

## Book Reviews

produced a thorough and sensible study which will become the standard reference work on *garum* and salted fish in the Roman world. There is now no excuse for ignoring their dietary importance in the ancient world, and it is to be hoped that Curtis or someone else will take the study of this aspect further.

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JENS PEDER HART HANSEN, JØRGEN MELDGAARD, and JØRGEN NORDQVIST (eds), *The Greenland mummies*, London, British Museum Press, 1991, pp. 192, illus., £14.95 (0-7141-2500-8).

*The Greenland mummies*, first published simultaneously in Danish and Greenlandic in 1985, is a most handsome and readable book, lavishly illustrated, and of interest to the specialist anthropologist and non-specialist alike. It recounts the discovery and scientific investigation of the bodies of six women and two children of Inuit culture buried in 1475. They were members of a small community at Qilakitsoq, a settlement on the western coast of Greenland, 450 km north of the Arctic circle. The finding of the mummies in October 1979 by two brothers out ptarmigan hunting is told in an absorbing account that one of them wrote to a friend. The professional investigation of the graves is also described in a personal way that involves the reader in the excitement of the event.

This is followed by a discussion on dating technique and the process whereby the bodies were preserved (mainly of interest to the amateur) and a most significant chapter is devoted to the scientific investigation of the mummies. Routine physical anthropological examination was carried out, and extensive use made of clinical X-radiography. The precise determination of adult ages by this method does somewhat stretch credibility, and for the specialist more explanation would have been of interest. But the reproduction of the X-rays is excellent, and the range of palaeopathological lesions exhibited is extensive, including a child with Down's syndrome and Perthes disease. A most interesting skull radiograph is reproduced of a female mummy 11/8, which shows numerous erosive bone lesions, and it is suggested that these are metastatic carcinomatous deposits. Unfortunately the preservation of her soft tissues was poor, so the authors are unable to suggest a possible primary neoplasm in this case; breast carcinoma seems likely. Dental disease in the mummies is analysed and the chewing of sealskin is proposed to account for attrition. It was also found that all the bodies were infested with head lice and at least one had intestinal pinworm infestation. Tissue typing was carried out and interesting proposals regarding family relationships of the mummified bodies are made. This is an exciting new field of investigation in preserved soft tissue. No firm conclusions could be drawn on the cause of death.

There is much fascinating information in this book ranging from contemporary Inuit ideas on death and burial ritual, to tattooing, clothes, and living conditions in fifteenth-century western Greenland in general. I highly recommend it.

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JOHN SNOW MD, *On narcotism by the inhalation of vapours*, Introductory essay by Dr Richard Ellis, London and New York, Royal Society of Medicine Services Ltd., 1991, pp. xxvii, 112, £20.00 (1-85315-158-0).

Dr Richard Ellis, who has made many notable contributions to the early history of anaesthetics, has collected and published in a facsimile edition the series of eighteen papers by John Snow that appeared in the *London Medical Gazette* between May 1848 and December 1851. In an introductory essay he analyses their subsequent publishing history as three separate, and now rare, booklets, and continues with an account of Snow's involvement in the development of general anaesthesia. Within one month of the administration of the first general anaesthetic in England, Snow had successfully applied John Dalton's concept of saturated