

validity of commenting upon the treatise *On the best sect* (Tecusan's fragments 277–279), if it is, as stated by Iwan Müller over a century ago, an early modern fake. The qualifications made by the reviewer obviously aim at improving slightly a very impressive, dedicated and useful work; in any case, the details of the Greek text are of importance only to a part of Tecusan's readership, which will be wide enough, as soon as the commentary is published.

At any rate, thanks to Manuela Tecusan, the Methodists, once vilified by Galen and neglected by most of the Moderns, receive at last well-deserved attention; one is impatient to see the second volume published, in order to use the first one “according to the right method” (as Galen would say).

Caroline Petit,
University of Exeter

¹ Ph. Mudry, ‘Le regard souverain ou la médecine de l'évidence’, *Les cinq sens dans la médecine de l'époque impériale : sources et développements* (Actes de la table ronde du 14 juin 2001, ed. I Boehm and P Luccioni), Paris, De Boccard, 2003, pp. 31–8 ; J Pigeaud, ‘Les fondements du méthodisme’, in *Les écoles médicales à Rome* (Actes du 2^e colloque international sur les textes médicaux latins antiques, Lausanne 1986), Publications de la faculté des lettres de Lausanne, XXXIII, Genève, Droz, 1991, pp. 9–50.

Florian Steger, *Asklepiosmedizin: medizinischer Alltag in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Medizin Gesellschaft und Geschichte, Beihefte 22, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 2004, pp. 256, €38.00 (paperback 3-515-08415-0).

“*Asklepiosmedizin*”, the medicine of Asclepius, or Asclepius in the medical tradition, is a field of study which has been looked at from various angles—archaeology, history of medicine, Greek and Roman religion, history or cultural history of the Mediterranean just to name a few. The research of any of its various features is very complex and requires meticulous work on archaeological findings as well as a profound knowledge of the general intellectual discourse of their time.

This volume describes and contextualizes Asclepiian medicine of the Roman imperial period. It is the revised version of a PhD thesis written at the Institute of Ancient History at the University of Bochum. The book consists of five main parts, an introduction with a survey of earlier studies on Asclepiian medicine in general and an outline of the main issues; an extensive chapter on the medical marketplace in imperial Rome and the different types of medical profession, including also ritual healers; a description of the Asclepius cult and its origins; an analysis of the influence of Oriental and Greek thought on Roman culture; and a conclusion with a summary of the preceding chapters.

The book covers, within the limitations of a monograph and beyond the scope of a PhD thesis, all aspects relevant for a historical analysis of the topic. Its structure is clear and lucid and an elaborate system of references guides the reader and makes sure he or she does not get lost in details of sub-paragraphs. The intended audience is not just a minor fraction of ancient historians—where necessary, background information on less known subjects is provided, making the book accessible for scholars from other disciplines.

Changes of perspective between the main sections and also within chapters is one of the leading features of the book. The focus shifts from analysis of secondary literature to anecdotal accounts of healings, academic discourse on medical sects in antiquity and interpretation of cultural exchange in the Roman empire. Thus, it gives insight into all relevant parts and aspects of Asclepiian medicine, institutions, buildings and their setting, practices and the needs of the patients.

The central part of the volume consists of a study of three texts in which, in a broader sense, patients describe their experiences of Asclepiian treatment. Carefully avoiding the problems of retrospective diagnosis, Steger analyses the nature of the disease, the treatment applied and the setting in which it took place. He follows the only right assumption, that some dietetic measures might not be limited to a medical meaning but could also be part of a cult or a religious ritual, or, of course, common sense and

a ubiquitous form of popular medical understanding. What the patient encountered was not a medical treatment one could get at the practice of a resident physician, and if one wanted a purely medical treatment, one could see a doctor and avoid the trouble of travelling to an Asclepian sanctuary. Asclepian medicine was characterized by a treatment that had its roots both in rituals and medical thought, and usually also a direct contact between patient and god.

Overall, this book provides a detailed study of the imperial Asclepius cult and its relationship to medical practice; moreover, it traces back the roots of the cult and gives information on its relevance for the medical history of the western world. It provides both a link and a synopsis for material that would otherwise be hidden in highly specialized publications of different disciplines.

Barbara Zipser,

The Wellcome Trust Centre for the
History of Medicine at UCL

Selma Tibi, *The medicinal use of opium in ninth-century Baghdad*, Sir Henry Wellcome Asian Series, vol. 5, Leiden and London, Brill, 2006, pp. xiv, 314, €93.00, \$133.00 (hardback 90-04-0414696-2).

With an intimate knowledge of the Arabic language and a professional background in pharmacy, the author of this study possesses a fortunate combination of qualifications for examining the medicinal use of opium in ninth-century Baghdad. The great achievement and centrepiece of Tibi's research is a detailed analysis of six key medical texts (al-Kindī's *Aqrābādhīn*, Sābūr ibn Sahl's *Aqrābādhīn*, Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq's *K. al-'ashr maqālāt fī 'l-'ayn*, al-Tabarī's *Firdaws al-ḥikma*, ps.-Thābit ibn Qurra's *K. al-Dhakhīra*, and Rāzī's *Hāwī*), which she scrutinized for any references to opium or variants of poppy. Some of these texts have been edited with indices, but Tibi had the painstaking task of examining all 23 volumes of Rāzī's *Hāwī* to discover a total of 544 references to opium/poppy.

Tibi presents the results of her research in three parts: early Islamic knowledge of Graeco-Roman

use of opium; use of opium in the early ninth century and in the late ninth century. Tibi admits this distinction is slightly arbitrary, yet, as she states in her conclusion, earlier authors tend to have longer recipes with far more ingredients, which are usually prescribed for a large number of very disparate ailments, whereas the recipes of later authors are shorter, more to the point and say very little about preparation, weights or dosage (p. 170). In each part Tibi provides a general introduction to the authors and their works, presents annotated translations of key passages and describes the general use of opium/poppy in the work of every author. Her approach is as accurate as it is comprehensive. It covers a variety of issues such as the kind of opium/poppy used, the ingredients it is used with, the ailments treated, the use of the medicaments, and the dosage of opium. Throughout her book Tibi presents the answers to these questions in very helpful and detailed statistical tables. The appendix contains editions of the Arabic passages, a list of the *materia medica* and glossaries of substances and diseases.

There are not many shortcomings in this impressive study. One of them concerns the presentation of the edited Arabic texts. Even though the editions are part of the appendix, Tibi chose to discuss the state of the manuscripts and her editorial principles in the study itself where they disrupt her discussion of the contents. Furthermore, Tibi generally relied on existing editions for which she occasionally suggests different readings; in the case of Ḥunayn's treatise she also consulted two additional manuscripts. Unfortunately she did not do so in the case of Sābūr's *Aqrābādhīn*. She seems to have been unaware of Manfred Ullmann's review (*Welt des Orients*, 2004, 34) of Oliver Kahl's edition (*The small dispensatory*, Leiden, 2003), which points out the significant amount of material neglected in that edition.

Another shortcoming of the study is its strict limitation to descriptions of the statistical findings. Except for a few remarks in her interesting conclusion, Tibi does not try to explain why the use of opium differs so substantially between individual authors, opium appearing in only 4 per cent of al-Kindī's