

JOHN H. BODLEY



***VICTIMS* OF PROGRESS**



SECOND EDITION



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John H. Bodley
Washington State University



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PREFACE

The original edition of this book was based largely on conditions existing as of 1970–1972, but since then there has been a dramatic shift toward the political mobilization of indigenous peoples throughout the world. Federations of indigenous peoples have been formed in several regions, and a World Council of Indigenous Peoples now exists. There has also been a recent proliferation of new, nonindigenous organizations designed to support various native efforts to maintain traditional ways of life. These new developments are treated in two new chapters that replace the last chapter of the first edition. I was never fully satisfied with Chapter 9 in that edition because it made the long-term survival of some traditional cultures seem so hopeless. Conditions today are certainly much more dynamic and the outlook for genuine cultural diversity seems more promising than it did in 1970.

In this new edition, I bow to the widespread distaste of my colleagues for the term *primitive* as applied to contemporary cultures, and I employ the less precise terms *tribal*, *native*, *traditional*, or *indigenous* in its place. This shift does not represent any retreat from my viewpoint that these cultures represent a unique way of life that offers important contrasts to the cultural patterns of industrial states. The term *primitive* is employed in reference to the Primitivist-Environmentalist perspective on the protection of traditional cultures that is discussed in the final chapter. Hopefully, this specialized usage will not offend anyone, but it may stimulate further discussion of the issues.

This work, like the first edition of *Victims of Progress*, assumes that government policies and attitudes are the basic causal factors determining the fate of tribal cultures, and that governments throughout the world are concerned primarily with the increasingly efficient exploitation of the human and natural resources of the areas under their control. The following chapters examine and document the worldwide regularities characterizing interaction between industrial nations and tribal cultures over the past 150 years. It is an unfortunate record of wholesale cultural imperialism, aggression, and exploitation that has involved every major modern nation regardless of differences in their political, religious, or social philosophies. While blatant extermination policies have become relatively infrequent, basic native policies and the motives underlying them have remained virtually unchanged since the industrial powers began to expand more than 150 years ago.

PREFACE

Victims of Progress will be of special interest in anthropology courses that stress culture change, modernization, and economic development as they relate to tribal cultures. It is also suitable for introductory-level general and cultural anthropology courses in which the instructor wishes to present these topics in greater depth than normally provided by introductory texts. Because this book presents a particular viewpoint on controversial issues, it may be a stimulus for debate. Arguments are stated clearly and abundant case material and documentation are included so that each chapter can be a basis for classroom discussion or supplemental reading.

JOHN H. BODLEY

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In 1980 I was on professional leave at the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) in Copenhagen, Denmark, to gather and write up new material for the second edition. I am grateful for the many kindnesses extended to me by the IWGIA staff, but I would like to thank especially Helge Kleivan, director of IWGIA documentation and one of IWGIA's original founders, for his enthusiastic support for this research. In London, I also benefited from discussions with Stephen Corry of Survival International.

J.H.B.

INTRODUCTION

Industrial civilization is now completing its destruction of technologically simple tribal cultures. According to the viewpoint of many authorities within industrial civilization, this disappearance or drastic modification of these cultures is considered necessary for the "progress" of civilization and is thought to be inevitable, natural, and, in the long run, beneficial for the peoples involved. However, it is ironic that now that we foresee the imminent possibility of the total disappearance of free tribal peoples, we are just beginning to realize the staggering worldwide costs of industrialization. It is becoming increasingly apparent that civilization's "progress" destroys the environment as well as other peoples and cultures, and that modern civilization may become a victim of its own progress. In view of this we might well question the wisdom of endorsing and encouraging the final disappearance of peoples who reject our "advances" and instead find satisfaction in a technologically simple life in close harmony with its environment.

The impact of modern civilization on tribal peoples has been a dominant research theme in anthropology, but in the past anthropologists often viewed it from the same ethnocentric premises accepted by government officials, developers, missionaries, and the general public. Surprisingly, anthropologists, who discovered ethnocentrism and built their profession by scientifically documenting and analyzing tribal cultures and the process of their "modernization," too often took positions facilitating their destruction. Applied anthropologists attempted to reconcile the natives to the "inevitable" loss of their "maladaptive" cultures and often worked to speed the process while perhaps easing some of the detrimental side effects. Unfortunately many anthropologists disregarded their own humanistic admonitions concerning ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, and the fundamental right of different life-styles to coexist, and developed theoretical concepts and advanced arguments masking the realities of civilization's systematic destruction of tribal cultures.

