

Carmen Peña, Fernando Girón. *La prevención de la enfermedad en la España bajomedieval*, Granada, Universidad, 2006, 549 pp. ISBN: 84-338-3920-9.

There are few books currently available on the prevention of illness in medieval medicine that are as substantial and informative as this one. Its authors are long-established and respected authorities in this field. They have the added advantage that one is an Arabist and the other a medical doctor, which allows them a wider vision, given that they approach their objectives from complementary perspectives.

The work in question is very thorough and clearly the result of years of dedication. It combines sources of diverse origins, with texts that often present a complex interpretation but are treated with scientific rigour and, most importantly, touch on aspects that are under-represented in current historiography

The reason for this under-representation is that the prevention of illness, in antiquity and the medieval world, did not receive the same attention from doctors as actual illnesses, their causes, progression and treatment. However, the great medical writers always reserved a chapter of their work, even in small treatises dedicated to their patrons, for discussion of the factors that affected patients on a daily basis and exerted a significant influence on their health.

The book takes three groups of sources as references. The first constitutes contributions by classical authors, mainly Hippocrates and Galen. The second refers to Arabic authors—or Jews who wrote in Arabic—with contributions by Avicenna, al-Razi and al-Mayusi from the East and by Avenzoar, Averroes, Maimónides and Ibn al-Jatib from Andalusia Andalusians. The third group acknowledges the debt owed to the Christian and Jewish doctors who inherited this knowledge and translated it into Latin or Castilian for the benefit of the Christian world. Pedro Hispano, Arnau de Vilanova, Juan de Aviñón, Alonso Chirino and the anonymous author of the *Medicina castellana regia* are included among these sources. The book also cites other authors of equal standing but who made a lesser contribution to this study, such as the Andalusians al-Zahrawi, 'Arib ibn Sa'id and al-Arbuli.

Peña and Girón do not limit themselves to the task of gathering information but rather subject it to a detailed analysis, raising various thought-provoking questions that lead to specific hypotheses. The book is, in summary, a combination of contributions from different writers, their analysis by the authors and their conclusions.

The work itself is divided into three parts, sub-divided in turn into chapters. They are preceded by a useful «Note to the Reader» in which the authors set out the reasons that inspired them to develop this study. They go on to cite their sources and their corresponding geographical areas, as well as their individual contribution to and influence on the object of study.

In Part One, they address the preventative tradition, dating back to antiquity, which has been crystallised in writings on health at different times and in different cultures,

paying special attention to the treatises cited in this work. Throughout these pages we encounter references to measures for preventing disease, with specific mention of patients' food and drink intake, habitat, sleep and wakefulness, physical exercise, retention and excretion, and emotions. They follow the factors in patients' daily life that influence their treatment by the doctor, e.g., their age, sex, constitution and habits, as well as the seasons of the year and climate. Completing this part is a description of texts emanating from classical Greek, Byzantine, Latin, eastern Islamic, and Andalusian sources and from scholastic medicine in general, as well as references to the works of Avenzoar, Averroes, Maimónides, Pedro Hispano, Arnau de Vilanova, Ibn al-Jatib, Juan de Aviñón and Alonso Chirino.

Part Two is dedicated to the preventive resources used in the preservation of health, which are divided into three groups. The first concerns the day-to-day surroundings of patients: their location, air, clothing and adornment; the towns, streets, gardens and houses; the orientation of their possessions and furnishings and the ambience created; the materials and colours used for clothes, and their jewellery. The second group is dedicated to the measures to be taken in the event of epidemics, and the third is concerned with sleep, wakefulness and the emotions.

