and sweating can occur there regardless of the external temperature. The eating of highly spiced foods, for example, produces its own special pattern of facial sweating. Emotional stress quickly leads to sweating on the palms of the hands, the soles of the feet, the armpits and sometimes also the forehead, but not on other parts of the body. There is a further distinction in the areas of emotional sweating, the palms and the soles differing from the armpits and the forehead. The first two regions respond well only to emotional situations, whereas the last two react to both emotional and to temperature stimuli. It is dear from this that the hands and feet have 'borrowed' sweating from the temperature control system and are now using it in a new functional context. The moistening of the palms and soles during stress appears to have become a special feature of the 'ready for anything' response that the body gives when danger threatens. Spitting on the hands before wielding an axe is, in a sense, the non-physiological equivalent of this process.

So sensitive is the palmar sweating response that whole communities or nations may show sudden increases in this reaction if their group security is threatened in some way. During a recent political crisis, when there was a temporary increase in the likelihood of nuclear war, all experiments into palmar sweating at a research institute had to be abandoned because the base level of the response had become so abnormal that the tests would have been meaningless. Having our palms read by a fortune-teller may not tell us much about the future, but having them read by a physiologist can certainly tell us something about our fears for the future.