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ONE

PROGRESS AND TRIBAL PEOPLES

The Industrial Revolution disrupts and transforms all preceding cultures in West and East alike, and at the same time throws their resources into a common pool.

Graham, 1971:193

It is generally recognized that tribal peoples are being drastically affected by civilization and that their cultural patterns and, in many cases, the peoples themselves disappear as civilization advances. For many years anthropologists have made this topic one of their special fields of study, but many seem to have missed its larger significance by failing to stress that the ecological irresponsibility of modern industrial nations and the reckless pursuit of progress are the basic causes of the continuing destruction of tribal peoples. This book is an attempt to dispel some of the widely held ethnocentric misconceptions concerning the disappearance of tribal cultures and to focus attention on the most basic causes, because these causes reveal serious problems within industrial culture itself and must be understood before the world will be safe for cultural diversity.

At the outset the problem must be viewed in long-term perspective as a struggle between two basically incompatible cultural systems—tribes and states. People have led a hunting-and-gathering tribal existence for at least the past half million years, and only for the past 10,000 years or so have any people lived in cities or states. Since the first appearance of urban life and state organization, the earlier tribal cultures were gradually

displaced from the world's most productive agricultural lands and were relegated to marginal areas. Tribal peoples persisted for thousands of years in a dynamic equilibrium or symbiotic relationship with civilizations that had reached and remained within their own ecological boundaries. But this situation shifted rather abruptly a mere 500 years ago as Europeans began to expand beyond the long-established frontiers separating tribal peoples from states. However, by 1750, after 250 years of preindustrial European expansion, tribal peoples still seemed secure and successfully adapted to their economically "marginal" refuges—but industrialization quickly swept away all hope for their continued survival.

PROGRESS: THE INDUSTRIAL EXPLOSION

In the mid-eighteenth century the industrial revolution launched the developing Western nations on an explosive growth in population and consumption called "progress," which led to an unprecedented assault on the world's relatively stable tribal peoples and their resources. Within the 200 years since then the world has been totally transformed, self-sufficient tribal cultures have virtually disappeared, and dramatic resource shortages and environmental disasters have suddenly materialized. Now that many researchers are struggling to explain why industrial civilization seems to be floundering in its own success, anthropologists are beginning to realize that the first and most ominous victims of industrial progress were the several million tribal people who still controlled over half the globe in 1820 and who shared a stable, satisfying, and proven cultural adaptation. It is highly significant and somewhat unsettling to realize that the cultural systems of these first victims of progress present a total contrast to the characteristics of industrial civilization (see Bodley, 1976).

The industrial revolution can be called nothing less than an *explosion* because of the totally unparalleled scope and the catastrophic nature of the transformations that it has initiated. Phenomenal increases in both population and per capita consumption rates were the two most critical correlates of industrialization because they quickly led to overwhelming pressure on natural resources.

The acceleration in world population growth rates and their relationship to industrial progress have been well documented. Immediately prior to the industrial revolution, for example, the doubling time of the world's population is estimated to have been approximately



FIGURE 1. *Traditional tribal cultures and industrial civilization are totally contrasting and incompatible systems. This conflict is obvious in the above scene from highland New Guinea where a tribal group is observing the overwhelming presence of modern technology, which has suddenly been thrust upon them.* (Patricia K. Littlewood)

250 years. However, after industrialization was under way, the European population of 1850 doubled in just over eighty years, and the European populations of the United States, Canada, Australia, and Argentina tripled between 1851 and 1900 (Woodruff, 1966). Under the full impact of industrialization, the doubling time of the world's population by 1970 was only thirty-three years. In contrast, clear anthropological evidence shows that tribal populations grow very slowly and tend toward equilibrium with their environments. This relative population balance is due only partly to higher mortality rates; it must also be attributed to a variety of social, economic, and religious controls on fertility, the significance of which is only now beginning to be understood by researchers.

THE CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION

The increased rates of resource consumption accompanying industrialization have been even more critical than mere population increase.

