

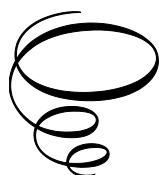
Insights into Portuguese Medical History:

*From the Birth of the Art
of Asclepius*

Edited by

Maria do Sameiro Barroso,
Christopher John Duffin
and João Alcindo Martins e Silva

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INTRODUCTION

The rich history of Portuguese medicine, ranging from Neolithic trepanned skulls to the country's unique contribution to the Age of Discovery by introducing the medical knowledge of Eastern *materia medica* into European medicine, has mainly been studied by Portuguese researchers. The 46th Congress of the International Society for the History of Medicine (Lisbon 3-6 September 2018) initiated a resurgence of interest in Portuguese medical history by both Portuguese and foreign researchers; the results of this new wave of research deserve the wider circulation that high-quality publications in English can bring about. The volume *Medical Heritage of the National Palace of Mafra*, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2021, paved the way for new insightful research. The current volume aims to bring together new studies by combining a Portuguese and international authorship, including medical doctors, geologists, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians and pharmacists, focusing on Portuguese medical history.

This book encompasses historical, epigraphic and archaeological research, exploring the rich mosaic of Portuguese medical history from Roman times up to the twentieth century, finishing with an outstanding medical doctor who was also an archaeologist and Director of the Lisbon National Museum of Archaeology.

The title, referring back to Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, evokes the Greek influence embodied by the presence of Greek pottery, primarily vases discovered in archaeological excavations (Rocha Pereira, 2010). A tombstone dedicated to Asclepius, supposedly fashioned by a Greek freedman and found in Bracara Augusta, one of the most flourishing cities in the Iberian Peninsula during Roman times, establishes the thread traced in this book from Greek Medicine to that of present day Portugal.

In these times of new pandemics, an urgent reconsideration of the analogous experiences of the past has resulted in a meaningful reassessment and revitalization of the present. This mosaic of Portuguese medical history begins with an essay about the goddess *Salus* by **José d'Encarnação**, exploring the ancestral framework of religious beliefs and seeking appeals for godly cures in Roman funerary epigrams, highlighting the social and political concerns expressed in early times.

Further developing the relationship between archaeology and medicine in the Roman period in Portugal, **Maria do Sameiro Barroso** presents an innovative study of medical surgical instruments from Bracara Augusta. Framed within an archaeological context, this study sketches an overview of prevailing medical and surgical practice in the glamorous Roman settlement located in the present day city of Braga, and devised in the sixteenth century by Archbishop D. Diogo de Sousa, the patron of the Archaeological Museum. A second, complementary chapter on the Bühler-Brockhaus Collection completes an insightful overview of the materials used in ancient medical practice. Rare tools whose original functions challenge interpretation have been subjected to modern study techniques such as radiological investigation.

In an essay exploring ancient medical-religious traditions, **Christopher Duffin** presents an in-depth study of the medicinal use of emeralds—precious stones given special consideration by the Portuguese/Goan physician, Garcia de Orta (c. 1501-1568). Continuing his pioneering work on the use of geological materials in medicine, he provides yet another valuable contribution in an aspect of the history of the *materia medica* which, until now, has received very little attention in the literature.

Returning to the topic of pandemics, **Carlos Lemos and Daniel Nunes** explore Art History as a source providing a novel window into the study of ancient epidemics, focusing on the outbreaks of epidemic diseases and plagues.

Maria do Sameiro Barroso presents paintings and a sculpture of the earliest representations of spectacles in Portuguese Art History and a previously unpublished collection of the earliest spectacles found in Portugal following an overview of the use of magnifying beryls used as visual aids and the discovery and development of the earliest spectacles.

The socioeconomic disruption and, above all, the high mortality rate caused by the second pandemic of bubonic plague in Portugal were a constant source of concern for the monarchs who reigned from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. In two detailed and comprehensive chapters, **J. Martins e Silva** considers how plague and other transmissible diseases were excluded from entry via Lisbon harbour and other Portuguese ports by the development of new norms and sanitary regulations exemplified by the lazaretto, health stations and the sanitary park.

