



## ELGOOD, CYRIL LLOYD

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**ELGOOD, CYRIL LLOYD** (1893-1970), British historian of medicine in Persia. After attending Oxford University, he volunteered for war service and was commissioned in the British army and posted to India in 1914; he transferred to the Indian army in 1918 but was invalided out in 1919. He became a medical student and qualified at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London. From 1925 to 1931 he was physician to the British legation at Tehran. He took part in negotiations on the transfer of quarantine stations in the southern ports, became an honorary physician to the shah, and acquired a lifelong interest in Persian medicine, together with a thorough knowledge of Persian and a fair knowledge of Arabic. Thereafter, he was a general practitioner in Wareham, England (1932-33) and Florence, Italy (1934-37), and a consultant at two London hospitals (1938-48). In 1948-53 he worked in the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. From 1953 until his death he was part-time director of medical services in the Seychelles.

In his first major work, *A Medical History of Persia and the Eastern Caliphate*, he gave a continuous account of the development of medicine in Persia from pre-Islamic times to the present, for he believed that previous studies had concentrated too exclusively on the great physicians of the early Islamic period. He vividly sketched Zoroastrian concepts of hygiene and attempted to trace the growth of medical knowledge under the Sasanians. The transmission of the Greek heritage (mainly through the school of Jondēšāpūr) and the development of the "Arabian" system of medicine (mainly by Arabophone Persians such as 'Alī b. 'Abbās Majūsī, Moḥammad b. Zakarīyā Rāzī, and



Avicenna; qq.v.) are treated less fully and from fewer sources than in other modern works. Much space is given to general historical background and to anecdotes, customs, and superstitions. His descriptions of diagnostic methods and of surgical, ophthalmological, obstetric, pharmacological, and anaesthetic techniques show the great advances under Islam despite the four humors theory and inadequate anatomical knowledge due to a prohibition of dissection. He gives little attention to unaccepted ideas such as the pulmonary blood circulation theory of the Syrian Ebn al-Nafīs (d. 687/1288). Also discussed are medical education and hospitals (see BĪMĀRESTĀN), which flourished under the Buyid ‘Azod-al-Dawla (q.v.) and the Il-khanid vizier Rašīd-al-Dīn Faẓl-Allāh but were neglected by the Safavids. His account of the spread of modern medicine in the Qajar period through the efforts of ‘Abbās Mirzā (q.v.), the Dār al-Fonūn (q.v.), the Imperial hospital (Marīẓ-kāna-ye dawlatī), the American and British missionary hospitals, and the Sanitary council (Majles-e šeḥḥī) is useful. Also interesting are the accounts of the frequent epidemics of cholera and plague and of the diseases and deaths of high-ranking persons. Elgood’s chief contributions lie in his insight as a practicing doctor and in his studies of the Safavid and Qajar periods.

Elgood’s second book, *Safavid Medical Practice*, is in part an expansion of the chapters on the Safavid period in his earlier work. This was the period when the traditional system of medicine reached its peak in Persia, a time of advances in diagnosis and therapy, i. e., of whooping cough and hay-fever (by Bahā’ al-Dawla, d. 913/1507) and of the newly arrived syphilis—though progress in anatomical knowledge was neither achieved nor sought. Drawing mainly on four Persian treatises and on European travelers, Elgood gives detailed descriptions of every branch of Safavid medical practice. The first part of the book is an account of the various classes concerned with medicine in Safavid Persia, ranging from clinicians and pharmacists to the authors of verse dealing with medical topics. The second part is a detailed account of surgery in Safavid Persia. The final part is an account of gynecology and obstetrics.

Elgood also published descriptions or translations of a number of medical texts, the most important being two texts on the so-called “prophetic medicine,” i.e., medical lore based on the Hadith.



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