

## MISCELLANEOUS

- c) International Law Association
- d) World Health Organization
- e) UNESCO
- f) International Medical Law Study Group
- g) International Committee for the Neutrality of Medicine
- h) other international and national organizations

## IV

1. The prospects for the codification of international humanitarian law
  - a) partial and complete codification
  - b) contemporary trends in international law development and their influence on international humanitarian law

## V

1. By way of conclusion
  - a) the present dilemma: humanity and nuclear weapons.

## ARAB MEDICINE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

*In La Presse Médicale (Paris, November 1966), Mr. Monnerot-Dumaine describes the importance of Arab medicine in the Middle Ages and of its leading figures. We think it to be of interest to reproduce this account following on a series of studies devoted to the theoretical and practical development of humanitarian ideas in different civilizations.*

There are some admirers of the Middle Ages who express their irritation when criticised for the obscurantism, stagnation and backwardness of that period. They make every effort to prove that

such criticism is ill-founded. There is one sphere, however, in which medieval ignorance cannot be denied, namely in that of medicine.

From the II<sup>nd</sup> Century, that of Gallen, until the end of the Middle Ages what great names enriched European medicine ? There are none except for a few Byzantines such as Paul Eginé, the famous doctor and surgeon of the VII<sup>th</sup> Century. Certainly in the X<sup>th</sup> Century the School of Salerno was beginning to become illustrious, but its greatest exponent, Constantine the African, was a Saracen and he taught Arab medicine. It was not until the XIII<sup>th</sup> Century that the first universities were founded in Europe. Developments in the fields of anatomy and surgery were only made in the XIV<sup>th</sup> Century by Mondino de Luzzi and Guy de Chauliac. However, the almost sacrosanct dogmas of Gallen which had paralysed and atrophied medicine were not attacked until the XVI<sup>th</sup> Century by Paracelsus for pathology, by Fracastor for infectious diseases, Fallopius and above all Vesalius for anatomy and by Michel Servet for physiology (although the discovery of pulmonary circulation had already been made by the Syrian Annafis in the XIII<sup>th</sup> Century).

Now, throughout this long period of the Middle Ages one finds a proliferation of great names in Arab medicine. The large number of translations into Arabic from Greek and other languages on medicine, science and philosophy date from the VII<sup>th</sup> Century. During the next hundred years medicine in the vast Arab Empire began to produce original works. Medical schools were started such as that of Kairouan illustrated by Isaac ibn Omrane in the IX<sup>th</sup> Century. The Persian Zacharia er Razi called Rhazes was famous in the IX<sup>th</sup> and X<sup>th</sup> Centuries for his oral and written teaching. In the X<sup>th</sup> Century, Aly Abbas, also a Persian, wrote a veritable treatise on medicine which was translated by Constantine the African, whilst Jesus Haly or Alhazen was the founder of ophthalmology. In the XI<sup>th</sup> Century, the Andalusian Aboulcassis was an outstanding surgeon and the Persian Ibn Sinna (Avicenne) gifted with prodigious intelligence and memory who by himself alone wrote enough medical books to fill an entire library. The XII<sup>th</sup> Century produced further doctors of high quality, such as Avenzoar (ibn Zohr), Averroes (ibn Rochd), Maïmonide (Meïmoun) and the Essakaly line brought fame to the School of Tunis. The following

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century saw the discovery of pulmonary circulation by the Syrian Annafis (Alaadine ibn Nafis). Meanwhile Arab scholars were making great progress in the study of chemistry and botany and drew up a pharmacopoeia.

It is therefore not possible to accept the view that Arab medicine only played a secondary rôle during the total eclipse of European medicine, and that it had only translated, preserved and handed on the teachings of Hippocrates, Gallen and other Ancients.

Dr. Sleim Ammar's<sup>1</sup> excellent work abundantly proves the original character of Arab medicine, and underlines its considerable contribution to science. This, moreover, is so true that the great Arabic writers have had their works translated into Latin and European languages for use in the medical schools of Europe. They were also studied long after the Golden Age of Arab medicine and after the XVIth Century when European medicine finally awoke from its lethargy.

Arab medicine has been noted for its universality and its humanism. Its great masters were philosophers such as Maïmonide or possessed an encyclopaedic knowledge like El Birouny. An understanding of the whole body and of the psychosomatic system of medicine were familiar to them. With rare exceptions were they subjected to racial or religious prejudice. Whether they were Moslems, Christians, Jews or Zoroastrians, their ability opened the gates of the Caliphs' palaces where they were loaded with honours. They were above all remarkable clinicians, astute observers, who swept aside hazy theories and abstract dissertations. Unfortunately, they could not carry out dissection or autopsy, forbidden by Islam. It cannot be doubted that, if Arab doctors had been able to study normal anatomy and pathology, they would have given a great impulse to the development of those branches of medicine.

Many of them had an extremely high conception of the dignity of the medical profession. Their works are often interspersed with philanthropic advice, ethical precepts and profound sketches on the honour of doctors, their duties and moral responsibilities. Mohamed Essakaly wrote in the XIVth Century : " Do not treat lightly the slightest failing ; does not torrential rain begin with

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<sup>1</sup> *En souvenir de la médecine arabe* by Dr. Sleim Ammar. 1 vol. (Maloine edit.), Paris, 1966.

little drops of water ? ” and “ Realize that there is no more abominable crime than that of the abuse of human beings . . . especially of those unfortunate ones who are suffering and who are without spirit or strength. When a person feels lost, he calls upon your knowledge to relieve his troubles, you examine him and make out a prescription. Then he places all his hopes in this piece of paper and believes that its contents, with divine aid, will heal him . . . Now, how criminal would it be, if you acted lightly and how great would be your responsibility ! . . . Be scrupulous and circumspect, for your faults will be most serious in the eyes of God . . . ”.

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### ADVANCED COURSE FOR YOUNG MEDICAL OFFICERS

This fourth international course, organized by the International Committee of Military Medicine and Pharmacy, will be held in Munich from August 22-31, 1967, under the direction of Colonel Brigadier H. Meuli, a member of the ICRC. It is intended primarily for young medical officers of the armed forces nominated by their countries' medico-military authorities. In addition, other military medical officers, whether of the standing armed forces, or of reserve and auxiliary services, as well as Red Cross doctors, may also participate.

The main items of the provisional programme are as follows:

- Lectures by German and other professors on subjects interesting military medicine, in particular: army medicine, surgery and hygiene; the general organization of a military health service; the study of vaccinations; the rôle of psychiatry in the army; anaesthesia during campaigns; the means of warming up of the shipwrecked; etc . . .
- Lectures by prominent members of the World Health Organization, of the International Red Cross and of the World Medical Association, on medical ethics, international medical law and humanitarian law.