

drawings, and carvings bare-breasted and sitting on men's laps or offering drinks. They also appear in unexpected forms such as mermaids right up to the Tudor period, thereby suggesting they were not real women but some strange creature provided for sinful service to mankind.

The ranks of prostitutes have effectively not changed since ancient times: at the top of the league were the high-class, often educated expensive courtesans, then the youngish working-class girls, and finally the sixpenny whores, known as 'cockatrice' (also a mythical creature). In rural areas there were also the hedgerow female vagrants known as 'doxys', offering intercourse in a ditch or under a tree for bread and possibly the additional unexpected gift of an infectious disease that could prove fatal. As disease and age took beauty away, the girls tumbled down the league table and their price tag fell, just like modern professional footballers after a few too many seasons. It is thought that a large number of the girls didn't live much beyond the age of 30 years, not only because of illness but also because brothels can be dangerous places, well supplied with drink and everyone carrying knives hanging from a leather belt alongside rosary beads and a wooden cup. The atmosphere could be considerably heightened by the large sums of money lost in gambling, the second favourite way of spending money in such establishments.

The medieval prostitute: she may be a shadowy figure in history but she was definitely there...

## Future articles

This article is the second of a series of three articles; the final article will take us forward in time from the Tudor period and will focus on the Georgian prostitute.

## Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Dr G Williams, British Museum, London, UK for his help and advice.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love and Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships.** David M Schnarch. London, UK: WW Norton & Co, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0-39333-427-2. Price: £11.99. Pages: 448 (paperback)

This updated edition of the famous *Passionate Marriage* is a wonderful tool for couples and therapists to explore and integrate into their everyday lives. David Schnarch offers fresh examples and detailed analysis of cases so that we can understand his principles of 'differentiation' fully.

This book is not an easy read but it invites the reader deeper into every chapter, encouraging reflection and understanding as one continues to explore the different themes that emerge. Therein lies the recipe for exploration of intimate relationships and the emotional turmoil such relationships bring. Being in an intimate relationship is the only way to develop such emotional maturity. As Schnarch says "marriage prepares one for marriage". Overcoming the difficulties and working with them through the 'crucible approach' is the way to a much more fulfilling understanding of the relationship itself, release of tensions and anxiety and thus realisation of one's sexual potential

Schnarch takes the reader through different case histories and sexual problems to illustrate his points. Each case has an analysis and allows the reader to reflect on learning from the previous case. He refers to later chapters when he talks about a new emerging theme and the reader can skip to the relevant parts if so desired. I preferred to read the book right through and then re-read some of the more complicated themes again.

This book will suit couples who enjoy reading and have some insight into their problems. It is unlikely to appeal to clients who do not really enjoy reflection or self-help, or those who find it difficult to connect with themes and case studies. It provides insight into a

different way of working for therapists who deal with psychosexual problems. Towards the end of the book Schnarch also writes to tell clients what to expect from therapists who are properly trained in his technique and where to find such therapists. This book is certainly a must-read for therapists, clients and anyone in an intimate relationship who wants to fully explore their sexual potential and happiness.

Reviewed by **Neelima Deshpande**, MRCOG, MFSRH Staff Grade Doctor in Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare, Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust, Birmingham, UK

**Top Secret: Sexual Guidance for Married Couples (4th edn)** (Arabic title: **Sirri Lil Ghaya**). Widad Lutah. Dubai Distribution Office, 2009. Price: 34.00 AED (around £7). Pages: 221 (paperback)

This is a much-needed book on a topic that has been buried under the shroud of religion, culture and tradition. The author is a marriage counsellor at the Family Guidance section in the Dubai Courthouse and is appropriately placed to write such a book.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The initial chapters deal with describing normal sexual behaviour as indicated in the Quran and Sunna (with examples from Prophet Muhammad's life), as well as the views of eminent Muslim scholars. There is a good description of the meaning of marriage in the Islamic cultural and religious context. The book urges the reader to understand the role of sex and sexual pleasure in a relationship. The author also addresses taboo subjects such as oral and anal sex from a religious as well as a cultural perspective.

The book talks openly about homosexuality in the Islamic world, where genders are rigorously separated. Many men have their first experiences with other men, which affects their attitude towards

sex in marriage: "many men who had anal sex with men before marriage want the same thing with their wives, because they don't know anything else".

The book describes normal and abnormal sexual practices. It gives insight into practical sexual and relationship problems that affect individuals as well as couples. These are addressed through case studies that the author has been involved in, and the author attempts to offer possible explanations for the problems and also recommends solutions to them.

Although the language of the text is easy to read, there is use of formal Arabic words (e.g. use of terminology to name anatomical parts such as clitoris), which a layperson, and even a specialist, may find difficult to understand. [NB. It should be pointed out that the book is written in Arabic and is not currently available in any other languages.]

The book does not mention any other form of contraception than coitus interruptus. This could be because it is not within the scope of the book. However, the book does emphasise the function of marriage and sex as not only providing sexual pleasure but also, more importantly, that of reproduction. Therefore, other methods of contraception could have been mentioned.

The need for sex education and demystifying sexual practices by open discussion is the take-home message of this book – an important concept in a society where people are confused about moral issues with changing traditions.

We feel this book is a brave step in a challenging world of sexual taboos.

Reviewed by **Angie Doshani**, MRCOG Clinical Lecturer and Senior Registrar in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, Leicester, UK

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