

Book Reviews

All three books, two written in the United States and one in France, demonstrate that valid cures can be obtained by means quite different from Western medicine in its present state, that anatomy and disease entities do not have to be the be-all and end-all of medical investigation, and that a system of functions and relationships between energies also seems to work. However, two of the writers have a Chinese background and the third was trained in Macao. Unless one's thinking is based on the Chinese way of seeing the world, the philosophy of yin and yang, and the Tao which will turn each thing into its opposite in due course, one can hardly hope to practise this type of medicine successfully.

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FREDERICK SARGENT II, *Hippocratic heritage. A history of ideas about weather and human health*, New York and Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xlii, 581, illus., \$65.00 (\$25.00 paperback).

Published posthumously, this first historical survey of human biometeorology was written by a leading human ecologist and principal founder of the International Society of Biometeorology. Frederick Sargent traces the evolution of the Hippocratic idea that weather is one of the determinants of health from its ancient origins to the present day. The narrative is built around lengthy sketches of the life and ideas of key figures, and with the unsurprising exception of Paracelsus, these accounts are reliable as far as they go. True to the Baconian spirit that Sargent commends in biometeorological work itself, the book reproduces large amounts of recorded observations and historical material with limited analysis.

The author's main historical concern is with the time lag between the early-modern appearance of measurement and graphic techniques, and their belated application in systematic medical-meteorological investigations. He shows that, despite the enthusiastic inductivism of the medical topographers, it was not until the late nineteenth century that quantitative methods prevailed over impressionistic observations, and that the graphic analyses essential for the discovery of biometeorological correlations were applied. The explanations offered for this delay are the intrinsic difficulty of biological study, lack of experimentation, and the unreliability of contemporary data. It is suggested that the germ theory of disease also retarded progress in the mid-nineteenth century by deflecting interest away from the weather and human constitution, but that biometeorology re-emerged all the stronger for this clarification when the environment again attracted attention in the human sciences around the turn of the century.

The book is more successful on twentieth-century developments, when the author literally comes into his own. A sensitive intellectual biography of Sargent's teacher and collaborator, William F. Petersen ("the American Hippocrates"), forms one-fifth of the volume. The epilogue contains an intriguing content analysis of recent research, revealing a marked divergence between continental and Anglo-American biometeorology. Continental scientists continue to pursue the meteorological causes of disease, an interest exemplified by the provision of medical-meteorological forecasts to doctors and hospitals by the German weather service. Anglo-American work, on the other hand, is now largely restricted to the physiology of human survival in extreme weather conditions. Sargent observes that the rich Hippocratic tradition of Britain and America depicted in his book might conceivably have led to an outcome more like the continental one. It will take a different sort of history – institutional and comparative – to explain why it did not.

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PETER GARNSEY, C. R. WHITTAKER (editors), *Trade and famine in classical antiquity*, Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Volume 8, Cambridge, 1983, 8vo, pp. 127, £12.50 (paperback). (Obtainable from Dr C. Austin, Trinity Hall, Cambridge CB2 1TJ.)

In the last few years, historians of the ancient world have begun at last to investigate the difficult areas of ancient food supplies and deficiencies. This collection of essays, derived as it is