

Oliver Overwien: Medizinische Lehrwerke aus dem spätantiken Alexandria. Die *Tabulae Vindobonenses* und *Summaria Alexandrinorum* zu Galens *De sectis*. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter 2019 (Scientia Graeco-Arabica 24). x, 236 p. € 108.95/£ 99.00/\$ 124.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-062693-3.

Diagrams are used nowadays to visualise knowledge in various disciplines. Readers of this book can now get an insight into the distant ancestors of didactic diagrams. Oliver Overwien partly fulfils a longstanding *desideratum*, namely the edition of the unique surviving set of tree diagrams in Greek associated with the canon of sixteen works by Galen that was taught at the ‘School’ of Alexandria in Late Antiquity. These diagrams are found in the thirteenth-century *Codex Vindobonensis Medicus Graecus* 16, folia 329r–359v, which transmits diagrams for the first four works of the canon, the introductory ones (*On the Sects for Beginners*, *Art of Medicine*, *Therapeutics to Glaucon*, and *On the Pulse for Beginners*), and for one of the more advanced ones, which was known by the overarching title *Περὶ αἰτίας* (*On Cause*) and actually included four Galenic works (*On the Different Kinds of Diseases*, *On Causes of Diseases*, *On Distinctions in Symptoms*, *On Causes of Symptoms*). Overwien provides the first-ever complete edition of the diagrams for *On the Sects for Beginners* (*De sectis*), along with a German translation and a detailed textual analysis. It is worth noting that before Overwien’s edition, these diagrams were only known from the edition of a few scattered examples by Beate Gundert, who also gave the name *Tabulae Vindobonenses* to them in a long chapter published in a collective work in 1998.¹ To provide his reader with a more complete picture of the available evidence, Overwien also gives a German translation of the surviving Arabic *Alexandrian Summary* of *On the Sects for Beginners*.

The edition and translation are preceded by three very useful and highly informative, introductory chapters. The first brief chapter (“Einleitung”, pp. 1–8) serves as an introduction to the entire book where Overwien provides details about the importance of the *Tabulae Vindobonenses* and *Alexandrian Summaries* (*Jawāmi‘ al-Iskandarā-niyyīn*) and gives an overview of his

1 B. Gundert: Die *Tabulae Vindobonenses* als Zeugnis alexandrinischer Lehrtätigkeit um 600 n. Chr. In: K.-D. Fischer/D. Nickel/P. Potter (eds.): *Text and Tradition. Studies in Ancient Medicine and its Transmission*. Leiden/Boston/Köln 1998 (*Studies in Ancient Medicine* 18), pp. 91–144 and ill. 1–3.

book. He sets out his objective, namely to show that both the diagrams and the *Alexandrian Summary* were created in late antique Alexandria and contain material derived from the lectures of Alexandrian iatrosophists (literally ‘medical philosophers’ and actually ‘professors of medicine’). They were actually different kinds of textbooks (‘Lehrwerke’) summarising central concepts from the lectures (‘Vorlesungen’) of the iatrosophists in a clear manner, which the student was supposed to memorise in order to be able to use them in medical practice later on. The material in the textbooks is presented following the notion of *diairesis* (division), which was significantly developed in Late Antiquity to support teaching. In this way, a certain term or theory is divided and further subdivided into several components, which were then visualised in the form of tree diagrams.

These textbooks open a window onto the teaching of medicine in fifth- to seventh-century Alexandria and also provide us with an excellent way to study the reception of the Galenic output in even later contexts where these textbooks continued to be used, such as early medieval Ravenna and the medieval Islamic world. For example, the method of division and also some of the contents of these textbooks were adopted by Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (died 873) in his introductory Arabic work for beginners in the form of question and answer; his work was then translated into Latin in the late eleventh century and circulated widely in the medieval West under the title *Isagoge*.

