

Presentazione/Preface

MEDICINE IN BYZANTIUM (10th C. - 1453)

1. HEALTH PROBLEMS AND MEDICAL ANSWERS
2. MEDICAL CULTURE AND SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGES

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In the current state of bibliography, Byzantium is almost unknown in the History of Medicine: besides being largely under-researched, it is frequently considered as an intermediary period that reproduced and preserved with more or less accuracy the great treatises of Classical Antiquity and transmitted them to the West after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453.

In this context, research deals mainly with transmission of texts (above all Hippocrates and Galen) and, when it focuses on non-classical topics, it generally works on what is now called the Late Antique World, i.e. the period from the 4th to the 7th c.; but, even in this case, it examines above all the permanence of classical medicine, along with its possible transformations.

On the other hand, if research deals with specific Byzantine topics, it treats mainly textual questions (attribution of treatises, classical sources and similar) or the social or institutional dimension of medicine in Byzantium, without examining what was typical of Byzantine medical art and, more generally, science.

It is true, however, that texts are fundamental and have to be studied before any other question, since they constitute our main source of Byzantine medicine. Thus, they need to be duly edited, i.e. fixed in a form which can be considered, if not as the original one, at least as the most close to it. But it is no less true that research has also to inventory and identify the material at disposal in a broader perspective, without limiting itself to the classical period and its legacy. Furthermore, it should study the link between medicine and science or, more generally, culture in Byzantium.

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On this basis, it would be possible to determine whether there was a Byzantine specificity and, in the case of a positive answer, to identify it. And - to quote but a few among the questions to be studied - it is indispensable to analyse the data resulting from previous examination in a specific medical perspective.

Works like those will surely not be definitive, since primary sources have still to be researched. But, in the meantime, they will propose a renewed approach, the conclusions of which could be submitted to further revision, in an evolutionary perspective of research.

A renewed approach is precisely what we propose here, with 18 essays, which focus on four themes: medical knowledge, structure and techniques; diseases and health problems; books, libraries and scientific imagery; circulation of ideas, influences on Byzantium and legacy of Byzantium. The contributions have been grouped in two parts, the first dealing with health problems and medical answers, and the second with medical culture and scientific exchanges. Each part is introduced by a synthetic essay, a general presentation of Byzantine history during the period studied here, for the first one, and an overview of the circulation of ideas in the Byzantine World, for the second.

The diversity of the approaches (codicology, philology, history of the book, general history, medicine, chemistry, history of ideas and of scientific illustration, Ottoman and Hebrew studies) aims to reflect the complexity of the process under consideration. It suggests that inter- and trans-disciplinary study is necessary, not only to cope with Byzantine medicine, but also - if not above all - to perceive it in all its aspects.

After all, Byzantine medicine lasted more than one millennium and received a large spectrum of data of all kinds, assimilated in a specific and original way, precisely during the period 10th c. - 1453.

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Articoli/Articles

HISTOIRE DE BYZANCE DU X^e SIECLE À 1453

INTRODUCTION

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La période macédonienne (867-1056)

L'expansion

L'histoire de l'empire après le rétablissement des images marque l'apogée de Byzance. À l'extérieur, les succès militaires font de l'empire une puissance inégalée depuis des siècles tandis que les succès des missions d'évangélisation dans les pays slaves permettent une expansion de la culture byzantine dont on a maintes traces encore aujourd'hui.

Le règne de l'empereur Michel III, avant le règne de Basile I (867-886), fondateur de la dynastie macédonienne, est précurseur de ce grand souffle conquérant aussi bien par la brillante victoire du général Pétronas sur les Arabes en 863 que par l'activité de christianisation du Patriarche Photius. Des missionnaires furent envoyés en Russie, en Moravie, en Bulgarie. Parmi eux les frères Cyrille et Méthode traduisirent les Évangiles et la liturgie en slave. En 864 le prince bulgare Boris reçut le baptême de Constantinople et prit le nom chrétien de Michel qui était celui de son parrain, l'empereur byzantin.

Face aux Arabes les grandes victoires militaires du X^e siècle aussi bien sur les Arabes que sur les Bulgares ont été néanmoins remportées pendant le règne des empereurs *usurpateurs*, comme on a l'habitude d'appeler ces représentants de la grande aristocratie d'Asie mineure, qui profitèrent de la minorité des empereurs de la dynastie macédonienne pour prendre le pouvoir: Romain Lécapène (919-944), Nicéphore Phokas (963-969), Jean Tzimiskès (969-976). Grâce à eux, la frontière orientale de l'empire fut repoussée à l'extrême limite en Mésopotamie jusqu'à