

Vladimir Abramović

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

Čika Ljubina 18–20

11000 Belgrade, Serbia

E-mail: vabramov@f.bg.ac.rs

**REVIEW OF THE BOOK *INSIGHTS INTO PORTUGUESE MEDICAL HISTORY: FROM THE BIRTH OF THE ART OF ASCLEPIUS* BY MARIA DO SAMEIRO BARROSO, CHRISTOPHER JOHN DUFFIN AND JOÃO ALCINDO MARTINS E SILVA, EDITORS, CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE 2022, XXVI+516 P. ILLUSTR. ISBN (10):1-5275-8831-9; ISBN(13):978-1-5275-8831-8**

As the title and introduction by the editors suggest, the book presents excerpts from the Portuguese medical history. Bearing in mind that the topic encompasses millennia – counting from the evidence of Neolithic skull trepanations to the present day – to condense such a rich medical history between covers of a book is an impossible task. Therefore, a selection had to be made. Howsoever it was done, some pieces of that mosaic will be missing. The selection in *Insights* spans from the Roman times, across Early Modern era – which comprises the most of the book – up until and including the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the absence of topics related to the Medieval medical history is noticeable. Although it does not diminish the significance and value of the book, we feel that it would have been a valuable addition, considering the vibrant Medieval history of the Iberian Peninsula and its western territories that would in time become Portuguese.

This mosaic of topics presented in the volume is varying in both length and scope. Some of the chapters could be considered as case studies of limited subjects, while the others could serve as all-encompassing stand-alone studies, especially those written by Christopher Duffin in his pioneering work on emeralds as *Materia medica* and Maria do Sameiro Barroso on the history of spectacles, with special focus on Portugal in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Other chapters, more limited in scope, explore a variety of subjects, such as those from the Antiquity, for example the analysis of the Roman and Graeco-Roman surgical instruments and pharmacy tools kept in Portuguese museums, as well as exploring the concept of *Salus* based on Roman epigraphic documents from the province of Lusitania. A significant part of the book is dedicated to sanitary precautions against plague in Portuguese ports and the operation of the Maritime Lazaretto of Lisbon. Other chapters devoted to the Early Modern era cover the biographies and careers of renowned Portuguese physicians, both home and abroad, as well as the representation of plague in French baroque painting representing the disease's outbreak in northern Italy in 1630. As we reach the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, the focus shifts to Portuguese contribution to the discovery of quinine, the epidemic of Spanish flu in Portugal, the Portuguese echo of works of Maria Ropala Cickersky, the first female Romanian forensic physician and a panegyric devoted to Fernando de Almeida, who made significant contributions to Portuguese medicine and archaeology.

The publisher opted for a thick hardback cover with a solid, sewn binding, which is a necessity for the book of such voluminosity. It also indicates that the target audience is primarily professional and expert public. Unfortunately, the impressum does not contain information on book circulation, so we can only hope that the number is high enough to satisfy the demand – both of the professional and general public – which an edition such as this certainly deserves.

This book, with its broad palette of topics and subjects, represents a valuable contribution to the study of history of Portuguese medicine. Its publication in English opens the door for international researchers to access this field of medical history, hitherto the preserve of Portuguese scholars.