

Book Reviews

JOHN LADA and FRANK A. REISTER (editors), *Medical statistics in World War II*, Washington D.C., Office of the Surgeon General, Department of the Army, 1975, 8vo, pp. xvii, 1215, illus., \$19.50.

In World War II American troops were deployed in eight theatres, forming the largest force ever mobilized by the nation. This book contains, in 1129 pages of tables, the data concerning the battle casualties and non-battle diseases and injuries encountered, based on eighteen million individual medical records. They not only provide details of the medical aspects of the war, but they also record valuable information for future reference.

There are four introductory chapters which provide a summary analysis of the tables. They are followed by an account of sources, definitions and methodology, and after the tables there is a detailed index.

The awesome series of tables in fact provides a remarkably fascinating and useful summary of military medical statistics. Here in compact form is the price the United States paid for their participation in World War II as far as human life and health are concerned. It will not only be of great interest to military and medical historians, but also to those concerned with present and future medical aspects of troops and to medical planners. Considering its size and its value as an essential book of reference the price is a give-away.

CHARLES LESLIE (editor), *Asian medical systems; a comparative study*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, University of California Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. xiv, 419, illus., £13.20.

On the whole there is a great deal of ignorance in the West concerning non-Western forms of medicine. We tend to dismiss them as akin to fringe medicines, so certain are we that our own system is the correct one. Recently, there has been increasing interest in oriental therapy, partly due perhaps to the occasional failure of our methods of treatment, partly because of the mystery of the East, and in part fostered by the nationalistic efforts of those advocating it. It seems reasonable, nevertheless, to know something of Asian medical systems and this book which surveys them all, with a comparative study, provides an excellent source of information.

For the historian of medicine there are comprehensive scholarly essays on the great traditions of Arabic, Indian, and Chinese medicine, and in several of the articles on the modern state of affairs there is considerable historical material. Of particular interest is the way in which ancient systems are still being purveyed today according to the original practices and concepts, with only slight modification. Their folk traditions are continued, often side by side with Western medicine, and here the comparative approach is most rewarding.

Contributions are made by twenty scholars from many disciplines, mainly anthropology and sociology, although no historian of medicine is represented. It seems strange that a medically qualified historian, of which admittedly there are few with intimate knowledge of eastern medicine, was not recruited for a book dealing with a basically medical topic. Even so, there seem to be no major errors, and the book will be of great value to all who are interested in or concerned with non-Western medicine from the practical, historical or general interest point of view.