

the physician's profession (training, specialization and particular cases, and remuneration), the fields of medical activities (public sector, army, private sector), and the physician's social and legal status. Chapter 5, entitled 'De l'étiologie à la thérapie: le choix offert au malade', proposes a general reflection on the kinds of medicine practised in Antiquity.

The subject of this work is very promising, for it considers ancient medicine as a social practice, with the intention of improving our knowledge not of medical theories and therapeutics, but of the social and legal status of doctors and their art in Antiquity. However, Raj does not fully attain her objective, because of an incomplete understanding of medical history. In fact, she does not seem to have had any specific training in the history of medicine, and thus makes some mistakes in the interpretation of evidence. On several occasions, Raj's remarks betray her misreading of Greek and Latin medical literature, notably the Hippocratic Corpus. For example, concerning the medical knowledge of Philo of Alexandria, Raj points out that he had studied the Hippocratic authors, in particular "Hippocrate, dont il cite par deux fois le début des Aphorismes . . . ainsi qu'un long passage tiré du traité des Semaines" (p. 70). The wording here implies that these two treatises, the *Aphorisms* and the *Weeks*, are still attributed to Hippocrates today, a view at variance with modern Hippocratic studies. The author's lack of familiarity with the medical evidence also appears in the choice of editions. For instance, Raj quotes (p. 245) a long extract from the Hippocratic treatise *Sacred disease* in the French translation of Emile Littré, published in 1849, without taking into account the more recent editions, particularly the translation and commentary of Jacques Jouanna (2003).

Some inaccuracies also appear in the pages on the *archiatroi*. With regard to the oldest mention of the term, Raj cites the inscription discovered at Iulia Gordos (Lydia), in honour of Apollophanes of Seleuceia, doctor of Antiochos III. She, of course, states that on the damaged original the word *archiatros* was restored, but she still seems to believe this to be the correct word, only indicating in a footnote

that Louis Robert rejected this "restoration". Today, it is admitted, after new reading of the stone, that the word *archiatros* was never inscribed on the chiselled area (P Herrmann, 'Ehrendekret von Iulia Gordos', in *AAWW*, 1974, 111, p. 439, n. 2; E Samama, *Les médecins dans le monde grec*, Genève, 2003, p. 355, n.50). Furthermore, Raj asserts that the title of *archiatros* seems not to have been given to the doctors of the Ptolemaic kings, nor to the imperial doctors in Rome (pp. 55–6). Yet, in the following lines, she rightly mentions some instances of the title being used during the reigns of Claudius (C. Stert. Xenophon) and Nero (Andromachos). Moreover, other examples of *archiatroi*, imperial doctors in Rome, appear in ancient evidence (T. Stat. Crito under Trajan, Marcios Hermogenes under Hadrian, Stat. Attalos under Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, L. Gellios Maximos under Caracalla). The word *archiatros* did not always designate the imperial doctor in Rome, but it could be employed with this meaning.

In addition, Raj sometimes bases her argument on evidence which is not chronologically relevant to her subject. For instance, among the types of medical men, she refers to the *pepaideumenos* or the cultured man (pp. 67–70), a word borrowed from Aristotle. She quotes some examples of this enlightened medical amateur throughout Antiquity, from Plato to Apuleius, including Philo of Alexandria in Roman Egypt. But she is unable to identify any in the papyrological evidence, because they do not practise medicine as such. However, this kind of *pepaideumenos*, defined by Aristotle, is the result of theoretical considerations, which cannot be transposed to the reality of medical practice under the Empire. It is one of the misuses of evidence which detracts from the quality of this work.

Cécile Nissen,
Université de Liège

M S Valiathan, *The legacy of Suśruta*,
Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 2007, pp. xxxiv,
830, Rs 895 (hardback 978-81-250-3150-5).

M S Valiathan's new book on the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* has been constructed on the same principles as his *The legacy of Caraka*, published for the first time in 2004. The contents of the *Samhitā* are rearranged in fifteen sections and eighty-seven chapters by collecting the material on particular subjects usually found scattered in the original treatise. Most chapters are therefore composite as can easily be ascertained by consulting the references at the end of each. Several chapters on particular diseases, for example, derive their text from the Nidānasthāna (aetiology, symptomatology, etc.) and the Cikitsāsthāna (treatment). The position of the sthānas themselves has also been reorganized. The Śārīrasthāna, for example, has been moved towards the end.

This arrangement has obvious advantages in view of the fact that the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* spreads its teachings on a specific topic in many instances over a number of chapters, even over different sthānas. This is an even more conspicuous feature of the *Carakasamhitā*, which led P V Sharma, much earlier than Valiathan, to an enterprise resembling the latter's *The legacy of Caraka*, namely to the compilation of the *Carakasamasyā*, which does not present a translation, but, instead, the original Sanskrit.

On the other hand, Valiathan's method has its drawbacks, mostly the same as P V Sharma's work. Those familiar with the Sanskrit text and its order or with a full translation are faced with the problem where to find particular passages of the original in Valiathan's book since the latter did not provide it with a concordance, which would have been a boon to his readers. His table of contents and the summary index give only a superficial orientation.

