

John Scarborough
University of Wisconsin at Madison

Some Organizational Principles and Pharmaceutical Therapies
in the Hippocratic *Diseases of Women I*

Among the works on gynecology and obstetrics in the Hippocratic corpus, *Diseases of Women I* and *II* incorporate the majority of specifics describing female anatomy, and what we would term 'physiology,' 'pathology,' and therapeutics, especially listings of suggested drugstuffs. Although there is some overlapping in contents with the *On Generation* and *On the Nature of the Child* (and likely *Diseases IV*) and later parts of *Diseases of Women I* and *II* indicate the author's presumptions of a four-humor theory (similar to the *Nature of Man*), the lengthy and detailed recipes of pharmacological remedies in *Diseases I* and *II* probably incorporate details drawn from far older traditions, so that some of these sections likely are dated to about 400 B.C. My purpose, however, is not to delve into the heated controversies of which of the works in the Collection is earliest, but to suggest that in some of these pharmacological sections, one can discern fairly precise organizational principles that can be broken down into (1) Description, (2) Etiology, (3) Therapy, (4) Contraindications, (5) Discussion of Other Therapies and Refutation, and (6) Continued Therapies, concluded with multi-ingredient and technical instructions for the preparation of pharmaceuticals.

A primary illustration will be *Diseases of Women I*, 63 (Littre, 8, pp. 126-130) that begins, "If the wombs should develop sores, and there is a concurrent clearing-out of purulence and blood...", followed by a clear etiology ("The ailment seizes a woman after miscarriage..."), therapy, contraindications, discussion, and further drug therapy; other sections in the work display similar structures, but the paper will provide a detailed analysis of *I*, 63, and some comparisons with other comparable instructions in Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts, as well as some careful identification of the phytochemical principles indicated in the suggested ingredients, especially in the "[Continued Drug Therapy: an Eleven-Ingredient Ointment]" = Littre, 8, p. 130.

Preliminary Bibliography

- Lesley Ann Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994
Hermann Grensemann, *Knidische Medizin, Teil I*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975
Hermann Grensemann, *Hippokratische Gynäkologie*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1982
Ann Ellis Hanson, trans. with headnote, "Hippocrates: *Diseases of Women 1*," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1, no. 2 (1975), 567-584

- Gwendolyn Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994
- É. Littré, ed., trad., *Oeuvres complètes d'Hippocrate*, Vol. 8. Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1853; rptd. Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1982
- M. Stol and F. A. M. Wiggermann, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting*. Groningen: Styx Publications, 2000
- Hildegard von Deines, Hermann Grapow, and Wolfhart Westendorf, *Übersetzung der medizinischen Texte*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958 [Grundriss der Medizin der alten Ägypter IV 1]
- Rudolf von Grot, "III. Ueber die in der hippokratischen Schriftensammlung enthaltenen pharmakologischen Kenntnisse," in Rudolf Kobert, ed., *Historische Studien aus dem Pharmakologischen Institute der Kaiserlichen Universität Dorpat*, 1 (1889), 58-133
- Kathleen Whiteley, trans., *Hippocrates Diseases of Women Book One*. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2003 [MA thesis]