

Book Reviews

Medical historians will find the chapter on plague epidemics of particular interest. Dr. Finlay shows how epidemic death rates varied with location, social status, age, and (least easily explained) sex; and he stresses in a telling conclusion that London's demography depended more on the "background" level of mortality than on these occasional critical years, despite their dramatic effects. Here and elsewhere, he succeeds in illuminating some of the most fundamental features of London at a time when it was becoming the greatest metropolis in Europe.

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PHILIP CASH, ERIC H. CHRISTIANSON, and J. WORTH ESTES (editors), *Medicine in Colonial Massachusetts, 1620–1820. A Conference Held 25–26 May 1978 by the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, Boston, The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1980, pp. xxiii, 425, illus., \$25.00.

This volume's paradoxical title, which identifies the colonial period in Massachusetts with the years from 1620 to 1820, reflects one of the leading constraints placed upon the colonial medical historian's endeavour. The few extant sources from the bulk of the colonial period have been exhaustively studied; documentation is extensive only from the 1740s, and abundant only after 1760. Further exacerbating this problem is the fact that unlike Philadelphia, in Massachusetts, or more particularly in Boston, medical institutions such as schools and societies that conventionally provide grist for the historian's mill were almost entirely founded only after the Revolutionary War, for reasons that Whitfield J. Bell jr., and G. B. Warden skilfully explicate in their studies. Accordingly, many of the fifteen essays that comprise this collection not only needlessly recount knowledge that is commonplace, but also deal almost exclusively with the period after 1775, and strictly speaking are not colonial history at all.

Three essays obviate these problems by exploiting new categories of sources using demographic and quantitative analysis. Douglas Jones's study of the sick poor and the practitioners who attended them in eighteenth-century Essex County is plainly the outstanding piece of the volume. Based largely upon court and town records, it incorporates the techniques and ideas of the best of colonial American historiography. Using similar records, as well as church registers, Eric Christianson's discussion of the demographic, educational, and economic characteristics of Massachusetts' practitioners is extracted from the longer study that is his dissertation; it is unlikely that anyone else could coax more information out of the sources he has mined. J. Worth Estes's contribution pivots upon an analysis of four physicians' manuscript account books and ledgers. Although his study is drawn from a limited number of sources, it provides intriguing insights into eighteenth-century therapeutic practice by pointing to the similarities and differences among his practitioners in their uses of the *materia medica*.

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GUSTAV HENNINGSEN, *The witches' advocate. Basque witchcraft and the Spanish Inquisition (1609–1614)*, Reno, Nevada, University of Nevada Press, 1980, 8vo, pp. xxix, 607, \$24.00.

This fascinating book makes an extremely important contribution to the history both of the European witch-craze and of the Spanish Inquisition. The "witches' advocate" was Alonso de Salazar Frías, one of the three inquisitors at Logroño, in the North of Spain. The importance of this inquisitor's sane and sceptical investigations into an outbreak, lasting from 1609 to 1614, of witch-accusations in the Basque region, has long been known, from C. H. Lea's *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages* (1888), and quite recently from Julio Caro Baroja's *The world of the witches* (1964); but Henningsen, a Danish folklorist, has discovered an enormous wealth of documents in the archives of the Inquisition in Madrid, which enable him to trace in the greatest detail the history both of this witch-panic and of the gradual development in the *Suprema* (the central tribunal of the Spanish Inquisition, in Madrid) of a sceptical attitude towards accusa-