

Book Reviews

Aidan Cockburn, Eve Cockburn, and Theodore A Reyman (eds), *Mummies, disease and ancient cultures*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 1998 (1st ed., 1980), pp. xxii, 402, £70.00 (hardback 0-521-58060-9), £24.95 (paperback 0-521-58954-1).

The first edition of *Mummies, disease and ancient cultures* was reviewed in *Medical History* in 1981 by my colleague Dr Simon Hillson, who called it “a fascinating book”. This second edition is fundamentally revised and enlarged (by 62 pages), and brings in a new co-editor, in the person of the paleopathologist Theodore Reyman, the original joint-editor Aidan Cockburn having died as long ago as 1981.

The book is still divided into its four component parts: ‘Mummies of Egypt’, ‘Mummies of the Americas’, ‘Mummies of the world’, and ‘Mummies and technology’ (previously ‘The study of mummies’).

In Part I (my own speciality) there are few changes, apart from Chapter 3 on dental health in ancient Egypt which has been completely revised. Generally, there are some additions, and the bibliography is brought up-to-date to reflect work in the last twenty years.

Part II sees an entirely new chapter (10) on ‘South American mummies: culture and disease’. In Part III what was originally the last chapter, on miscellaneous mummies, is now divided over two chapters, one devoted to the mummies of the Mediterranean world (Italy, North Africa) and the Canary Islands, and one on bog bodies (actually not mummies!) from cold regions. The latter is entirely new. Other chapters have been enlarged and revised.

The biggest change in the second edition is the new Part IV, consisting of just one chapter (16) by Reyman, *et al.* on new investigative techniques. The old chapters on various aspects of the study of mummies have either disappeared or are integrated into this new one which encompasses aDNA and its application to mummy studies; paleoimaging, particularly computed tomography (CT scanning), by which a better visualization of the body is acquired; and paleonutrition studies: analysis

of burial offerings and of intestinal contents, leading to a reconstruction of the diet. Finally the study of ancient human parasitism is evaluated, which increasingly focuses on mummies. These exciting vistas have all opened up since 1980, the rapid pace of discovery and change reflecting the need for this second revised edition.

Hillson commented that the first edition was “nicely designed and well presented”. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the second where I found the photographs most disappointing, being far smaller and darker than when previously printed, which naturally diminishes their clarity and usefulness.

This aside, I can only reiterate Hillson; the second edition of the comprehensive *Mummies, disease and ancient cultures* is indeed as fascinating, if not more so, than the first. It fully justifies the wish of Eve Cockburn, as expressed in the final sentence of her new preface: “Let us hope that this second edition can be as stimulating”. It is again a “must” for the shelves of academic and layperson alike, and is certain to continue to appear on student core reading lists (including my own) for a further two decades, by which time (if not before?) we must eagerly anticipate yet another edition.

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Andrew Cunningham and Bridie Andrews (eds), *Western medicine as contested knowledge*, Studies in Imperialism, Manchester University Press, 1997, pp. ix, 294, illus., £40.00 (0-7190-4673-4).

I read most of the essays in *Western medicine as contested knowledge* on long train journeys to and from a conference on ‘Medical pluralism in colonial and post-colonial societies’. On the outward journey, I began to wonder what made for the “wars” between medical systems promised in Cunningham’s and Andrews’s edited collection, and the