Chapter Two (“Der alexandrinische Schulkontext”, pp. 9–34) presents material essential to contextualizing the *Tabulae Vindobonenses* and *Alexandrian Summary*. Overwien provides background information about the so-called ‘Alexandrian School’, a term which he rightly states should be used with caution. For example, we are aware of iatrosophists such as Gesios (ca. 500, said to have been the best student of the well-known philosopher and scholiast of Aristotle Ammonios), and also Stephen and John (sixth/seventh century), but it is not absolutely certain whether they were all active in Alexandria or belonged to the same scholastic environment. Overwien lists all the available sources on the medical curriculum of Alexandria. According to the clearest account of the Galenic canon, which is found in the preface of the Arabic version of a Greek work by John the Grammarian, the so-called *Synopsis of the Sixteen Works of Galen*, the curriculum consisted of sixteen works. It covered introductory material on various medical theories, diagnostic techniques, and anatomy (e. g. *On the Sects for Beginners*,

On the Pulse for Beginners, *On Mixtures*, *On the Anatomy of Muscles for Beginners*), works on symptoms and diseases (e.g. *On Causes of Diseases*, *On Affected Parts*), and two more advanced works, i.e. *On the Preservation of Health* and *Therapeutic Method*. Overwien suggests that Alexandrian professors presumably gave lectures on all the works of the Galenic curriculum. Nevertheless, not a single one of these lectures has survived, since the versions that have come down to us only represent notes by students that are commonly called *σχόλια ἀπὸ φωνῆς* ('oral scholia'). Each lecture consists of several teaching units (*πράξεις*), which were further subdivided into *θεωρίαι* that included general remarks on the respective topic and *λέξεις*, which contained a detailed examination of individual words.

Overwien then goes on to introduce the various kinds of textbooks. The surviving examples were no longer perceived as textbooks to accompany the lectures by medieval readers, but as independent works or, more precisely, as a summary of Galenic teachings. For the *On the Sects for Beginners*, there are three surviving textbooks and eight lectures in complete or fragmentary form, which were either created directly in Alexandria or at least in an environment that followed the Alexandrian tradition. The last section of this chapter deals with the position and the function of the *On the Sects for Beginners* in the Galenic curriculum, where it was consistently placed at the very beginning. In fact, this also aligns with Galen's own intention that it can be read first by medical students as stated in his *On My Own Books*.² This text does guide the reader through some very basic details about the art of medicine, including explaining the differences between the three main medical sects in antiquity, i.e. the Dogmatic, the Empiric, and the Methodic.

The third chapter ("Die *Tabulae Vindobonenses* und *Summaria Alexandrinorum* als Lehrwerke", pp. 35–107) focuses exclusively on proving that the *Tabulae Vindobonenses* and *Alexandrian Summary* should actually be dated to late antique Alexandria and that they had functioned as textbooks. By analysing their contents and comparing them with the surviving lectures by Agnellus of Ravenna, John the Grammarian, and Palladios, Overwien concludes that they both reflect actual teaching by the Alexandrian iatrosophists. The sur-

2 Galien: Œuvres. Texte établi, traduit et annoté par V. Boudon-Millot. Tome 1: Introduction générale. Sur l'ordre de ses propres livres. Sur ses propres livres. Que l'excellent médecin est aussi philosophe. Paris 2007 (Collection des Universités de France. Série grecque. Collection Budé 453), p. 137.4–6.