Valiathan's English rendering of Suśruta's text is not a complete one. Sentences or verses are omitted in several instances and abridgments are rather common. The translation itself is in general acceptable. His preface states that he made use of P V Sharma's translation of the complete text but he sometimes deviates from it. These changes are in most cases no improvement. The transliteration is in general correct apart from a restricted number of oddities, such as aṣṭilā instead of aṣṭhīlā, udbhijja instead of

udbhijja, jāmbavauṣṭha instead of jāmbavauṣṭha, darbhā instead of darbha, jāṅgalā instead of jāṅgala, manyāsthambha instead of manyāstambha, etc. These errors increase in the list of Sanskrit names of plants; examples are: barhiṣṭā, jaṭila, jūṅgī, kkaṇḍa, kūsmāṇḍa, kusumbhā, sahadēva, trapusā.

Another important feature of Valiathan's work is the tabular presentation of a large part of the contents, which makes it easier for the reader to see the structure of lists and prescriptions. As in most translations of Sanskrit medical texts, the translator seems not to have met with difficulties in the interpretation and with ambiguities.

Valiathan refrains from indicating where such passages are found and which alternatives are possible or have been proposed by predecessors.

The author has been wise in keeping the original names of plants and having asked C Ramankutty of the Arya Vaidya Sala to prepare the list of botanical identifications. The spelling of the botanical names is in most cases remarkably correct; exceptions are Boerhaavia instead of Boerhavia and Crataeva instead of Crateva. The names given are usually the valid ones though exceptions do occur. Examples are: guggulu—*Commiphora mukul* (Hook. ex Stocks) Engl. instead of *Commiphora wightii* (Arn.) Bhandari, sūraṇa—*Amorphophallus campanulatus* Decne., while the correct names are: *Amorphophallus paeoniifolius* (Dennst.) Nicolson = *Amorphophallus campanulatus* (Roxb.) Bl. ex Decne. Sources are not indicated but it is no surprise to discover that the identifications in most cases agree with those given in *Indian medicinal plants: a compendium of 500 species*, edited by P K Warriar, V P K Nambiar and C Ramankutty himself. The errors indicated are also found in this source. Nevertheless, there are deviations too; the identities of a number of plants disagree; examples are: āṣpotā, kovidāra, kucandana, kuraṅṭikā, snuhī, svarṇakṣīrī, viṣamuṣṭi. A second source is probably P V Sharma's *Dravyaguṇaviṅṇāna*, as attested by the identification of kākaṇḍa (more correct: kākāṇḍa) as *Mucuna monosperma* DC. Noteworthy are the distinction made between hiṃsrā and ahiṃsrā, regarded as identical by Ḍalhaṇa, a commentator on the *Suśrutasaṃhitā*,

Book Reviews

and the identification of *śvētā* as *Careya arborea* Roxb. A remarkable feature is the absence from the list of a considerable number of plants mentioned in the *Suśrutasaṃhitā*, such as *akaṣoṭa*, *arimeda*, *bhūrja*, *bhūṭṛṇa*, *chagalāntrī*, *citrā*, *cukra*, *coca*, *dhanvana*, *gavedhuka*, *kapittha*, *nākulī*, *pattūra*, *prapunnāḍa*, *tamāla* (*patra*), *tripuṭaka*, *ṭuṅṭuka*, *vatsanābha*.

A characteristic of the list of botanical identifications is a fair number of question marks after Sanskrit names of plants indicating that no reliable identifications are known. This contrasts with the apparent certainty of the majority of the identifications, whereas it is generally known that many of these are not certain at all. No doubts are shown, for example, in identifying controversial plants such as *mūrvā*, *pāṣāṇabheda* and *rāsnā*. The members of the group of eight plants called *aṣṭavarga* are even confidently given a botanical name despite the fact that nobody knows what their original identity may have been.

Valiathan discusses the genesis of the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* in his introduction. He assumes that an original *Suśrutatantra* has been reworked and enlarged with the *Uttaratantra* by a Nāgārjuna and that later changes, especially by Candraṭa, made it into the text known to us. He is convinced that the *Suśrutatantra* came into being well before the time of Pāṇini (around 700 BC) since the

latter refers to a Suśruta. This assumption, rather often found in works by Indian authors, has no solid basis because the grammatical works mentioning Suśruta (the *Gaṇapāṭha* of Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Kātyāyana's *Vārttikas*, the *Kāśikāvṛtti*, and the *Mahābhāṣya*) nowhere indicate that a medical authority is meant (see G Jan Meulenbeld, *A history of Indian medical literature*, Groningen, 1999, vol. IA, pp. 333–5). Valiathan's view that the Nāgārjuna who revised the *Suśrutatantra* lived after Dṛḍhabala, who did the same with the *Carakasaṃhitā*, also lacks any supporting evidence. Finally, he does not indicate which additions were, in his eyes, made much later by Candraṭa.

Recapitulating briefly my impressions, Valiathan's new book on the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* is a valuable addition to the already existing translations by bringing together related but scattered information and by presenting complex material in tables. Unfortunately, the resulting drawbacks of this procedure have not been remedied. Apart from this, the book shows numerous minor deficiencies and inaccuracies, proving that the author is not well acquainted with the recent literature on the *Suśrutasaṃhitā*.

G J Meulenbeld,
Bedum, The Netherlands