier has summarized succinctly and illuminated superbly the development and flowering of a major tree in the field of surgery, now two centuries old and still growing vigorously. The references and index are comprehensive and meticulous. Only the price is controversial.

John Kirkup, Royal College of Surgeons of England

HANS DAIBER, *Naturwissenschaft bei den Arabern im 10. Jahrhundert n. Chr.: Briefe des Abū l-Faḍl Ibn al-'Amīd (gest. 360/970) an 'Aḍudaddaula*, Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, vol. 13, Leiden and New York, E. J. Brill, 1993, pp. vi, 243, Gld. 90.00, \$51.50 (90-04-09755-4).

Abū l-Faḍl Ibn al-'Amīd (d. A.H. 360/A.D. 970) is best known as a poet and littérateur, and as a mentor, confidant, vizier, and administrator serving the Būyid rulers of Persia. His interests in philosophy and the exact sciences occasionally emerge in previously published essays by him, but largely as vignettes which provide an insufficient basis for assessing Ibn al-'Amīd's place in these fields. Following up on an article published some fifteen years ago,<sup>1</sup> Daiber now fills this gap with editions, German translations, and commentaries on seven previously unpublished essays, six from a *majmū'a* in the Iraqi Museum Library in Baghdad, and one from another *majmū'a* in Leiden University Library.

As the editor establishes in his introduction, these essays were written in Rayy during the last decade of Ibn al-'Amīd's life, between 961 and 970, and address queries put to him by the Būyid ruler 'Aḍud al-Dawla, who as a youth had been tutored by Ibn al-'Amīd. Meteorology is the most

prominent topic, with further contributions in physics, astronomy, mechanics, cosmology, and psychology. The questions addressed largely consist of the puzzles of the curious layman (e.g. why is the sky sometimes red, how do flies stick to walls, etc.), presented in the style of the Greek *problemata* literature. The arguments offered in response are, as one would expect, essentially Aristotelian; but they often set forth new formulations or deal with problems not to be found in the Aristotelian corpus. Daiber's commentaries are especially useful for the way in which they place Ibn al-'Amīd's essays within the context of the development of Aristotelianism in medieval Islam, with the philosopher al-Kindī (d. c. 252/866) proving to be an important source of influence. The transition from Greek to Arabic is also pursued by Daiber; he draws attention to numerous points of translation, and observes, *inter alia*, that Ibn al-'Amīd seems to have access to an Arabic translation of the *Parva naturalia* which does not agree with the extant Greek text. There is also a detailed Arabic-German glossary which will be of considerable value to researchers interested in the technical and specialized vocabulary of the medieval Arabic natural sciences.

In his introduction and commentaries, Daiber repeatedly compares his author to Leonardo da Vinci. The comparison was first made by Khalīl Mardam Bey in 1931, and more recently has been reiterated by several other scholars, but seems both unnecessary and misleading. Both Ibn al-'Amīd and Leonardo displayed formidable talents in many fields, but their cultural backgrounds, the focal points of their contributions, and their influence on later cultural and scientific developments were so different as to render a comparison highly problematic. Beyond that, such comparisons tend to obfuscate an important feature of Islamic science illustrated by Daiber's volume. In matters of culture, such scholars as al-Jāhīz (d. 255/868), Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023), and Ibn al-'Amīd were primarily literary figures, but represented a tradition which encouraged very broad learning and denigrated narrow specialization.<sup>2</sup> The result was the appropriation into literary culture of much of the philosophical, medical, and other scientific learning of the day, and the side of Ibn al-'Amīd's career presented by Daiber in this volume may perhaps best be seen as an example of the ways in which this process encouraged not just the assimilation, but also the expansion of scientific knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Daiber, 'Briefe des Abū l-Faḍl Ibn al-'Amīd an 'Aḍudaddaula', *Der Islam*, 1979, 56: 106–16.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, al-Jāhīz, *Rasā'il*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Ḥārūn, Cairo, 1384–99/1964–79, I, pp. 379–93.

VARDIT RISPLER-CHAIM, *Islamic medical ethics in the twentieth century*, Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East, vol. 46, Leiden and New York, E. J. Brill, 1993, pp. vii, 149 (90-04-09608-6).

Since their emergence in the nineteenth century, newspapers in the Islamic world have been major vehicles for discussion of the impact of the West and how Muslims should respond. Up to the present day, religious scholars have taken advantage of the press to publicize their formal pronouncements, or *fatwās*, on many topics of concern to Muslims, and in doing so they continue a mode of legal discussion and commentary which in its Islamic context dates back more than a millennium.

To Dr Rispler-Chaim goes the credit for recognizing that this *fatwā* literature offers a valuable corpus of evidence for modern Islamic medical ethics. Based on documents published in numerous *fatwā* collections, and others from twenty-two different Muslim newspapers and periodicals, her book illustrates ethical discussions on a broad range of issues. These include abortion, artificial insemination, organ transplants, cosmetic and sex-change surgery, medical aspects of Muslim worship (e.g. is one's fast in Ramaḍān broken by taking essential medication?), doctor-patient relations, autopsy, circumcision, euthanasia, and AIDS. A chapter of 'Miscellany' offers translations of *fatwās* in areas where insufficient material was available for more analytical discussion, and includes documents on healing, wine drinking, drugs and pork, milk banks, smoking, sex during menstruation, freezing sperm, masturbation, epilepsy in married women, and the *siwāk* (a traditional tooth-cleaning stick).