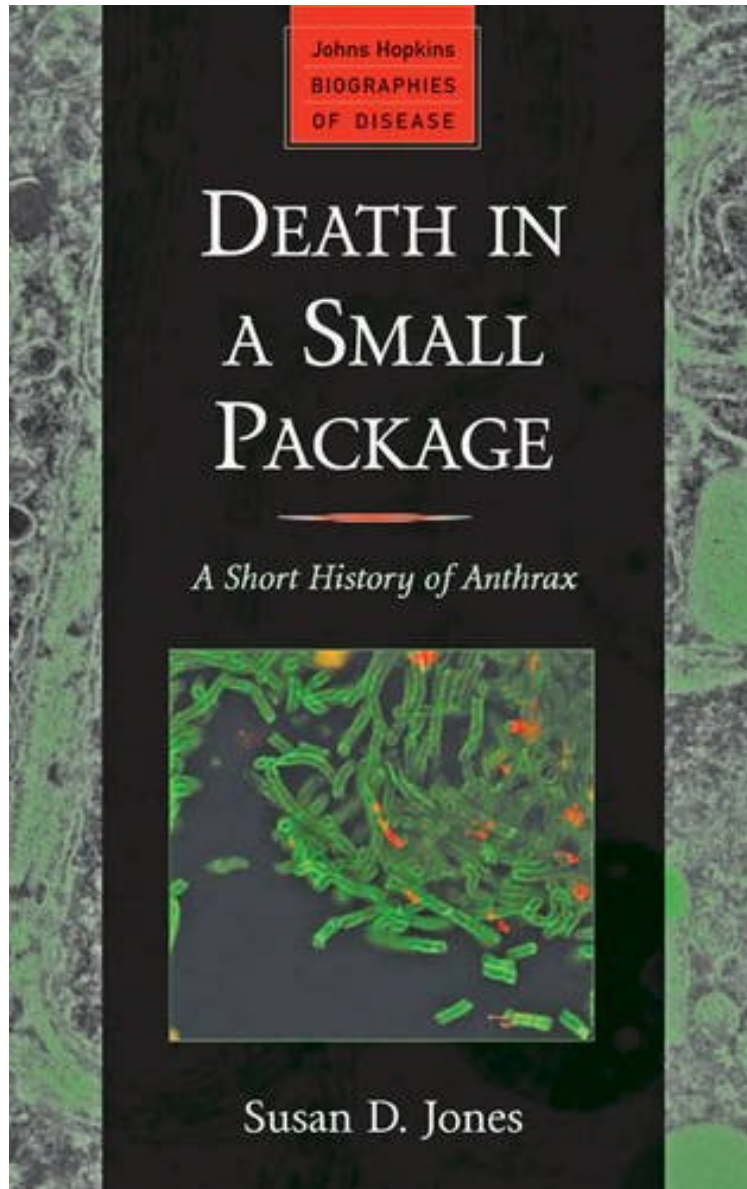


[Download] Death in a Small Package: A Short History of Anthrax (Johns Hopkins Biographies of Disease)

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Susan D. Jones

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Susan D. Jones : Death in a Small Package: A Short History of Anthrax (Johns Hopkins Biographies of Disease) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Death in a Small Package: A Short History of Anthrax (Johns Hopkins Biographies of Disease):

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. History that reads like a fast-paced detective novel

