

## Book Reviews

process of industrialization and urbanization. Woolf reveals the enduring roots of poverty in the disruptions of family life by age, death, and illness, coupled with underemployment and subsistence wages, particularly for women, children, and the aged. He also explores the continuity in official attitudes towards poverty, and in the various strategies which became fashionable across Europe to combat the problem. Above all he brings out the centrality of the family unit, both as a moral and an economic institution, in the strategies of the poor and their betters alike. The final two chapters, on the records of the Florentine Congregation of San Giovanni Battista, bring out particularly well the tragic *pas de deux* between the “family strategy of subsistence” and élite beliefs about “the centrality of the social role of the economically independent family unit” in a “world of structural poverty”.

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PIA BENNIKE, *Palaeopathology of Danish skeletons*, Copenhagen, Akademisk Forlag, 1985, 8vo, pp. 272, DKr. 195.00.

There is now a voluminous literature in the field of human palaeopathology, and for that matter, a healthily growing one on other earlier vertebrates. Even fossil hominid material is beginning to be considered more routinely for evidence of ill health, a reflection on the past narrower approach to our adaptive evolution. Much of the literature on Holocene material is concerned with disease evidence in specific archaeological site samples and is often associated with more general excavation reporting. There are also an encouraging number of studies on the antiquity of specific categories of disease, the arthropathies, oral pathology, and so forth. Two further developments, if they are indeed new trends, are also equally welcome. First, earlier disease evidence is being fitted within a broader-based “medical anthropology”, embracing social, ecological, and epidemiological factors. Second, there seems to be a growing interest in regional evaluations of disease evidence, and it is in this category that Pia Bennike has made a major contribution.

As a result of a long tradition of careful archaeological excavation and curation, a large collection of ancient skeletons is available in Denmark, mainly covering the past 7,000 years. While some of the pathology has been reported on in the past, Dr Bennike provides the first major review (for which she received a medical PhD), with special attention being given to the prehistoric material.

After introducing the archaeology of the material, the author provides a demographic framework within which to consider the disease evidence. No osteometric details are included in the review, with the exception of stature, which has been used in some studies as a variable which can reflect health status. Following this, a number of major disease categories are considered in sequence from trauma and trepanation, the arthropathies, oral pathology, and finally the “special” finds—less common, but indicating the presence of infections (including tuberculosis), neoplasms, and possible nutritionally-related changes (rickets, anaemia).

There is clearly plenty here to interest a range of specialists within medical history. The rickets evidence (neolithic) is by far the earliest known. But to me the most surprising information is in the form of a neolithic skull from Hulbjerg, with clear evidence of a hole drilled neatly through a molar. Dental calculus within the drill-hole showed clearly that this was produced ante-mortem!

A very useful reference work.

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J. H. GADDUM, *Vasodilator substances of the tissues*, with introduction by H. H. Dale, reprint of 1936 ed. with introductory notes on the 50th anniversary by F. C. MacIntosh, Cambridge University Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. xviii, 276, £27.50.