

or to Christendom (Expiración García Sánchez on the gardens of al-Andalus). The contributions also range from ferociously scholarly text-based work to broader brush-strokes, and to the interestingly practical, with Deirdre Larkin's closing paper on recreating medieval gardens (an unfortunate proof-reading error has given her the running head *Horus* (for *Hortus*) *redivivus*, but there are no Egyptian deities in her piece—the range is not quite that wide).

It would be invidious in such a short review to pick out individual papers for praise or criticism, but I recommend the collection as a whole not only to medievalists (both early and late), but to anyone who may believe that the classical legacy was neglected or unknown until the humanists rediscovered it, and to all those interested in plant-based medicine, *materia medica*, or the history of horticulture. The editors deserve our gratitude for bringing these scholars together (the collection stems from a conference held at Penn State in 2003) and for sharing their findings with a wider audience.

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Efraim Lev and **Zohar Amar**, *Practical materia medica of the medieval eastern Mediterranean according to the Cairo Genizah*, Sir Henry Wellcome Asian Series, vol. 7, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2008, pp. x, 619, €169.00, \$237.00 (hardback 978-90-04-16120-7).

The term Cairo Genizah refers to a room in the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat (Old Cairo), into which, in accordance with Jewish practice, unwanted documents were deposited in order to avoid destroying the written divine name. For about 1000 years, between the ninth and nineteenth centuries, around a quarter of a million items, ranging from large manuscripts to small fragments, were placed in this room, making it the most important documentary archive for both Mediterranean and medieval studies across many fields, including

medicine. The largest and most important collection of Genizah fragments is housed in the Cambridge University Library, which also hosts the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit. The research presented in this book is based on this particular archive.

Research into the medical treasures of the Cairo Genizah was greatly enhanced by an Iraqi Jewish doctor, Haskell Isaacs, who settled and practised medicine in Manchester. The combination of his knowledge of Arabic (including Judaeo-Arabic), Aramaic and Hebrew, and his medical training, coupled with his intense interest in, and recognition of the significance of, the Genizah manuscripts, enabled him to break new ground in the field of Genizah medical research. This culminated in the production of a descriptive catalogue of medical manuscripts, which remains the most important reference work to this day (H D Isaacs, *Medical and para-medical manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah collections*, Cambridge University Press, 1994). Since its publication, at least another 180 new medical manuscripts from the Genizah have come to light. It is obvious, therefore, that research into the Genizah medical manuscripts is very much in its infancy. The range of medical texts found thus far is astounding, and includes fragments of Arabic translations of classical medical texts (e.g. Hippocrates and Galen), works on anatomy, pathology, pharmacology and therapeutics, prescriptions, and letters containing medical advice as well as lists of *materia medica*.

Lev is a botanist by training, so he brings an important array of skills to the analysis of medicinal plants. Amar is a historian with a strong research profile in the history of science and technology in the Middle East. Between them, they have over 100 publications in Hebrew, so this book represents a much needed step in the dissemination of their work to a wider audience.

The bulk of this book consists of two detailed lists of *materia medica*, arranged in alphabetical order according to their English names (Agaric to Zinc, Acacia to Yew) followed by their Latin and Arabic names.

Sufficient indices of Arabic and Latin terms are also given, which greatly enhances the usefulness of these chapters. Also, the Arabic terms are transliterated throughout, so non-Arabists should not feel intimidated. The first list contains 120 items that are commonly attested in the Genizah fragments, while the second contains 140 items that are less commonly attested.

After the opening section on terminology, for each entry there follows a description (e.g. botanical, metallurgical) of the substance and a brief reference to earlier sources that discuss it (e.g. Dioscorides, the Bible and the Talmud). The next two sections discuss the medicinal uses of the substance as described in practical lists of *materia medica* and theoretical medical textbooks respectively, with reference to the particular Genizah fragments that contain these descriptions. Thus this book functions as a concordance to the occurrence of medicinal substances in the fragments of the Taylor-Schechter Collection, albeit an incomplete one due to the infancy of this field. Moving beyond the Genizah sources, the following sections discuss references to substances in the wider medical literature of the medieval period, the current uses of these substances in the traditional medicines of the Middle East, and references to their production and trade in medieval sources. The data given is very detailed, with ample references to enable further study. The utility of the volume is further enhanced by copious appendices and indices, a detailed bibliography and a useful introduction. There are thirty-two pages of colour photographs, some of Genizah documents, some of medicinal substances, including a photograph of a carrot and carrot seeds (fig. 20), intriguingly labelled “Seeds and root of carrot, *Daucus carota* (Apiaceae)”. Fortunately, such vanities are rare in what is otherwise a very worthwhile volume that really only lacks a reverse index of Genizah fragment classmarks.

A word of caution is in order, however, regarding the identification of the plants. This is a very problematic process with many

pitfalls. For example, in their entry on the ash tree (pp. 340–1), the authors refer to the Arabic terms *dardār*, *lisān al-‘aṣāfir* and *lisān al-‘uṣfūr*. In modern standard Arabic, the last two terms refer to the ash, while the first refers to the elm. Lev and Amar state, “The name ‘*dardār*’ was given to elm and common ash trees, but in the Levant this was the usual term only for the Syrian ash” (p. 340). The problem here is that *dardār* is probably a Persian term adopted by earlier Syriac writers to translate the Greek term *πτελέα*, which refers to the elm, so it was not the usual term for ash in the Levant. The picture becomes further confused because certain writers, such as the late-twelfth-century Iberian agriculturalist Ibn al-‘Awwām, referred to the *lisān al-‘aṣāfir* as being the fruit of the *dardār* tree. Given that one of the most celebrated botanists, Ibn al-Baitār, was born in Iberia but gradually moved eastwards until his death in Damascus, it is also clear that trying to distinguish such identifications by region is not advisable.

This volume is a very timely reference work that will be deeply appreciated by all working in medieval medicine in the Mediterranean. Any shortcomings are due to the infancy of the field, meaning that subsequent revisions will be necessary as more research is done and more documents come to light. If the authors persevere with this, it will prove of great use for many years to come. The value of the Taylor-Schechter Collection in Cambridge is clearly demonstrated by this book, and one can only hope that its publication stimulates more interest in an often neglected archive.

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John Henderson, Peregrine Horden and Alessandro Pastore (eds), *The impact of hospitals 300–2000*, Oxford and Bern, Peter Lang, 2007, pp. 426, illus., £48.00 (paperback 978-3-03911-001-8)

The publication of *The hospital in history* (1989) represented a break with traditional