

# DISABILITY & DEAFNESS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, A BIBLIOGRAPHY.

## 4. HISTORICAL ITEMS: INTRODUCTION

(See also remarks on history in the General Introduction).

During the latter part of the 20th century, with the rise of disability studies in Europe and North America, a range of scholarly work focusing directly on disabilities, deafness, mental infirmities and disadvantage in ancient, medieval and later Middle Eastern societies began slowly to accumulate. A few examples of authors are: Abrams, Avalos, Baasher, Cassin, Dasen, Dols, Hadadian, Haj, Hallo, Holden, Jeffreys & Tait, Kinnier Wilson, Leichty, Malti-Douglas, Marcus, Roman, Roth, Safai, Sari, Stol, Tubb, Ward, as listed below; and no doubt many others whom the compiler failed to notice. Vastly more work has appeared on the history of medical conditions, some of which undoubtedly can have disabling effects, while not generally being perceived as 'disabilities'. Since 2000, new disability-historical studies have appeared concerning this region, e.g. from Arcas Campoy, Bazna & Hatab, Ceresko, Dikici, Economou & Lascaratos, Ghaly, Gracer, Hamdy, Rispler-Chaim, El-Saadi, Scalenghe, Walls, and others, as well as new translations of relevant primary texts, and other relevant materials.

The c. **850** items listed below represent only a fraction of the vast Middle Eastern historical and secondary literature on medical, legal, religious and ethnographic topics having some possible bearing on disability and on the background of infancy, childhood, education etc. Much of the primary material still awaits critical editing and translation. Judging by titles of over 1,900 primary and secondary medical items listed by Ebied (q.v.), and the subsequent coverage in appropriate sections of online databases such as NLM Gateway (history), and the Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine catalogues, comparatively little has been written directly concerning deafness, physical disabilities, or mental retardation and developmental delay, in Arab or Middle Eastern history. Treatments for blindness or visual impairment are better represented.

The listed items are hardly of equal weight or value - ranging as they do from a news paragraph in a missionary magazine to a vast, multi-volume, scholarly History of Ophthalmology - yet it is anticipated that each type of item will play some part in the Middle Eastern histories of disability, of disabled people, and of social or professional responses, which in due course will be more exhaustively written from various points of view. While hopping lightly across these many, highly-cultivated gardens of other people's erudition, the present compiler/annotator apologises in advance for inadvertently trampling hidden blossoms and ignorantly muddling some transliterations!

As noted in the General Introduction, the two 'historical' periods, **Antiquity to 1750**, and **1751 to 1970**, "are not chosen to correspond with any political events, since battles and change of rulers seldom make much difference to the 'world of disability'. They are chosen intuitively to correspond with an idea of historical movements in knowledge." There are a few people alive in 2008 who had a great grandparent alive in 1751 - it is not too remote a time for some personal transmission of memories and experiences. On the other hand, the colossal increase of information technology and the associated expansion of knowledge

creation and dissemination since the 1960s has tended to push back into 'history' everything before some notional date (here, 1970 is chosen). Anyone who would prefer to divide the material into different time periods is free to do so.

**KINDLY NOTE:** In the broader coverage entailed by historical material, some views offered by a few of the listed authors might be repugnant to the adherents of some religions and faiths. Further, some terms historically used for impairments and disabilities (e.g. 'cripple, 'idiot', 'mute') would be considered offensive by many disabled people if they appeared in modern discourse. The terms in which travellers reported the lives of people in Middle Eastern countries often reflected their own European prejudices. Any such repugnance or offence is regretted. No endorsement is intended of the personal, political or religious views expressed in any materials listed. The materials are listed only for the historical light they may shed on *disability* in the region, without regard to any particular religious or political viewpoint or battle. Listing of some references in the Qur'an, and among the hadiths of the prophet Muhammad, or in other revered texts, intends merely to draw attention to these important sources, without entering into specialist issues of translation or interpretation.