Above all else, industrial civilization is a culture of *consumption*, and in this respect it differs most strikingly from tribal cultures. Industrial economies are founded on the principle that consumption must be ever expanded, and complex systems of mass marketing and advertising have been developed for that specific purpose. Social stratification in industrial societies is based primarily on inequalities in material wealth and is both supported and reflected by differential access to resources. Industrial ideological systems place great stress on belief in continual economic growth and progress, and characteristically measure "standard of living" in terms of levels of material consumption.

Tribal cultures contrast strikingly in all of these aspects. Their economies are geared to the satisfaction of basic subsistence needs, which are assumed to be fixed, while a variety of cultural mechanisms serve to limit material acquisitiveness and to redistribute wealth. Wealth itself is rarely the basis of social stratification, and there is generally free access to natural resources for all. These contrasts are the basis for the total incompatibility between tribal and industrial cultures, and are the traits that are the sources of particular problems during the modernization process.

The most obvious consequences of tribal consumption patterns are that these cultures tend to be highly stable, make but light demands on their environments, and can easily support themselves within their own boundaries. The opposite situation prevails for the culture of consumption. Almost overnight the industrialized nations quite literally ate up their own local resources and outgrew their boundaries. This was dramatically apparent in England, where local resources comfortably supported tribal cultures for thousands of years, but after barely a hundred years of industrial progress the area was suddenly unable to meet its basic needs for grain, wood, fibers, and hides. Between 1851 and 1900 Europe as a whole was forced to export 35 million people because it could no longer support them (Woodruff, 1966). In the United States, where industrial progress has gone the furthest, by 1970 Americans were consuming per capita some fifteen times more energy than neolithic agriculturalists and seven times the world average in nonrenewable resources. They were also busily importing vast tonnages of food, fuels, and other resources from around the world to support themselves.

Indeed few, if any, industrial nations can now supply from within their own boundaries the resources needed to support further growth or even to maintain current consumption levels. In view of these facts it should not be surprising that the "underdeveloped" resources controlled by the world's self-sufficient tribal peoples were quickly appropriated by outsiders to support their own industrial progress.



FIGURE 2. *A Campa Indian of the Peruvian Amazon prepares wild rubber for sale. The ever-increasing need of the industrial nations for resources has been a primary cause of the transformation of tribal cultures. (author)*

RESOURCE APPROPRIATION AND ACCULTURATION

It is indeed obvious that in case after case, government programs for the progress of tribal peoples directly or indirectly force culture change, and that these programs in turn are linked invariably to the extraction of tribal resources to benefit the national economy. From the strength of this relationship between tribal "progress" and the exploitation of tribal resources, we might even infer that tribal peoples would not be asked to modernize if industrial societies learned to control their own culture of consumption. This point must be made explicit, because considerable confusion exists in the enormous culture change literature regarding the

basic question of why tribal cultures seem inevitably to be acculturated or modernized by industrial civilization. The consensus, at least among economic development writers (and the view often expressed in introductory textbooks), is the clearly ethnocentric view that mere contact with superior industrial culture causes tribal peoples to voluntarily reject their own cultures in order to obtain a better life. Other writers, however, have seemed curiously mystified by the entire process. A fine example of this latter position can be seen in Julian Steward's summary of a monumental study of change in traditional cultures in eleven countries. Steward (1967:20-21) concluded that while many startling parallels could be identified, the causal factors involved in the modernization process were still "not well conceptualized."

This apparent inability to conceptualize the causes of the transformation process in simple, nonethnocentric terms—or indeed the inability to conceptualize the causes at all—may be due to the fact that the analysts are members of the culture of consumption that today happens to be the dominant world culture type. The most powerful cultures have always assumed a natural right to exploit the world's resources wherever they find them, regardless of the prior claims of indigenous populations. Arguing for efficiency and survival of the fittest, old-fashioned colonialists elevated this "right" to the level of an ethical and legal principle that could be invoked to justify the elimination of any cultures that were not making "effective" use of their resources. These old attitudes of social darwinism are deeply embedded in our ideological system and still occur in the professional literature on culture change. In fact, one development writer recently declared: "Perhaps entire societies will lack survival value and vanish before the onslaught of industrialization" (Goulet 1971:266). This viewpoint has also found its way into modern theories of cultural evolution, where it is expressed as the "Law of Cultural Dominance":