Jewish physicians and their often tragic experiences with the court of the Portuguese Inquisition provide some of the most interesting chapters in Portuguese medical history. Jacob de Castro Sarmiento (1690-1762), one of the most outstanding Portuguese physicians who fled to London and succeeded in becoming a Fellow of the Royal Society, is the subject of a

biographical study by **Christopher J. Duffin**. Sarmiento's works included an account of variolation for smallpox, the introduction of Newtonian science in Portugal and a 'secret' recipe of a quinine-containing *Água de Inglaterra* ('Water of England').

Francisco Curate and **Telmo António** present another Jewish physician, Gaspar Lopes Henriques de Chaves (1729-1796), who managed to stay in Portugal and left valuable manuscripts reflecting his everyday activities. The authors investigate his unpublished collections of medical case histories as major sources of knowledge revealing medical practice and the physician's relationships with patients, providing a valuable contribution to the study of medicine in late eighteenth century Portugal.

Pharmacy studies are represented in this book by the chapter contributed by **João Rui Pita, Maria Guilherme Semedo and Ana Leonor Pereira** on the Portuguese physician Bernardino António Gomes (1768-1823), who isolated cinchonine from cinchona bark, engaging the French scientists Pelletier and Caventou in the study. Gomes stimulated the isolation of quinine, the alkaloid which was the mainstay in malarial treatment until the mid-twentieth century.

In a study of modern viral pandemics, **António Trabulo** recalls the catastrophe triggered by the Pneumonic Influenza (Spanish flu) of 1918-1919, focusing on the experiences and implications of the disease in Portugal, evoking Amadeo de Souza Cardoso (1887-1918), one of the most illustrious Portuguese contemporary artists, taken away by the virus.

The exciting topic of female physicians in the History of Medicine is the subject considered by **Dana Baran**, who presents an overview of the life of Maria Ropala Cickersky (1881-1973), the first female forensic physician in South-Eastern Europe and one of the earliest worldwide. Her personality and scientific work did not go unnoticed in Portugal. In 1936, the Portuguese assistant professor Carlos Ribeiro da Silva Lopes, from the Porto Faculty of Medicine and Institute of Forensic Medicine, emphasised a leading paper on the subject by Maria Ropala.

The volume is completed by the contribution of **Carolina Moreira** who considers Fernando de Almeida (1903-1969), a Portuguese gynaecologist and obstetrician, professor of the Lisbon Faculty of Medicine of Lisbon, who made a significant contribution to Neurology and research in collaboration with Egas Moniz (1874-1955), in the discovery of cerebral angiography. Fernando de Almeida also graduated in Historical and Philosophical Sciences, embarking on a highly successful new career in History and Archaeology, leading to his appointment as Director of the Lisbon National Museum of Archaeology, a post which he held from 1967-

1972, proving that a medical doctor can extend his cultural interests far beyond Medicine.

In short, this volume shows that the History of Medicine represents a confluence of multiple arts and sciences. The practice of Medicine is as complex as the human soul. Since ancient times, science has sought to elucidate the secrets of the human body through the dedication, shrewdness and wit that allowed the establishment of a system of medical reasoning based on empirical observation. *Tradition of Medicine*, also referred to as *On Ancient Medicine*, one of the earliest *Hippocratic writings* dating from the end of the fifth century BC, is surprising for its topicality:

Medicine has for long possessed the qualities necessary to make a science. These are a starting point and a known method according to which many valuable discoveries have been made over a long period of time. By such a method, too, the rest of the science will be discovered if anyone who is clever enough is versed in the observation of the past and makes the starting point of his researches (Hippocrates, *Tradition in Medicine* in Lloyd 1894, 71).

Science and empathy stand as two leading characteristics. The ability to understand and share the feelings and emotions of other people, particularly during times of ill-health is the most fundamental, vital essence original to the development of Medicine, as stated by Sir William Osler (1849 –1919), one of the most brilliant physicians, sometimes known as ‘The Father of Modern Medicine’: *Medicine arose out of the primal sympathy of man with man: out of the desire to help those in sorrow, need and sickness* (Osler 1921, 6).

Citing Hippocrates (460-370 BC), Sir William Osler views the history of empathy as a complementary discipline of clinical medicine: *Where there is love of humanity there will be love of the profession* (Osler 1921, 62). Ultimately, cultivating an understanding of the past, the history of empathy is at the core of the History of Medicine.

Maria do Sameiro Barroso
Christopher J. Duffin

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