Sappol, Michael (ed.) 2011, *Hidden Treasure: The National Library of Medicine*, New York: Blast Books, Pp. 450 colour plates. ISBN 978-0-922233-42-7. \$50.00

This gorgeous volume, compiled to mark the 175th anniversary of the National Library of Medicine, provides an intimate look at dozens of rare items from the world's largest medical library. Ranging from public health posters to anatomical dolls, postcards to filmstrips, medieval manuscripts to laboratory notebooks, these unique holdings of the NLM are brilliantly displayed in large, clear photographs, with at least two pages dedicated to picturing and explicating each item. Because of its large-scale, high-quality photographs of medical curios—and because many of its items tend toward the gruesome (illustrations of conjoined twins, faces ravaged by tertiary syphilis)—the volume is undoubtedly destined to grace the coffee tables of doctors and antique collectors across the globe. Nevertheless, the serious scholar will still find much of interest in the book. Each item is accompanied by an illuminating essay written by a distinguished expert in the field, either from academia or the remarkable staff of experts at the NLM and NIH. The images are large and detailed enough that the scholar can make careful analysis of each object. The book could easily be used to introduce advanced undergraduates or graduate students to the challenges and delights of material culture analysis in the history of medicine.

The informative introduction to the volume reminds us that there once was a time when men believed that all the knowledge in the world could be collected under one roof. The National Library of Medicine is testimony to this belief: the outcome of 'the immensely ambitious task of collecting all the world's medical knowledge from antiquity to the present in one place...' (p. 9). Founded as the Library of the Surgeon General's office in 1836, for more than a century it served as the US Army Medical Museum and Library, the repository of medical knowledge for the republic's military forces. A good part of the collection, as it is represented here, can be linked to military goals: atlases of surgery and anatomy, books on battlefield first aid, military hospital magazines, WWII films educating soldiers of the dangers of gonorrhoea. But while military men were the curators, their desire to make the library a comprehensive collection of knowledge went far beyond a practical concern for military hygiene. Bibliophiles brought in embossed volumes of Aristotle, Kircher, Zahn, and Vesalius—works of great interest to today's historians of medieval and early modern science. Popular medicine is represented through recipe-books, postcards, and nostrum advertisements. What the reader will remember the most, though, are the *Wunderkammer*-type objects that the medically curious were wont to collect: inevitable images of dog-faced boys, syphilitic sores, and perfectly sliced cadavers. It is not surprising that the publisher, Blast Books, has also published volumes on the Mütter Museum and the Musée Fragonard.

Happily, the volume does not suffer from an Eurocentric bias, and there is much here that will be of interest to Asianists. Scattered through the volume are over a dozen objects that are of Asian provenance or pertain to an Asian topic. Many are not what one would expect from a 'medical library'. A Persian translation of Al Qazwini's *Marvels of Things Created*, hand-copied and illustrated in India, and a Mongolian manuscript of *The Sutra of Great Liberation* are among the more surprising items. The medical manuscripts encompass a remarkable range of Asian periods and locales, from a fourteenth-century Persian *Anatomy of the Human Body* to the 1945 *Medical Report of the Atomic Bombing in Hiroshima* compiled (in English) by the First Tokyo Military Hospital. The material culture of health and hygiene in modern China is particularly well represented, including objects such as a lovely accordion foldout handbook of acupuncture points dating from the Korean War period (with accompanying essay by Bridie Andrews), and a delightful set of 'health and hygiene puzzle-blocks' from the Shanghai Number 10 Toy Factory (with accompanying essay by Marta Hanson).

In general the book's essays demonstrate a good balance between detailed analysis of the specific object and general introduction of the object's historical context. The voices of the

individual authors shine through: some essays are playful, if not satirical in tone, others are more straightforwardly descriptive. The editor was wise to avoid imposing a single structure on the essays. Similarly, the lack of clear categories in the book's organisation adds to the reader's sense of suspense and discovery—one never knows what to expect with the turn of each page. What is missing from the descriptions, though, is any specific discussion of how each object came to be part of the NLM collection. How on earth, for example, did palm-leaf medical manuscripts from Sri Lanka wind up in Bethesda? Behind each object is a story of social networks and military conquest that remains untold. For example, many of the Meiji-era Japanese works that I have consulted in the NLM bore the stamp of SCAP (the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers), linking the objects to the US military occupation of Japan after WWII. Perhaps the most chillingly gruesome image in the volume—an X-ray of Hitler's skull—was in a set of reports compiled by US military intelligence after the war. Who compiled it, and how did they wind up with Hitler's medical records? Complex questions of provenance are perhaps beyond the purview of the brief essays, and lingering questions remain. Such unanswered questions, though, make the volume a wonderful tool for the scholar of medicine. Even the most casual perusal of its captivating pages could launch a dozen inquiries into the unknown.

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