

## Parasites in Past Civilizations and Their Impact upon Health

Parasites have been infecting humans throughout our evolution. When complex societies developed, the greater population density provided new opportunities for parasites to spread. In this interdisciplinary volume, the author brings his expertise in medicine, archaeology, and history to explore the contribution of parasites in causing flourishing past civilizations to falter and decline. By using cutting-edge methods, Mitchell presents the evidence for parasites that infected the peoples of key ancient civilizations across the world in order to understand their impact upon those populations. This new understanding of the archaeological and historical evidence for intestinal worms, ectoparasites, and protozoa shows how different cultures were burdened by contrasting types of diseases depending upon their geographical location, endemic insects, food preferences, and cultural beliefs.

PIERS D. MITCHELL is trained in medicine, archaeology, and medical history, and leads the Ancient Parasites Laboratory at the University of Cambridge, UK. Piers has been president of the British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology, and also president of the Paleopathology Association, the worldwide organization for the study of ancient diseases.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-107-00077-3 — Parasites in Past Civilizations and Their Impact upon Health

Piers D. Mitchell

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

---

*Parasites in Past  
Civilizations and Their  
Impact upon Health*

---

PIERS D. MITCHELL

*University of Cambridge*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-107-00077-3 — Parasites in Past Civilizations and Their Impact upon Health

Piers D. Mitchell

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)



Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107000773](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107000773)

DOI: 10.1017/9780511732386

© Piers D. Mitchell 2023

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2023

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.*

ISBN 978-1-107-00077-3 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<b>1 Introduction</b>	1
<b>2 Near Eastern Civilizations</b>	10
<b>3 Ancient Egypt and Nubia</b>	20
<b>4 The Prehistoric Peoples of Europe</b>	42
<b>5 The Roman World</b>	53
<b>6 Medieval Europe</b>	65
<b>7 East Asian Civilizations</b>	80
<b>8 North American Indigenous Peoples</b>	95
<b>9 South and Central American Civilizations</b>	103
<b>10 Parasites, Migrations, and Epidemics</b>	117
<b>11 Conclusion</b>	130
<i>Bibliography</i>	137
<i>Index</i>	172

## *Acknowledgements*

I would like to thank the talented PhD and master's students who have worked with me in the Cambridge Ancient Parasites Laboratory over the last decade, including Evilena Anastasiou, William Eskew, Anna Graff, Elizabeth Grimshaw, Ari Jones, Delaney Knorr, Marissa Ledger, Abigail Lloyd, Grace Pyles, Sophie Rabinow, Tianyi Wang, Faith Williams, and Ivy Yeh.