

Book Reviews

commentary, written by distinguished scholars in the field of art history, biology, geology and zoology, discuss Seba's collection within its own time, the history of natural history and describe the many difficulties that confronted a collector and publisher such as Seba. How, for example, was he to conserve African snakes, frogs and lizards during the long voyages from overseas? How should an Amsterdam-based painter draw and colour an exotic animal in a life-like pose when he had never seen a live one with his own eyes?

These questions point to the enormous difficulty we are confronted with today when looking at the species in Seba's *Thesaurus*, that is, their identification according to the rules of modern nomenclature. Carl von Linné's (1707–78) classificatory system, first published in 1735, which still forms the basis of our modern biological classification and taxonomy, was not yet available for Seba as a guideline for the organization of his large assortment of specimens. Seba's classification was still based on similarities and comparison, and still offered plenty of room for all kinds of natural abnormalities, such as Siamese-twin deer, and even fabulous creatures such as the seven-headed hydra. Seba, frequently confronted with overseas species he had never seen before, simply invented new names for them, a standard practice at the time. For the modern reader it is therefore very helpful that the editors made the extra effort to identify the animals and plants presented in the work and provide their modern names.

Seba's catalogue is a unique Baroque document, both as an artistic tour-de-force and as an important example of the history of collecting and natural history. The Taschen reprint of the *Thesaurus* is a little wonder in itself and deserves a special place on the shelves of every scholar's own *Wunderkammer*.

Claudia Stein,
Warwick University

Zohar Amar, *The history of medicine in Jerusalem*, BAR International Series 1032,

Oxford, Archaeopress, 2002, pp. vi, 163, illus., £20.00 (paperback 1-84171-4127).

Zohar Amar's *The history of medicine in Jerusalem* joins a long series of studies conducted by the author in recent years at the Unit for the History of Medicine in Ancient Times in the Department of Land of Israel Studies at Bar-Ilan University, Israel. Although the book focuses on medicine in greater Jerusalem, it reflects the nature of medicine in, and the changes it underwent throughout, the history of the Levant.

Drawing on hundreds of primary and secondary sources in various languages, the author has produced, for the first time, a concise and lucid description of the history of medicine in the holy city. The book contains information about the status of medicine in different periods, the physicians, the hospitals and other medical institutions that served the public, and more besides.

The book is divided into two parts. The first, 'A short history of medicine in Jerusalem', has eight chapters which cover in chronological order: medicine in Jerusalem in Biblical times; a range of subjects in the Roman period from sanitation and hygiene to the different varieties of medical practitioners; and the practice of medicine under Byzantine and Muslim rule and during the Crusader period (until 1187). The author describes and discusses the medical work of the military orders such as the Hospitalers, the Teutonic knights, the Order of the Lepers (St Lazarus), and the relationship between the Western and Eastern medicine. This is followed by accounts of the city's hospitals in the Ayyubid period (1187–1254), and of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian physicians; the Mameluke period (1260–1517); and the physicians, institutions of healing, sanitary conditions, and *materia medica* of the Ottoman period (until the end of the eighteenth century). An epilogue discusses the beginning of modern medicine in Jerusalem, concentrating mainly on the Jewish institutions of healing.

Part two, entitled 'Physicians in Jerusalem in the tenth to eighteenth centuries', focuses

Book Reviews

on eighty-nine of the most important physicians who practised in the holy city throughout this period. The biographical notes and descriptions of each of the practitioners constitute a treasure trove for scholars engaged in this area.

The book has 23 black-and-white illustrations and four tables that summarize some of the data; it closes with an excellent bibliography containing 344 items, including manuscripts and previously unused archival materials, and a comprehensive index. It is an excellent work which opens a window onto the medical facilities that served the citizens of Jerusalem for three

thousand years, and illuminates the personalities who practised the profession.

Historians will find this a very useful textbook for teaching the history of medicine in the Levant, and general readers will enjoy it too. The author uncovers much of interest from a variety of angles such as the relationship between the city's physicians of different religions and the flow of medical data between cultures, religions and geographical zones which occurred in Jerusalem across the centuries.

Efraim Lev,
University of Haifa