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 [Magical medicine. A Nigerian case-study.](#)Author(s) : [MACLEAN, U.](#)Book : [Magical medicine. A Nigerian case-study.](#) 1971 pp.167 pp.

Abstract : There is a tendency among some Europeans, particularly medical practitioners, to regard native medicine in underdeveloped countries as witchcraft and sorcery, and to speculate as to magical psychological powers. Dr. Maclean's little book carefully investigates the exact position among the Yoruba of Nigeria where, in the late 19th century, native medicine has to compete with Western medicine ranging from that practised at the University College Hospital, through less well equipped government hospitals to private practitioners. She first makes the important point that a therapeutic medicine depends on the social and medical beliefs underlying it, and that long since Western medicine was based on the doctrine of " humours " rather than on the doctrine of " germs ".

infections. The Yoruba is particularly concerned with " why " an illness or accident happen to him, rather than " how " it occurred, and this attitude is better called native medicine.

Even though he recognizes the value of Western medicine in major surgery and infections, he still feels the need for an answer to " why ", and in the minor, limiting illnesses that make up such a large proportion of medical practice, surgery satisfies him, and gives him the secure feeling that he has done the right thing by handing over his troubles to the expert.

Later chapters give more detail as to religious beliefs and to the different types of practitioners of native medicine. Dr. Maclean then describes some of the accidents of practitioners whom she met and with whom she discussed their methods, and the medical literature, part studious part advertisement.

Finally, she discusses the tenacity of native systems of medicine, and their interest in the sector of reproduction and childbirth.

This is a pleasant and amusing book, well worth reading with an open mind by anyone who is going to work in similar areas. *A. C. E. Cole.*

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