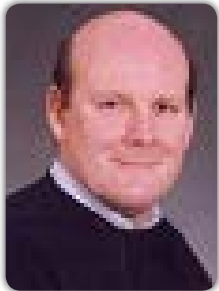


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Philip Norrie

Sydney, Australia

A history of infectious disease in ancient times – More lethal than war - An alternative medical history perspective of ancient history

When one thinks of ancient history one thinks of ancient historians and archaeologists; one does not think of medical historians. But one should, because most major changes in the ancient world were precipitated by an infectious disease epidemic of some kind. It is very naïve of ancient historians not to factor in the possibility that an infectious disease epidemic ended the civilization they are studying because it would have been a daily struggle not to die from an infectious disease in the ancient world. Hence the possibility of an infectious disease epidemic is the first thing ancient historians should eliminate during their research. This lecture will discuss the possibility of such an occurrence happening firstly in Sumer c.2000 BCE, the site of the world's first cities, followed by the Indus Valley Civilization c.1900 - 1350 BCE, Pharaonic Egypt during the 18th Dynasty c.1350 BCE, Haft Tappeh in Elam c.1350 BCE, then the end of the Hittite Empire c.1200 BCE, and finally the end of the Bronze Age in the Near East c.1200 BCE. This hypothesis challenges the current ancient history theories for the end of these civilizations and will upset ancient historians trained in the arts and not trained in using the medical model; which unfortunately is the vast majority. Infectious diseases such as influenza, measles, polio, tuberculosis, dysentery, malaria, typhoid, leprosy and finally the “big two” infectious disease epidemics namely smallpox and plague; decimated the ancient world.

Biography

Philip Norrie is a Family Physician from Sydney, Australia whose main interest is Medical History. This medical history interest is in two parts. Firstly in the history of wine as a medicine for the past 5,000 years which was the topic of his PhD. After this he developed the world's first fully resveratrol enhanced wine [REW]. The second interest is the role of infectious disease in the demise of ancient civilizations, which was the basis of his MD thesis and his current MPhil thesis. He is a Conjoint Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine at the Universities of New South Wales and Newcastle in Australia; as well as being an Affiliate in Medical History at the University of Montana, USA as an Adjunct in the National Institute of Complementary Medicine at the Western Sydney University [relating to REW] and the Vice Chairman of the Medical Advisory Committee at the Northern Cancer Institute in Sydney.

winedoctor@bigpond.com