That cultural system which more effectively exploits the energy resources of a given environment will tend to spread in that environment at the expense of less effective systems. (Kaplan, 1960:75)

Quite apart from the obvious ethical implications involved here, upon close inspection all of these theories expounding the greater adaptability, efficiency, and survival value of the dominant industrial culture prove to be quite misleading. Of course, as a culture of consumption, industrial civilization is uniquely capable of consuming resources at tremendous rates, but this certainly does not make it a more *effective* culture than low-energy tribal cultures, if stability or long-run

ecological success is taken as the criterion for "effectiveness." Likewise, the assumption that a given environment is not being exploited effectively by a traditional culture may merely represent a failure to apply the familiar biological concept of carrying capacity that would reveal the wisdom of tribal systems. We should expect, almost by definition, that members of the culture of consumption would probably consider another culture's resources to be underexploited and to use this as a justification for appropriating them.

"Optimum" Land Use for Hill Tribes

The recent experience of the Chittagong Hill peoples of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) provides an excellent example of the process by which industrialization leads to a shortage of resources at the national level and ultimately results in acculturation for tribal peoples who have preserved their resources more effectively. Along with other parts of the world—thanks to the intervention of the industrial nations—East Pakistan experienced a major population explosion that became so severe that by 1965 population densities reached an overall average of 470 people per square kilometer and the soil resources of the country were being pushed to the limits. As the crunch on resources worsened, the government made dramatic efforts to emulate the industrialization-economic development route of the developed nations, and soon directed special attention to the still largely self-sufficient Chittagong Hills tribal areas, which had so far managed to remain outside of the cash economy and had avoided major disruptions due to industrial influences. The tribal areas were beginning to show population growth and subsequent pressure on their own resources due to shortening swidden cycles. But with only 35 people per square kilometer, they remained an island of low population density and "underdeveloped" resources in what had suddenly become an impoverished and overpopulated country.

External exploitation of tribal resources in the interests of the national economy initially focused on the forests of the Chittagong Hills. Twenty-two percent of the district was declared a forest "reserve," a "Forest Industries Development Corporation" was organized by the provincial government, and in 1953 lumber and paper mills were in operation to facilitate the modern commercial utilization of the region's bamboo and tropical hardwoods. In 1962 the largest river in the tribal area was dammed to supply hydroelectric power to help feed the rising energy demands of East Pakistan's urban affluent. In the process, however, 673 square kilometers of the best tribal agricultural land were converted into a lake, thus further aggravating the land scarcity that was already

developing because of earlier disruptions of the population-resources balance and requiring the resettlement and "rehabilitation" of many hill people.

Still dissatisfied with the level of resource exploitation in the Chittagong Hills, in 1964 the Pakistani government enlisted an eleven-member international team of geologists, soil scientists, biologists, foresters, economists, and agricultural engineers to devise a master plan for the integrated development of the area based on what they considered to be optimum land-use possibilities. The team worked for two years with helicopters, aerial photographs, and computers. They concluded that regardless of how well the traditional economic system of shifting cultivation and subsistence production may have been attuned to its environment in the past, today it "can no longer be tolerated" (Webb, 1966:3232). The research team decided that the hill tribes should allow their land to be used primarily for the production of forest products for the benefit of the national economy because it was not well suited for large-scale cash cropping. The report left no alternative to the tribal peoples.

More of the Hill tribesmen will have to become wage earners in the forest or other developing industries, and purchase their food from farmers practicing permanent agriculture on an intensive basis on the limited better land classes. It is realized that a whole system of culture and an age-old way of life cannot be changed overnight, but change it must, and quickly. The time is opportune. The maps and the basic data have been collected for an integrated development toward optimum land use. (Webb, 1966:3232)

THE ROLE OF ETHNOCENTRISM

While resource exploitation is clearly the basic cause of the destruction of tribal peoples and cultures, it is important to identify the underlying ethnocentric attitudes that are often used to justify what are actually exploitative policies. *Ethnocentrism*, the belief in the superiority of one's own culture, is vital to the integrity of any culture, but it can be a threat to the well-being of other peoples when it becomes the basis for forcing irrelevant standards upon tribal cultures. Anthropologists may justifiably take credit for exposing the ethnocentrism of nineteenth-century writers who described tribal peoples as badly in need of improvement, but they often overlook the ethnocentrism that occurs in the modern