Population Council, has condensed the 500 typed pages of memoranda and transcript into 89 printed pages.

The book is divided into two parts: "Outline of present conditions"; and "Indicated lines of action." This thought-provoking survey should be required reading for every person concerned with the population problem, which the United Nations has described as having an "importance which transcends economic and social considerations. It is at the very heart of the problem of our existence."

In his summary, Osborn reviews some of the difficulties involved in getting to the heart of this dilemma: "The attempt to control mortality is becoming a major social activity all over the world. The resulting decline in deaths is bringing about rapid changes in population trends. The rate of population growth in many underdeveloped areas is now much greater than was ever experienced in European countries. In most of the others it will be so in the foreseeable future. And the population base is far larger than it ever was in Europe. Unless an effort equal to that made for the control of death is made for the control of fertility, and unless a reduction of births is achieved within a few decades, the hopes of great but underdeveloped nations for better conditions of life may prove futile, while the present standard of economically advanced nations will decline. Such a tragic failure to achieve the higher levels of living that should be possible could only bring disillusion, confusion, and the danger of resort to desperate measures."

The concern with this "central problem," voiced by the United Nations, appears to be amply justified.

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The Great Pulse. Japanese midwifery and obstetrics through the ages. Mary W. Standlee. Tuttle, Rutland, Vt., 1959. 192 pp. Illus. $4.50.

Japan's medicine, even more than her culture, is a product of successive foreign influences which were superimposed upon the indigenous practices, adapted locally, and blended into a colorful mosaic. The art of writing was unknown in Japan before the introduction of the Chinese character in the 6th century A.D., and all knowledge of earlier ideas had to be culled from uncertain sources and from surviving practices of the basic Shinto religion. Documentation began with the earliest medical books taken bodily from the Chinese.

Japanese obstetrical practice, however, obviously antedated the advent of the written word. As in all early cultures, Japanese women were attended in pregnancy and childbirth by untrained female relatives and neighbors or by midwives with varying degrees of skill. The tenets of Shinto make it evident that all natural female functions, such as menstruation and childbirth, were considered ritual impurities which demanded segregation of the individual. The first Chinese book used in Japan pronounced pregnancy a disease of the blood and so strengthened the taboo aspect of this condition.

According to this oldest known Chinese medical classic, the *Huang Ti Nei Ching Su Wen,* diagnosis of early pregnancy was made from the pulse. "The great pulse," the name by which this symptom was known, was taken as the title for Mary Standlee's book. In this work she describes the amalgamation of indigenous practices and beliefs with those of foreign origin. Throughout the narrative two essential points recur again and again: the wealth of persistent superstition of ancient origin that surrounds pregnancy and childbirth and the continuing employment of midwives as the chief obstetrical attendants in present-day Japan.

The book is the only Western study which deals with the complete history of Japanese obstetrics, and, as such, it is a welcome and important contribution. Unfortunately, the author admittedly is not thoroughly familiar with Oriental thought, and this deficiency is noticeable, although she acknowledges the help of experts. This lack is manifest in her treatment of the ancient basic Chinese concept of the Yin and the Yang, the universal dual force whose balance assures peace and health and whose imbalance brings disaster and disease. The author's approach to this abstract concept is oddly feministic, revealing her resentment that negative attributes are symbolized by Yin, the female half of the dual force. Although her reaction is disguised by awkward jocular expressions, it appears to indicate that she equates this cosmic force with the subordinate position of women in Japanese society. Similarly, the résumé of the legends of the Divine Age, dealing with the origin of the imperial family, is given in a bantering manner which may be intended to lighten the tedium of dynastic history but falls short of being amusing.

Passing references to Japanese medicine also reveal a lack of knowledge of some of its fundamental elements. Although acupuncture and moxa treatment are frequently mentioned as "panaceas," the theory underlying their use is never explained. And the *Huang Ti Nei Ching Su Wen,* the oldest Chinese book on internal medicine, is referred to as "the materia medica of early Chinese civilization," although its emphasis on medicinal substances is negligible compared to that of the *Pen Ts'ao,* which is devoted exclusively to drugs.

These flaws will be disturbing mainly to those familiar with the history of the Far East, who will find the book lacking in depth. To the less critical reader, for whom it is apparently intended, it will prove interesting and informative. The material dealing with more recent events is drawn from essentially good personal observation, and is accurately presented. The illustrations are well selected and excellently reproduced.

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Mutilaciones Dentarias Prehispanicas de México y America en General. Javier Romero. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City, 1958. 326 pp. Illus.

The practice of filing the edges of the front teeth into various shapes or of ornamenting the labial surfaces of the upper front teeth with inlays of jadite, pyrite, turquoise or (rarely) gold, never had very wide acceptance among prehistoric American Indians. In the main, it was restricted to the high-culture populations of what is now Mexico, Guatemala, and British Honduras—in other words, Meso-America. From this center, elements of the practice are believed to have spread northward, up the Mississippi Valley to the region of the present city of St. Louis, and southward to what is now Ecuador, without, however, leaving traces in the intervening regions. Traces of this custom have been found, also, in the American Southwest and as far away as Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. Surprisingly, nothing of the sort has been found in Panama and Peru.