


The Cambridge Encyclopedia
of **HUNTERS AND**
GATHERERS

Edited by RICHARD B. LEE AND RICHARD DALY

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The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers

Hunting and gathering was humanity's first and most successful adaptation, occupying at least 90 percent of human history. Until 12,000 years ago, all humans lived this way. Surprisingly in an increasingly urbanized and technological world, dozens of hunting and gathering societies have persisted and thrive world-wide, resilient in the face of change, their ancient ways now combined with the trappings of modernity.

The Encyclopedia is divided into two parts. The first contains case studies, by leading experts, of over fifty hunting and gathering peoples, in seven major world regions. There is a general introduction and an archaeological overview for each region. Part II contains thematic essays on prehistory, social life, gender, music and art, health, religion, and indigenous knowledge. A final section surveys the complex histories of hunter-gatherers' encounters with colonialism and the state, and their ongoing struggles for dignity and human rights as part of the world-wide movement of indigenous peoples.

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PREFACE TO THE PAPERBACK EDITION

In the five years since the publication of the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*, the world has undergone dramatic changes. Of all the world's societies, few could have been more remote from the direct impact of the events of September 11, 2001, than the hunting and gathering peoples. Yet, no less surely, these societies have experienced their own social/cultural and political/economic upheavals. The forces of globalization, environmental degradation, state penetration, and cultural imperialism have continued to affect hunting and gathering societies and force them into closer and closer proximity with surrounding polities and civil societies. Like local cultures everywhere, foragers and former foragers have continued to grapple with new challenges through a complex interplay of resistance, accommodation, and adaptation.

In fact the themes of continuity and change, tradition and transformation, highlighted in the fifty case studies and fourteen essays in this volume remain extremely timely. With correction of typographical errors, this edition contains the entire contents of the original. This brief introduction pinpoints recent developments in the field and directs the reader to current literature.

More and more, the hunting and gathering peoples have appeared on the global stage under the rubric of "Indigenous Peoples," sharing the platform with such disparate (and non-foraging) peoples as the Mayans, the Masai, and the Maori. The United Nations declared the period 1993-2004 the "Decade of Indigenous People," and former foragers made common cause with other marginalized and encapsulated minorities: pastoral nomads, reindeer herders, fishers, and swidden horticulturalists. Collectively these peoples are estimated to number some 250 million, or four percent of the world's population.

Given the political traction afforded by this rubric, the concept of "indigenous" has become highly contested. Scholars have been divided into two camps, roughly corresponding to the labels *revisionist* and *indigenist* we adopted in the introduction to this volume (pp. 11–12). In a widely discussed article Adam Kuper (2003, 2004) questioned the reality of the term and asserted that *indigenous* is an empty category: poverty and marginality are the defining characteristics of being indigenous, not primordial ethnicity. To label them as "indigenous" is to commit the error of "essentialism," a cardinal sin in post-modern discourse. Going further he asserted that to invoke ethnicity in any political argument is to flirt with reactionary and even proto-fascist political rhetoric.

Ranged on the other side of the debate are those who see the assertion of the rights of people to be *indigenous* as acts of restitution and re-inclusion, completely at odds with the exclusionary politics of right-wing ethnic chauvinism (e.g., Ramos 2003; Kenrick and Lewis 2004a, 2004b; Asch and Samson 2004; Saugestad 2004; Turner

2004). These observers argue the case that “indigenous” histories include elements of political autonomy, linguistic distinctiveness, and long-term land occupation, though in varying degrees from case to case. While acknowledging that the modern nation-state (cf. Benedict Anderson) may be an “imagined community” and that all ethnicities are to a degree fictional, they would argue that there is a world of difference between the reclaiming and restitution of rights by dispossessed San people in South Africa and the assertion of a greater German (or American) national destiny. To conflate the two is to erase critical differences between oppressor and oppressed.

In the current conjuncture, the people themselves, including many represented in this volume, self-identify as “indigenous” by employing a complex amalgam of their articulated histories (backed by scholarly evidence) and an emerging capacity for self-promotion. This may involve a process of *re-invention*, as an indigenous group recasts its identity in terms dictated by the politics and legal discourses of the nation-state. The term *strategic essentialism* has been applied to this political process, and supporters see this as a legitimate “weapon of the weak,” a means of redressing genuine grievances in courts of public opinion in a language the wider public can understand.

For the hunting and gathering peoples discussed in this book, the arenas in which these struggles are played out include the politics of identity, traditional environmental knowledge (TEK), land and civil rights, governmentality, and spirituality. Building on themes addressed throughout the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*, we offer a very brief sketch of some of the recent work.