viving Arabic *Alexandrian Summary* of the *On Sects for Beginners* is based on a now lost Greek original version. Overwien has shown that the *Tabulae Vindobonenses* and *Alexandrian Summary* contain numerous omissions, additions, and also differences when compared to the Galenic original text, but these could be seen as a process of simplification, compression, systematisation and alignment of the Galenic text with the development of ancient medical theories in Late Antiquity. One must therefore always keep in mind that the *Tabulae Vindobonenses* and *Alexandrian Summaries* that are available to us in manuscripts form only a part of the original group of textbooks. Overwien goes on to compare the *Tabulae Vindobonenses* and *Alexandrian Summary* demonstrating that there are obvious differences between the two kinds of textbooks, e. g. the *Alexandrian Summary* is divided into ten chapters/thematic units, while the *Tabulae Vindobonenses* have no structural elements apart from the numbering of each division. In terms of content, there are some differences between the *Tabulae Vindobonenses* and the *Alexandrian Summary*. For example, one case involves several observations on the Methodic sect in the *Alexandrian Summary* that are not in *Tabulae Vindobonenses*. Overall, it could be said that the *Tabulae Vindobonenses* and *Alexandrian Summary* represent the same type of textbook, which means that they also served the same purpose by using the key notion of division. The *Tabulae Vindobonenses* and *Alexandrian Summary* were not intended as substitutes for the Galenic original but rather to complement the lecture as visual learning aids; they could also be used subsequently as textbooks for the students when they wanted to revisit a subject.

In Chapter Four (“Die *Tabulae Vindobonenses* zu *De sectis*”, pp. 108–159), Overwien edits and translates into English the 84 diagrams that have survived in a single Greek manuscript, *Codex Vindobonensis Medicus Graecus* 16. The author is clear in establishing the principles of his edition, e. g. he tacitly corrects obvious misspellings and accentuation errors (e. g. Σωρανός instead of Σορανός, *Tabula Vindobonensis* 3; ἰππασία instead of ἰππάσια, *Tabula Vindobonensis* 20), has indicated all significant corrections in footnotes (e. g. διεφθαρμένην instead of διεφθαρμένα), and provided additions from the Galenic texts in angle brackets (<>) where text is missing, e. g. ἡ ἀπὸ βοηθήματος <ἐπὶ βοήθημα ὡς ἀπὸ μήλου ἐπὶ μέσπιλον> (*Tabula Vindobonensis* 11, p. 120). The edition and German translation are of very high quality; but it might be preferable to keep some Greek terms untranslated in italics when there is no modern equivalent (e. g. *Tabula Vindobonensis* 23 ὑδρόγαρον, a sauce

made of water, brine, and small fish is translated as “die mit Wasser zubereitete Fischsauce”, pp. 126–127), although this does not change or obstruct the understanding of the text by the reader.

The translation is accompanied by a detailed commentary on specific terms of interest, which greatly helps the reader appreciate the text and will be of great use to students and scholars of medical history alike. I would like to cite an example, which will give the reader a better idea of the nature of these diagrams and at the same time demonstrate Overwien’s competency in making them available to his readers. *Tabula Vindobonensis* 6 refers to the difference between the Empiric and Dogmatic sects in terms of their introduction of new remedies. The subdivision in two parts follows the Galenic original text (*On Sects for Beginners*, 1.16–2.3)³ very closely and reads: οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐμπειρικοὶ λέγουσι διὰ τηρήσεως εὐρηκέναι τὰ βοηθήματα (“Die Empiriker sagen nämlich, dass sie die Heilmittel durch Beobachtung gefunden haben”, p. 119) and οἱ δὲ λογικοὶ δι’ ἐνδείξεως (“die Rationalisten dagegen durch das Prinzip der Anzeige”, *ibid.*). The facing page of the edition contains the German translation, the relevant part of the *Alexandrian Summary* in parenthesis (= *Alexandrian Summary* 1.5), and two footnotes with parallel passages from other relevant texts, including the surviving lectures on the text in Latin by Agnellus of Ravenna and John of Alexandria. Additionally, Overwien comments extensively on the term ἐνδείξεις, in an appendix to the edition on p. 157, giving important passages from Galenic works and also references to secondary bibliography, so one can easily follow up and further investigate the content of this *Tabula Vindobonensis*. To give another example, the *Tabulae Vindobonenses* may sometimes be rather laconic, as in the case of the kinds of experience in *Tabula Vindobonensis* 16: πέντε δ’ εἰσὶ πείραι: | φυσικόν | τυχικόν | αὐτοσχέδιον | μιμητικόν | ἢ τοῦ ὁμοίου μετάβασις (“Es gibt fünf Formen der Erfahrung: | die natürliche | die zufällige | die improvisierte | die nachahmende | die Übertragung auf Ähnliches”, p. 123).

