

BOOK REVIEW

HONORIUS POPESCU, GEORGE DAN MOGOȘANU *HISTORY OF PHARMACY*

CONSTANTIN POLINICENCU*

Abstract: Books of history of pharmacy written by pharmacists are somewhat rare because, as an independent discipline, the history of pharmacy has been promoted by physicians and emerged only at the beginning of XXth century.

A criterion of originality of this writing is that it draws attention to more data and events that either have been overlooked or have not been properly evaluated yet.

Keywords: pharmacy, remedies, science, civilization, history.

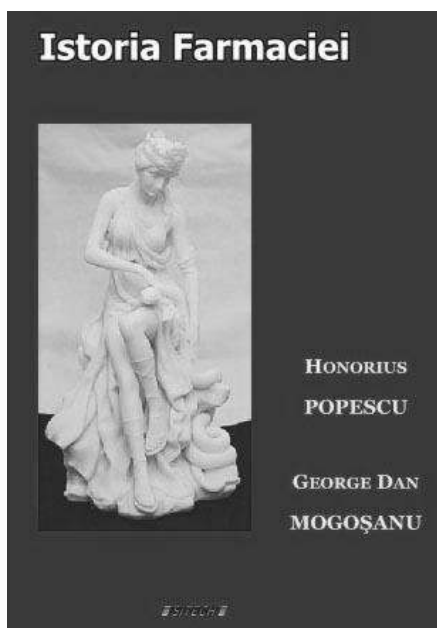


Fig. 1. Honorius Popescu, George-Dan Mogoșanu, History of Pharmacy, Sitech Publishing House, Craiova, 2010, 277 p., ISBN 978-606-11-0667-7.

Pharmacy arose within medicine and, after a while, it was separated and individualized as a specialization. In the book's introduction, we read: "The first pharmacist in the history was one of the

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healers, who his fellows have entrusted him the preparation of remedies, because they had too much work, because he was disciplined and have patience, skill and thoroughness”.

Books of history of pharmacy written by pharmacists are somewhat rare because, as an independent discipline, the history of pharmacy has been promoted by physicians and emerged only at the beginning of XXth century.

Following the thread of history, the authors refer to the social-cultural characteristics of the evolution of civilization in Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, China, Greece, Roman Empire, Middle Ages, etc. At the same time, from age to age, it emphasizes the ensemble medicine–drug, from which specifies the state and evolution of pharmacy as a science and profession.

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Some are particularly important as that of public pharmacy in Pompeii, recovered under the lava of the Vesuvius eruption in the year 79. The amazing officine of 2000 years ago is not properly assessed and is still considered that the world’s first pharmacy was in Baghdad, in the year 754.

Another case is *Capitolium* University, founded six centuries before the Western European universities, on the time of the recovery of the ancient works into *Codex Theodosianus* and *Codex Constantinopolitanus*.

So was the forgotten French pharmacist Denis Dodart (1634–1707), who introduced the technique of microscopy in the pharmacy education and research.

Other data gives the reading a less serious note, but equally interesting. Such data are the observations on the ancient names of the pharmacist (*urmas* in Egyptian, *yi-shen* in Chinese), then the first female pharmacists in Mesopotamia, the legendary Hygeia, the histories with secret drugs: “Vinegar of four thieves”, *Eau de la Reine de Hongrie*, *Eau de Cologne* and others.

Concerning the pharmaceutical aspect, other original findings are those who specify the factories of galenic preparations in XIXth century and the specialties’ drug industry in XXth century.

The chapter entitled “Milestones in the history of pharmacy in Romania” is particularly. Elaborated in short texts, with exciting subtitles, it shows how historical events from the Romanian area occurred under the destiny of the Central European position of the territory and of the Christian culture. Then, it presents the first knowledge on drugs, priestly assistance in guesthouses and infirmaries, first pharmacists and pharmacies, the advance of two centuries of Transylvania, etc.

The writing style is concise and lively. An innovation of the authors, which gives a special note of the book, is to present, immediately after the title of each chapter, a box with the most important events that particularize the respectively age, thus raising the reader’s curiosity.

Careful selection of scientific data and the association of information about pharmacy with specific elements of general culture, make reading easy and exciting.

In the section entitled “Annexes”, the authors reproduce some of their works on the history of pharmacy presented at symposia, conferences, national and international congresses.

The book shows many colour illustrations and it is a successful printing.