By Dominique Tobbell
In Death in a Small Package: A Short History of Anthrax (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), historian and veterinarian Susan Jones asks how a ubiquitous agricultural disease became, first, an industrial disease, and later, a biological weapon. To address this question, Jones combines extensive archival material (e.g. the field notebooks and laboratory notebooks of anthrax researchers) with some of the latest scientific knowledge, particularly genetic and epidemiological data about *Bacillus anthracis*. The primary units of Jones' analysis then are the microorganism itself, *Bacillus anthracis*, the disease it causes, anthrax, and the efforts of humans to control both. In particular, Jones' focus focuses the complex interactions of the disease-causing agent with the human and animal victims of that disease and their environment. Ultimately, Jones argues that anthrax's transformation from an agricultural disease to a biological weapon over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries was shaped by social, political, and economic factors (such as the establishment of global trade networks and the imperatives of wartime) and by the biology of *Bacillus anthracis* (particularly its unique life cycle, where it must kill its host to complete its life cycle, and where, in spore form, it can remain viable for decades--potentially centuries--undisturbed in the soil, resistant to sun, wind, and rain, until it is consumed by a new host and its virulence is reactivated). Moreover, Jones argues that *Bacillus anthracis* has undergone major changes in its ecology and its evolutionary pattern of development due to its interaction with humans. In particular, Jones contends that as the bacillus was brought into close relationships with human populations--through agricultural practices, through the global trade and manufacture of animal hair products, and through the investigations conducted in the laboratories of the 19th and 20th century--the bacillus became "domesticated." *Death in a Small Package* sits at the intersection of history of science, technology, and medicine, and environmental history. By reading this book, you learn what it was like to do science--specifically bacteriological, epidemiological, and biological weapons research--from the mid-19th century through the late 20th century. You also see clearly the influence that political economy has on the incidence and experience of disease. For example, when during the mid-19th century faster ships, cheaper transport costs, and reduced tariffs on imported goods contributed to increasing the global trade in animal hair products, this corresponded to increased outbreaks of anthrax among British and American mill workers who handled those hair products. In turn, this book highlights the vital role these mill workers played--in collaboration with physicians--in uncovering the cause of the disease from which they were suffering. Arguably the most fascinating aspect of this book is what it teaches us about the influence of military patronage on the development of 20th century science and technology. By the mid-20th century, military-sponsored scientists in Europe, Asia, and the United States realized that *Bacillus anthracis* could function as a "dual-use agent." That is, just as research on the microorganism could be used to cure or prevent anthrax, so too could research be used to transform *Bacillus anthracis* into a powerful and increasingly effective biological weapon. After World War II, biological weapons researchers worked --politically and otherwise--to retain the state or military agency as major patron of their research. During the Cold War era and in the heyday of nuclear weaponization, when the need for biological weapons was less clear, biological weapons researchers sold the work being done in their weapons laboratories as more than just weapons development. They argued these laboratories were also the sites of cutting edge research, particularly in efforts to produce increasingly effective vaccines against anthrax. *Death in a Small Package* is masterfully written and is a truly riveting work of history. The final chapter in particular, which examines the use (intentional and otherwise) of weaponized anthrax - in the former USSR in 1979 and in the U.S. letter attacks post-9/11--reads like a fast-paced detective novel as scientists, the police, and the FBI worked together to uncover the source of the anthrax and the perpetrator of the crime.

A disease of soil, animals, and people, anthrax has threatened lives for at least two thousand years. Farmers have long recognized its lasting virulence, but in our time, anthrax has been associated with terrorism and warfare. What accounts for this frightening transformation? *Death in a Small Package* recounts how this ubiquitous agricultural disease came to be one of the deadliest and most feared biological weapons in the world. *Bacillus anthracis* is lethal. Animals killed by the disease are buried deep underground, where anthrax spores remain viable for decades or even centuries and, if accidentally disturbed, can cause new infections. But anthrax can be deliberately aerosolized and used to kill as it was in the United States in 2001. Historian and veterinarian Susan D. Jones recounts the life story of anthrax through the biology of the bacillus; the political, economic, geographic, and scientific factors that affect anthrax prevalence; and the cultural beliefs about the disease that have shaped human responses to it. She explains how *Bacillus anthracis* became domesticated, discusses what researchers have learned from numerous outbreaks, and analyzes how the bacillus came to be weaponized and what this development means for the modern world. Jones compellingly narrates the biography of this frightfully hardy disease from the ancient world through the present day.

"An important piece of work. Jones is extremely well versed in the biology of anthrax, and she understands as well the social and environmental context. Her decision to write from the point of view of the organism is excellent. Jones avoids the trap of writing from a purely human perspective. She develops not only the ecology of the disease but also how it was transformed from a local into an international problem." (Gerald N. Grob, Institute for Health, Health Care

Policy, and Aging Research at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey)"An excellent resource for understanding the history of anthrax and its relationship to humans... Highly recommended." (Choice)"Jones's study breaks new ground in linking the histories of four types of anthrax: agricultural, laboratory, industrial, and weaponized... A great virtue of Jones's book is the dialogue between biology and history... Death in a Small Package beautifully illustrates the old truism that history is a dialogue between the present and the past and should be an essential text of historiography courses, as well as those on infectious diseases, military research, and bioethics." (Michael Worboys Bulletin of the History of Medicine)"A rich history of anthrax, which weaves together themes ranging across laboratory science, preventive medicine, and the technological developments which brought together biological agents and pre-existing military expertise... [an] excellent book." (James F. Stark British Journal of the History of Science)"Jones' book provides plenty of thought-provoking material for general readers and for specialist teachers of science and technology courses alike." (Mark Honigsbaum Social History of Medicine)" Death in a Small Package is interesting, well written, and accessible, presenting a worthwhile addition to the history of modern medicine and bacteriological science." (Karen Brown Isis)"This history of anthrax describes the bacterias transformation from agricultural disease to biological weapon." (Science News)About the AuthorSusan D. Jones is a veterinarian and an associate professor in the Program in the History of Science and Technology and the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. She is the author of Valuing Animals: Veterinarians and Their Patients in Modern America, also published by Johns Hopkins.