Chapter Five (“Die *Summaria Alexandrinorum* zu *De sectis*”, pp. 160–201) provides a German translation of the *Alexandrian Summary* based on the edition by John Walbridge.⁴ Overwien argues that several passages in the

3 Claudii Galeni Pergameni Scripta minora. Ex recognitione G. Helmreich. Vol. III. Leipzig 1893, pp. 1–32.

4 The Alexandrian Epitomes of Galen. A parallel English-Arabic text translated, introduced, and annotated by J. Walbridge. Vol. I: On the Medical Sects for Begin-

text edited by Walbridge can still be improved upon by using other witnesses, including, for example, the Greek *Tabulae Vindobonenses*, and the early fourteenth-century Hebrew translation of the *Alexandrian Summary* by the otherwise unknown scholar Samson ben Solomon. Interestingly, Overwien informs us that in several cases expressions in the *Alexandrian Summary* can be explained by comparing them with the relevant passages from Hunayn ibn Ishāq's Arabic translation of Galen's *On the Sects for Beginners*. He concludes that one of the two versions was used in the creation of the other, thus the authors of the Arabic version of *On the Sects for Beginners* and the *Alexandrian Summary* for this work were probably either the same person or at least belonged to the same circle of translators. The *Alexandrian Summary* is written as a continuous text and consists of ten thematic units in line with those of the original Galenic text. For example, Overwien's German translation of the first division of the first thematic unit (*Alexandrian Summary* 1.1) dealing with Soranus' definition of medicine reads as follows: "Soran definierte die Medizin so: Medizin ist die Kenntnis von Dingen, die die Gesundheit betreffen, und von den Dingen, die die Krankheit betreffen" (p. 165). It should be noted that Overwien often makes useful comments on the text by comparing the Arabic with the Greek (*Tabulae Vindobonenses*) and the Hebrew text.

The edition and translations are accompanied by a very useful appendix of parallel passages in three columns ("Parallelen mit den Vorlesungen und *De sectis*", pp. 202–209). The first contains the numbering of the *Alexandrian Summary/Tabulae Vindobonenses*, the second the passages that correspond with the surviving lectures in Greek (Palladios), Latin (Agnellus and John of Alexandria), and Arabic (Ibn Hindū and Al-Ruhāwī), and the third the relevant passage from the original Galenic work. The book also has two very useful indices; one of manuscripts (pp. 223–224) and an extensive one of references to primary sources (pp. 225–236).

There are very few scholars nowadays who can deal so competently with both Greek and Arabic material and Overwien should be warmly congratulated on his achievement. He has revealed an otherwise neglected, if not forgotten, episode of the early reception of the Galenic corpus and the teaching of medicine in Late Antiquity. His edition will be useful to medi-

ners. *The Small Art of Medicine. On the Elements According to the Opinion of Hippocrates*. Provo, UT 2014 (Islamic Translation Series 1), pp. 7–49.

cal historians, classicists, and scholars working on late antique, Byzantine, and Islamicate medical history and intellectual history alike. Personally, I am very much looking forward to further editions of the remaining *Tabulae Vindobonenses* and I do really hope that Overwien will fulfil this *desideratum* with the same laudable accuracy and meticulousness as he has done in this book. Εὐχαί!

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Petros Bouras-Vallianatos: Rezension zu: Oliver Overwien: Medizinische Lehrwerke aus dem spätantiken Alexandria. Die *Tabulae Vindobonenses* und *Summaria Alexandrinorum* zu Galens *De sectis*. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter 2019 (Scientia Graeco-Arabica 24). In: Plekos 24, 2022, S. 139–145 (URL: <https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2022/r-overwien.pdf>).
