AMIRA EL-AZHARY SONBOL, *The creation of a medical profession in Egypt, 1800–1922*, Syracuse University Press, 1991, pp. xii, 177, $34.95 (0–8156–2541–3).

In this study Amira Sonbol uses the history of the rise of a modern medical profession in Egypt as a vehicle for examining the question of social change and the impact of westernization in a Middle Eastern country. The book ranges over numerous problems and issues, but devotes special attention to the founding (1827) and subsequent history of the Qaṣr al-'Aynī School of Medicine.

The reforms of Muḥammad 'Alī Pāshā (r. 1805–48) are the obvious starting point, and, in tracing the early history of Qaṣr al-'Aynī, Sonbol offers new and enlightening insights into the viceroy's programmes and objectives. Religious scholars, the only teachers in pre-reform Egypt, quite rightly saw the teaching of modern medical science as a threat on several fronts, and the Egyptian people at first found it difficult to accept the loss of their sons' labour (most medical students were of peasant origin) for the sake of training in which no immediate benefit could be perceived. The development of the medical school thus proceeded haltingly for a time, its progress dictated by the cautious pragmatism of Muḥammad 'Alī and shaped by the expert guidance of Clot Bey.

Rejecting the usual view that medical reform was pursued for the sake of protecting the Egyptian army, Sonbol argues convincingly that from the start Muḥammad 'Alī and Clot Bey aimed to improve the lot of the population at large. Civilians were treated at the Abū Zabal site of the first hospital, the veterinary school (est. 1827) was founded in response to a general epizootic that devastated the country's animal population and so represented a serious threat to the economy, and the maternity school (est. 1831 to train female doctors, the *ḥakīma*s, to treat women's disorders and conditions) was obviously irrelevant to the concerns of the army. The affiliation of the school with the army was a tactic to give the institution greater status in the eyes of the people, as also was the practice of awarding military titles to graduates. Clot Bey himself saw military costs as an impediment to modernization in other areas.

The pursuit of modern medical education at first required simultaneous translation into Arabic of lectures delivered by foreign professors in either French or Italian; but former students later became teachers themselves, European textbooks were translated at a rapid pace, and committees of scholars and interpreters laboured over the establishment of modern medical terminology in Arabic. By 1876 the school was an efficient and well-organized institution with 195 students, an excellent hospital, a well-staffed library, and its own natural history collection. Over 3000 students had graduated; and while the traditional and folkloric healers had not been eliminated (this was not a goal in any case), there was a growing public awareness of the dramatic differences between these practitioners and the modern physicians. The differentiation was increased and highlighted by the favourable pay, ranks, promotions, and pensions the regulars received from the government, and "by the 1870s doctors were recognized by the population as being the members of a corporate structure, the medical profession" (p. 97).

It has been argued that Egyptian medical reforms, impressive on paper, were in reality modelled on the distinctly urban institution of the Western hospital and so were irrelevant to the needs of most Egyptians, 85 per cent of whom were peasants living in the agrarian hinterlands far from the major cities. Here Sonbol's work is particularly important, for she argues that Muḥammad 'Alī's reforms were indeed relevant to the peasantry. Medical personnel, sometimes husband and wife teams, were sent out to the villages and were often based in local primary schools; village barbers were trained to perform such minor surgery as opening abscesses and suturing wounds; and the *ḥakīma*s were a common and welcome sight in rural areas.

That a serious urban/rural gap eventually did develop is not doubted by Sonbol, but she views this within a context of general decline caused by measures taken under British rule after 1882. New laws made it possible for incompetent foreign physicians to practise in Egypt, while Egyptian physicians and medical students were faced with an increasingly difficult array of obstacles: a refusal to allow students to specialize, the adoption of English as the language of instruction, the imposition of discriminatory examination requirements, and the introduction

of medical and educational fees which exceeded Egypt's average per annum income. Egypt's need for physicians, steadily increasing with its increasing population, was thus met for the most part by foreigners, who preferred to live in Cairo or Alexandria, where they could expect to find the wealthy clientele able to pay high fees. Elsewhere, there were (by 1934) only 183 Egyptian doctors to meet the needs of their millions of countrymen.

Sonbol's study vividly illustrates the clash between the new and the old which marked the course of reform. The School of Medicine arranged marriages among its students without their prior approval (though either could subsequently reject the proposed match). Parents at first universally refused to allow their daughters to leave home to study at Qaṣr al-'Aynī to become *ḥakīmas*, so Muḥammad 'Alī purchased ten girls from the Cairo slave market, and these became the Maternity School's first student class. Egyptian students were at first deeply shocked by the desecration of the dead involved in dissection of human cadavers, and Clot Bey was once attacked by one of his own students during an anatomy class; one begins to sympathize with the students upon reading how Clot Bey once illustrated the nature of military injuries by blowing up a corpse in front of them in his anatomy theatre.

The book does, to this reviewer's mind, pose a few problems. For example, the "quality" of health care and "enough doctors to fulfil the country's needs" are difficult notions to deal with in historical terms, and increasing or declining numbers of physicians, however well or badly placed geographically, are not necessarily a useful gauge of how effectively medical problems are or are not being confronted. Far more importantly, however, Dr Sonbol has made some very significant contributions to our knowledge of the emergence of modern medicine in Egypt, and has done so in a way which invites comparison with the cases of other Middle Eastern countries and those of Third World nations in general. Her book should in fact be read along with LaVerne Kuhnke's recent *Lives at risk: public health in nineteenth-century Egypt* (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1990), which raises many of the same issues from the public health perspective. Sonbol gives a more closely nuanced and more accurate assessment of matters of particular relevance to her subject (e.g. the question of the appropriateness of urban hospital-based medicine to rural agrarian societies), while Kuhnke's study offers a better account of such public health issues as quarantines and debates in Egypt over disease causation. Together, they provide a very clear picture of the development of modern medicine in Egypt which will surely comprise the starting point for all future research on the subject.

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JACQUES JOUANNA, *Hippocrate*, Paris, Fayard, 1992, pp. 648 (2–213–02861–3).

Jouanna's *Hippocrate* is something of a hybrid. It belongs to a series of biographies published by Fayard, which includes, for instance, Michel Antoine on Louis XV, Ronald Clark on Benjamin Franklin, Jean Tulard on Napoleon, and Jean-Paul Roux on Jesus, and on Tamburlaine. This volume is similarly addressed to the general public and Jouanna frequently bypasses scholarly controversy on the grounds that that is just for the specialist. The passion and virulence of their debates, he writes (p. 77), would make the lay person smile. At the same time the claim is made (p. 9) that, thanks to the mutually supportive work of philologists and epigraphists, "the life of Hippocrates emerges from the limbo of hagiography".

Jouanna himself, of course, is an eminent scholar well known for his editions of several Hippocratic treatises and his work on the so-called Cnidian school in particular. He remains unperturbed by the critical attack, in recent years, on the whole notion of an identifiable school of Cnidian—or come to that of Coan—medicine, and by what he dismisses as the modish scepticism about identifying a genuine core of works by Hippocrates in the Corpus. The "good grain" is siftable, he insists (p. 88), from the "chaff". Nevertheless, the writing of a work of more than 600 pages on Hippocrates must be judged a breathtaking performance, though, to be sure, much of that space is taken up by a quite reasonable account of many of the multifarious topics broached in one or other of the treatises in the Corpus. But Jouanna is prepared to accept much of the evidence in the *Embassy* as also in the *Lives* of Hippocrates