

Leprosy and Dar-Kosis¹

In early Greek Pythagorean philosophy and astronomy it was postulated that on the side of the sun opposite the earth there exists a planet termed "counter-earth" (Antichthon). Being on the opposite side of the sun it is ever invisible to men on earth.

Recently a series, comprising 11 volumes, of science fiction novels have been issued on this concept of "counter-earth"; in them termed "Gor." The conditions and concepts of Gor are in many ways antithetical to those on earth; indeed, they might by some be regarded as antithetical to the concepts of women's lib. One might wonder at their having been permitted publication on earth were it not that, fortunately, women's lib has not yet achieved for women on earth the position occupied by males on Gor.

Be that as it may, a point of this brief editorial digression is to note that on Gor there exists a disease known as Dar-Kosis or the Holy Disease to which there are scattered references in volumes 1 and 5. In the reading of these there are strong reflections of medieval leprosy:

Dar-Kosis, or the Holy Disease, or Sacred Affliction, is a virulent, wasting disease of

Gor. Those afflicted with it, commonly spoken of simply as the Afflicted Ones, may not enter into normal society. They wander the countryside in shroudlike yellow rags, beating a wooden clapping device to warn men from their path; some of them volunteer to be placed in Dar-Kosis pits, several of which lay within the vicinity of Ar, where they are fed and given drink, and are, of course, isolated; the disease is extremely contagious. Those who contract the disease are regarded by law as dead.²

It seems that a physician on Gor, named Flaminus, took it as his life work to develop "an immunization against Dar-Kosis." This project, for political reasons not unlike those existing in the world of leprosy, was frustrated. In telling his tale, however, Flaminus revealed that similar research had been pursued long before his time and, though this had been specifically unsuccessful for Dar-

¹ It is regretted that this concept from "space" did not come to attention early enough to be included in the editorial "Compilation of Leprosy Equivalent Designations" (IJL 42 [1974] 204-208).

² Norman, J. *Assassin of Gor*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1970, p 266.

Kosis, it had resulted in the development of the "Stabilization Serums." These sera, given in four doses on four consecutive days (in Gor), render the recipients virtually immune to the processes of aging and are available free to all Goreans.

We have long contended that research in leprosy is of significance in relation to biological science and other disease but had not anticipated this possibility. Perhaps some bold soul could seek appropriate and elegant funding from a granting body now that science fiction is so widely mooted as having been remarkably prophetic.

The designation Dar-Kosis also presents itself for possible consideration as a term to resolve the current conflict regarding the earthly designation for this ancient affliction. But then we would have to rewrite literature and we might be reviled for alleged association with Gorean philosophy. The path of the leprosy worker is, alak, fraught with problems.

Unfortunately, with respect to these problems we are "on our own." It seems that the Priest-Kings of Gor have the technical abili-

ty to bend communication waves or beams, unnoticeably, in such a manner as to avoid the detection of Gor. Should we send a satellite to explore the opposite side of the sun, it is said that they are able to move Gor into the orbit of another sun—perhaps they have already done so.

Alas, it appears that we earthlings are alone with our problem. Possibly some direction to it may result from a synthesis of the disparate concepts put forth in the four recent editorials on this subject which have appeared in these pages.³⁻⁶ Alternatively we could, of course, all devote ourselves to reading science fiction!

—OLAF K. SKINSNES

³Skinsnes, O. K. The lepromatous macrophage defect as related to vaccine development in leprosy. *IJL* **44** (1976) 485-490.

⁴Godal, T. The rationale behind a leprosy vaccine research program. *IJL* **45** (1977) 61-63.

⁵Hastings, R. Transfer factor as a probe of the immune defect in lepromatous leprosy. *IJL* **45** (1977) 281-291.

⁶Skinsnes, O. K. Lepromin and the Arthus type reaction. *IJL* **45** (1977) 373-376.