

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Human Blood Groups*

REFERENCE: Prokop, O. and Gohler, W., *Human Blood Groups*, Denis J. Paradis Editions Inc., C.P. 757, Station H, Montreal, PQ, Canada, H3G 2M7, 1986, \$65.00 hard cover, \$50.00 soft cover, 368 pp.

Human Blood and Serum Groups, coauthored by Profs. Prokop and Uhlenbruck, was a remarkable collaboration of two German scientists, one from East Berlin and the other from Cologne, which became a benchmark text throughout Europe. The second German edition, translated and published in English in 1969 by Doctor Raven of Guy's Hospital, London, became a widely cited reference work in Western immunohematology. Although no further English translations of other major publications or editions by Prokop and his associates have appeared in 18 years, their work has continued to capture the attention and imagination of both expert and student in English speaking countries. Other more current publications are considered authoritative by workers in immunohematology and forensic laboratory sciences.

In 1976, Prokop attended the Fifth International Convocation of Immunology in Buffalo where he met M. Denis Paradis of Montreal. After initial discussions and subsequent lengthy correspondence, it was agreed that M. Paradis would prepare an English translation of the popular *Die menschlichen Blutgruppen*, a condensed version of the above volume including more forensic science data, which has been through five German editions and is widely used in European laboratories. In addition to Prof. Otto Prokop, Director of the Institute of Forensic Medicine in East Berlin, and his associates, Profs. Gunther Geserick and Georg Radam, the authors also include Prof. Werner Gohler of the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Leipzig and Prof. Wolfgang Mayr of the Institute of Blood Group Serology in Vienna.

This "Little Prokop" or "The Yellow Book" differs from the encyclopedic book by Prokop and Uhlenbruck. It is not an expansive exposition of all relevant material. Rather it attempts to achieve a balance between that which would satisfy the novice and information which would be of use to the specialist. The audience is blood group serologists and geneticists. The publisher, Gustav Fisher Verlag, has included it in their Genetics Series. This is appropriate since the practical applications of paternity testing, identification of blood stains, and the authors' experience as European forensic science experts are emphasized.

Human Blood Groups is divided logically in four parts: Cellular Characteristics, Erythrocyte Enzyme Characteristics, Leukocyte and Platelet Alloantigens (by Prof. Mayr), and Serum Characteristics. Addenda include Chromosomal Localization of Blood Group Genes, The Evidence Value of the Blood Group Systems, and The Probability of Exclusion of Paternity.

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For each subheading in these divisions there follows an exposition and development:

- (1) background,
- (2) methodology,
- (3) genetics,
- (4) biological significance,
- (5) practical significance,
- (6) forensic science applications,
- (7) anthropological applications, and
- (8) prospects.

All subtopics are referenced by original citations from both the Eastern and Western literature, many of which are known to English speaking peoples only through translations of abstracts or are not known at all. The methods and rules of jurisprudence are those of Europe, not of the Americas. This may cause some readers to find this text not relevant or noteworthy. These readers would be mistaken, however, because the germane arguments, formulae, and calculations are included.

This book is made more complex by its attempt to condense a large scope and volume of information applicable to a broad range of scientific fields into a moderate size book to be used as either a text or a reference. Some interesting serologic markers that are not well defined or do not have immediate practical use are mentioned only briefly or excluded. The methodology is that of the authors', not ours. This book is not intended for biochemists, although it deals succinctly with the serology of polymorphisms.

M. Paradis deals admirably with translating the intent and tone of Prokop's little yellow book. The publication also coincides with the first author's 70th birthday—a fine tribute to an outstanding forensic scientist. Those who may want to buy this book include students, forensic science laboratories, and those who are interested in what their colleagues in other parts of the world have been doing during the last 20 years.