Paulus Aegineta, a seventh century encyclopedist and surgeon: his role in the history of plastic surgery

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Paulus Aegineta (625-690 ad), born on the island of Aegina, practiced medicine at Alexandria. The last of the eclectic Greek compilers in the Byzantine period, he wrote an Epitome of medicine in seven books. The sixth book, which is considered the best section of his work, is devoted mainly to surgery. The first edition, "editio princeps," of his Epitome was published in Greek by the Aldine press in Venice in 1528 and later translated into English for the Sydenham Society by Francis Adams of Banchory (1844-1847). Paulus was not only a compiler but also a competent and skillful surgeon. In addition to his achievements in general surgical progress, Paulus Aegineta, especially in the book on surgery, made valuable contributions in the history of plastic surgery. He may be considered as one of the originators of plastic surgery as it is known today. He described procedures varying from the treatment of nasal and jaw fractures to operations for gynecomastia, ganglion, and hypospadias. This Grecian master influenced not only his own but also the subsequent ages. Rhazes, Haly Abbas, Albucasis, Avicenna, and Fabricius ab Aquapendente were the greatest physicians influenced by Paulus Aegineta. Because the work of Paulus Aegineta was the only source for many of the surgical treatises of Arabian authors, his Epitome bridged Western and Eastern medicine and conveyed surgical experience and knowledge, including several plastic surgery procedures, to the subsequent ages.

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