



# The Cambridge World History of Human Disease

*From Cambridge University Press*

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Combining recent medical discoveries with historical and geographical scholarship, *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease* traces the concept of disease throughout history and in each major world region. It offers the history and geography of each significant human disease--both historical and contemporary--from AIDS to yellow fever, and touches on the variety of approaches that different medical traditions have used to fight disease. Accessible to laypeople and specialists alike, *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease* offers an extraordinary glimpse of what is known about human health as the twenty-first century begins. This important book is now being reissued with a fresh new jacket design.

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## **The Cambridge World History of Human Disease** From Cambridge University Press Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1867133 in Books
- Published on: 1993-01-29
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.98" h x 2.32" w x 8.46" l, 7.05 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 1200 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

From Library Journal

In 1886, the last time a task of this scale was approached, August Hirsch was able to compile the *Handbook of Geographical and Historical Pathology* (New Sydenham Society, 1883-86) on his own; now, because of the knowledge explosion, it has taken 150 authors. In an attempt to provide an exhaustive and definitive world history of human disease and to document the present state of knowledge for the future, editor Kiple has brought together contributions from medical specialists, historians, anthropologists, and other researchers. Emphasis, however, is on Western medicine. Divided into eight parts, the volume consists of 218 chapters, each two to 15 pages in length, written by specialists but easily accessible to lay readers. Each article is followed by an extensive and useful bibliography. Part 1 offers an overview of the history of disease from prehistory to the present. Part 2 covers human understanding of the concept of disease. Part 3 chronicles genetics and the rise of nontraditional Western specialties such as chiropractic medicine and public health projects. Part 4 presents a demographic approach to disease. Parts 5 through 7 look at disease from a geographical perspective. Part 8, a little more than half the book at 560 pages, is a detailed description of the history and present state of 158 separate diseases, from AIDS to yellow fever. This is an ideal source for reference questions, term papers, hard research data, and clinical background. Highly recommended.

- Eric D. Albright, *Galter Health Sciences Lib., Northwestern Univ., Chicago*

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From [Booklist](#)

Medical geography and the role that pathogens have played in shaping history are increasingly of interest to researchers. For example, scholars study how the diseases brought to the Americas by the explorers shaped the future of this part of the world.

The last time an attempt was made to document disease as a maker of history was in the nineteenth century, when August Hirsch published his *Handbook of Geographical and Historical Pathology*. *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease* updates what was recorded more than a century ago. It is both a history and an encyclopedia of disease. The first seven sections present the history; section 8 is the encyclopedia of "Major Human Diseases Past and Present." Each chapter in these sections is separately authored and provides interesting accounts of research findings.

The first four sections provide background information on concepts of disease, special categories of diseases, and methods of measuring health. The next three discuss disease in different parts of the world during different periods of time (e.g., "Diseases of Antiquity in Japan," "Diseases of the Islamic World"). The remaining half of the book covers individual diseases from AIDS to yellow fever. Coverage is not limited to infectious diseases. There are entries on Down syndrome, epilepsy, and hypertension, for example. For each is provided information on clinical manifestations, distribution, cause, and treatment. The final part of each entry discusses the history and medical geography of the disease: how widespread it was during recorded history, and how and why it spread. This part of the book is fascinating reading for the educated layperson. Extensive bibliographies of medical literature are found at the end of each chapter. Distribution maps are provided for some diseases, tables or charts for others.

Personal-name and subject indexes conclude the book. A useful aspect of the name index is that thumbnail biographical sketches are provided for the more prominent scientists. The subject index is detailed, providing a multitude of access points.

This monumental compilation should serve as a starting point for anyone working in medical geography or the history of medicine. As a reference book, the encyclopedic portion will be quite useful in academic and large public libraries.

#### Review

"The Cambridge World History of Human Disease is probably the single most valuable reference work for any scholar of human health and medicine....[T]his work covers an enormous range of biology, history, anthropology, and epidemiology with impressive depth." Lawrence M. Schell et al., *American Journal of Human Biology*

"The publication of this epoch-making book testifies to the range and the maturity of contemporary scholarship in the history of medicine. It will quickly become indispensable to students of epidemiology and related fields." Gary B. Ferngren, *New England Journal of Medicine*

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