Politics of identity

Identity politics is a theme that pervades many of the case studies and essays. The late Susan Kent (2002) edited a collection of papers that assessed the degree of autonomy/subordination of hunting and gathering peoples in the recent past. Contributors tended to support the “indigenist” position. This theme is developed further in the book *At the Risk of Being Heard* (2003) edited by Bart Dean and Jerome Levy. Susan Lobo and Steve Talbot (2001) and Marie Battiste (2000) have assembled excellent collections emphasizing the voices of indigenous peoples in the Americas. Ronald Niezen (2003) has written a masterful overview of the politics of indigenism in the late twentieth century, while Kirk Dombrowski (2001, 2002) and Renee Sylvain (2002) present informative case studies that critically assess both the indigenist and the revisionist positions.

Land, civil, and property rights

In addition to coverage in most of the case studies, issues of rights are central in the essays by Trigger (pp. 473–80) and Hitchcock (pp. 480–6). The fostering of land and civil rights remain central to the agendas of almost all former hunter-gatherers. Alison Brysk’s *From Tribal Village to Global Village: Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America* (2000) and Curtis Cook and Juan Lindau’s *Aboriginal Rights and Self-Government: The Canadian and Mexican Experience in North*

America (2000) are recent collections surveying this topic. Schweitzer, Biesele, and Hitchcock (2000) explore these themes in an edited collection based on an earlier CHAGS conference. Thomas Widlok and Tadesse Wolde

(2004) have edited a major two-volume edition surveying property rights of peoples on the margins of capitalism, including many case studies of former foragers in Africa, Asia, Alaska, and Australia. These issues are also discussed by Lye (2004) for southeast Asia and Norström (2003) for south Asia.

Governmentality

How foraging peoples articulate with their nation-states in ways that acknowledge their difference and preserve a semblance of political space is a major theme in the encyclopedia, covered in all seven regional introductions. One of the editors, Harvey Feit, has followed up on this ongoing discussion in *In the Way of Development: Indigenous Peoples, Life Projects and Globalization* (Blaser, Feit, and McRae eds. 2004), as does Paul Nadasdy's (2003) *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon* and Colin Scott's (2001) *Aboriginal Autonomy and Development in Northern Quebec and Labrador*. Sidsel Saugestad's *The Inconvenient Indigenous* (2001) is a valuable study of the San peoples' relations with the Botswana state. Other recent sources include Hitchcock (2002) and Barnard and Kenrick (2001). Throughout its history, the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) based in Copenhagen has been a most effective advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples in international forums.

Traditional environmental knowledge (TEK)

A focus of the essay by Catherine Fowler and Nancy Turner (pp. 419–25), TEK continues to be a significant component of two linked processes in the current era of globalization: the search for sustainable development and the scramble for the genetic commons. Hunter-gatherers are part of this process. The environmental knowledge they possess can be used to find ways of establishing viable post-foraging economies; the same knowledge can be a source of useful pharmaceuticals and other products for world markets. In both cases the key questions remain if and how the indigenous people will retain the benefit. An edited volume by Ellen, Parkes, and Bicker (2000) explores these issues, while works by John Grim (2001) and Tim Ingold (2000) make important contributions to, respectively, the underlying ethics and anthropology.

Spirituality

The spiritual and ethico-religious roots of hunter-gatherer culture and lifeways addressed in several of the essays including Guenther on shamanism and mythology (pp. 426–33), Ingold on sociality (pp. 399–410), Karen Endicott on gender relations (pp. 411–18), and Barac and Morphy on music and art, respectively (pp. 434–48). Basic research on many of these themes continues to appear, including debates on shamanism (Lewis-Williams 2002a, 2002b; Narby 2001), art (Myers 2002; Morphy

1999), and other issues (Ingold 2000; Guenther 1999; Kratz 2002).

While the Cambridge Encyclopedia can be explored for the many ways in which current and former hunter-gatherers articulate with contemporary controversies, there are other ways to approach this book. It can also be valued as a source of the best available evidence on a vast array of peoples whose way of life once dominated the planet and whose footprints are still visible on most of the world's surfaces. Research on the hunting and gathering peoples, as part of humanity's heritage, continues to provide source material for debates in the cultural, political, and sociological imagination and for reflections on the human condition. The references cited also contain important new research by encyclopedia authors.¹ With these themes in mind, the editors and authors are pleased to welcome a wider readership to the hunter-gatherer world.

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¹ See entries for Anderson, Bahuchet, Balee, Daly, Dussart, Eder, Gardner, Hitchcock, Keen, Kratz, Lee, Medicine, Rival, and A. B. Smith.

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