Part Three, the most extensive section of the book, deals with the direct actions of the doctor to preserve the health of the patient through the relationship between the intake and excretion of patients. Two categories can be established. One category concentrates on prevention *via* the individual patient's food and drink and their positive or negative influence on the organism, as well as on the role of food in achieving specific results. Each type of food is defined by its nature, i.e., hot, cold, dry or humid, which is then matched to the nature of the patient. Some foods, prohibited by religion, were omitted from scientific texts. The other category concerns the actions needed to regulate the evacuation of residues in the body as a means of maintaining health. Among these actions is physical exercise, including rest, massage and bathing. This topic reveals the greatest differences in opinion between the Christian doctors on one hand and the Islamic and Jewish doctors on the other. There are also references to bloodletting, cupping, purgatives, vomiting, enemas and diuretics. This part ends with a chapter dedicated to sexual relationships as another form of evacuation.

The work is accompanied by an extensive critical bibliography, which the authors number by chapters. It is completed by the historical sources consulted and a glossary of place names, concepts, diseases, treatments, and proper names.

The quantity and range of the contributions to medieval medical knowledge contained in this book, some of which challenge existing preconceptions, result in a splendid work that is highly attractive to any type of reader, not only specialists in the subject. It is a well-rounded study, based on solid research into medical theory and practice, which illustrates the impact of these theories on people's daily lives in the cultural and religious mix of medieval Spain. Furthermore, by placing the dietetics of medieval Spain in the wider context of Islamic medicine, this book will be of lasting value. Consequently,

the book makes a major contribution to our understanding of the prevention of illness, a previously neglected area of research. The authors are to be sincerely congratulated, as are the bodies that made this publication possible, notably the Wellcome Trust, with support from the British Academy and Granada University Press. ■

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Arnaldi de Villanova. *Opera Medica Omnia. XVII. Traslatio Libri albuzae de medicinis simplicibus* [ediderunt J. Martínez Gásquez et M. R. McVaugh]. *Abū l-Ḥalt Umayya, Kitāb al-adwiya al-mufrada* [edidit A. Labarta]. *Llibre d'Albumesars de simples medecines* [edidit L. Cifuentes]. Praefatione et comentariis instruxerunt A. Labarta, J. Martínez Gásquez, M. R. McVaugh, D. Jacquart et L. Cifuentes, Barcelona, Universidad de Barcelona, 2004. ISBN: 84-9779-240-8.

La obra está dedicada a la memoria del profesor García Ballester y pertenece a la muy cuidada colección *Arnaldi de Villanova. Opera medica omnia*, de la que fue uno de sus principales colaboradores. Se trata de una edición árabe-latín con una Introducción catalana e inglesa, con partes en francés, del *Kitāb al-adwiya al-mufrada* (*Libro de los medicamentos simples*) del polifacético autor andalusí —escribió sobre poesía, filosofía, astronomía, matemáticas, música, geografía y medicina— conocido como Abū l-Ḥalt Umayya (1068-1134). En forma de apéndice se incluye la versión medieval catalana del texto, realizada a partir de la traducción latina.

Inicialmente compuesta en árabe, fue traducida al latín por Arnau de Villanova a finales del siglo XIII y, posteriormente, vertida al catalán por una mano anónima, quizás en el siglo XIV y también al hebreo, por obra de Yehuda Natan. De algún modo, si no fuera por los párrafos en lengua inglesa y francesa que acompañan la obra, se diría que todo el escrito forma parte de un ambiente absolutamente bajomedieval, respondiendo plenamente a nuestra visión de la ciencia en ese tiempo.

Se trata, en suma, de tres versiones medievales yuxtapuestas, en ningún caso de dos traducciones actuales. Esto es una cierta novedad, pues lo usual es ofrecer la versión establecida, en árabe o latín, seguida de su traducción en alguna lengua occidental. Las introducciones a cada una de ellas son muy completas y muestran la gran dedicación al tema de sus autores. Casi todos los aspectos de interés como puedan ser los manuscritos, sus características, omisiones de términos, etc. se han analizado amplia y satisfactoriamente.

La versión árabe de Ana Labarta está en la línea que nos tiene acostumbrados en cuanto a rigor y adecuación al texto y el empleo de seis manuscritos garantiza