

After these links are discussed, the author goes on to suggest that breastfeeding—and the social, policy and institutional supports that are required to make it possible—is an example of sustainable development. She concludes that it is more important to focus on improving conditions that affect women's lives than to be overly concerned with the more narrow issue of infant-feeding decisions.

There are a number of other specific, noteworthy aspects of this book. The four case studies of poor women in Colombia, Kenya, Java and Bangkok (Chapter 2) illustrate the issues and problems in the lives of women and their infants, and put human faces on the more general statements about poor women and the world system. Parts of Chapter 5, "The Commoditization of Infant Food," contain excellent discussions of the prestige aspects of food and the use of infant formula as a status symbol. And finally, Chapter 6 discusses how the various aspects of the argument interconnect, emphasizing the long-term negative consequences of bottle feeding, particularly in the less developed countries.

In sum, this book represents the kinds of contributions that nutritional anthropology can make to the understanding of issues of food consumption by viewing them in a broader context. Van Esterik demonstrates that larger forces, including those of the world system, play an important part in affecting the options of women deciding how and what to feed their infants. This book will be highly useful to anthropologists and other social scientists (as well as health professionals) interested in issues of nutrition, medical systems, gender and development.

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### **Health and the Rise of Civilization**

Mark Nathan Cohen

New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989. x + 285 pp. N.p. (cloth)

*Reviewer:* C.R. Hallpike

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The prevailing image of the noble savage, despite a sentimental admiration, has been of someone "poor, ill, and malnourished," while "the major transformations of human society have been portrayed as solutions to age-old problems which liberated human populations from the restraints of nature" (p. 3). Cohen, however, argues that agriculture, sedentism, urbanization, the state and industrialism have not necessarily produced better health and nutrition but rather, in many cases, the reverse. His evidence is based on: (1) modern dietary and epidemiological research, (2) field studies of contemporary hunter-gatherers, and (3) osteological and palaeopathological studies of archaeological sites.

The first category of evidence is the basis for a number of conclusions about the relative advantages of foraging and agriculture. Cohen argues that hunter-gatherer populations are vulnerable to diseases carried by organisms which complete their life cycles in animal hosts or the soil, as opposed to human hosts. Such diseases may be severe but are of limited distribution. Sedentary agriculturalists, however, especially with large populations, are increasingly vulnerable to diseases which depend on human hosts. "Large populations make possible the survival and transmission of certain diseases that could not have survived at all . . . in a prehistoric world populated by relatively small and isolated human groups" (p. 48). Measles,

smallpox, influenza, cholera and bubonic plague are typical of such diseases whose social impact in historic periods is well known. Permanent dwellings, the clearing of forests, the digging of irrigation channels and ponds, the use of animal and human manure, food storage and trade have all been significant factors in the increase of disease since the adoption of agriculture.

With regard to nutrition, most cereals are poor sources of protein, vitamins and minerals, a deficiency which is exacerbated by storage and cooking. Although cereals can be supplemented with other foods, domesticated crops may be less resistant to disease than their wild counterparts, and the failure of monocrops in particular will have proportionately serious consequences for those dependent on them. Centralized agricultural states also have a strong tendency to provide a better quality of health and nutrition for the more powerful classes at the expense of the poor.

Cohen's evidence from contemporary primitive societies only covers hunter-gatherers, and while it is difficult to establish average life-expectancies in such societies, it seems likely that they at least compare favourably with those in India until 1920 and in much of Europe as late as the 18th and early 19th centuries. The data from archaeological sites is mostly limited to the transition from foraging to intensive agriculture or the emergence of large political units in North America. This evidence "provides a very mixed record of changing health," but, Cohen suggests, "I can find no actual evidence of regular child survivorship anywhere in the world until the late nineteenth century" (p. 107). While the present evidence is thin and uneven, it seems likely that "we have built our images of human history too exclusively from the experiences of privileged classes and populations" (p. 140).

It is impossible in this brief review to do justice to the full range of arguments and evidence with which Cohen supports his case (there are 82 pages of notes and 46 of bibliography). Chapter Three, on the evolution of human society, is particularly well done, and the book as a whole can be strongly recommended.

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### **Ten Years Later: Indochinese Communities in Canada**

Louis-Jacques Dorais, Kwok B. Chan and Doreen M. Indra, eds.

Montréal: Canadian Asian Studies Association, 1988, 200 pp. N.p. (paper)

*Reviewer:* Lawrence Lam  
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While Canada has accepted thousands of Indochinese refugees since the mid-1970s, there is little systematic and comprehensive analysis of their efforts to organize themselves into viable distinctive sociocultural collectivities through which culture shock could be eased and their cultural richness added to a multicultural Canada.

Accordingly, this book is a welcome addition, providing much needed information, not only on the problems experienced by the Indochinese refugees in their attempts to carve out a satisfactory niche in Canadian society (e.g., underemployment and downward mobility), but also on their collective search for cultural identity and attempt to preserve their cultural heritage through the development of eth-