

cultural anthropology

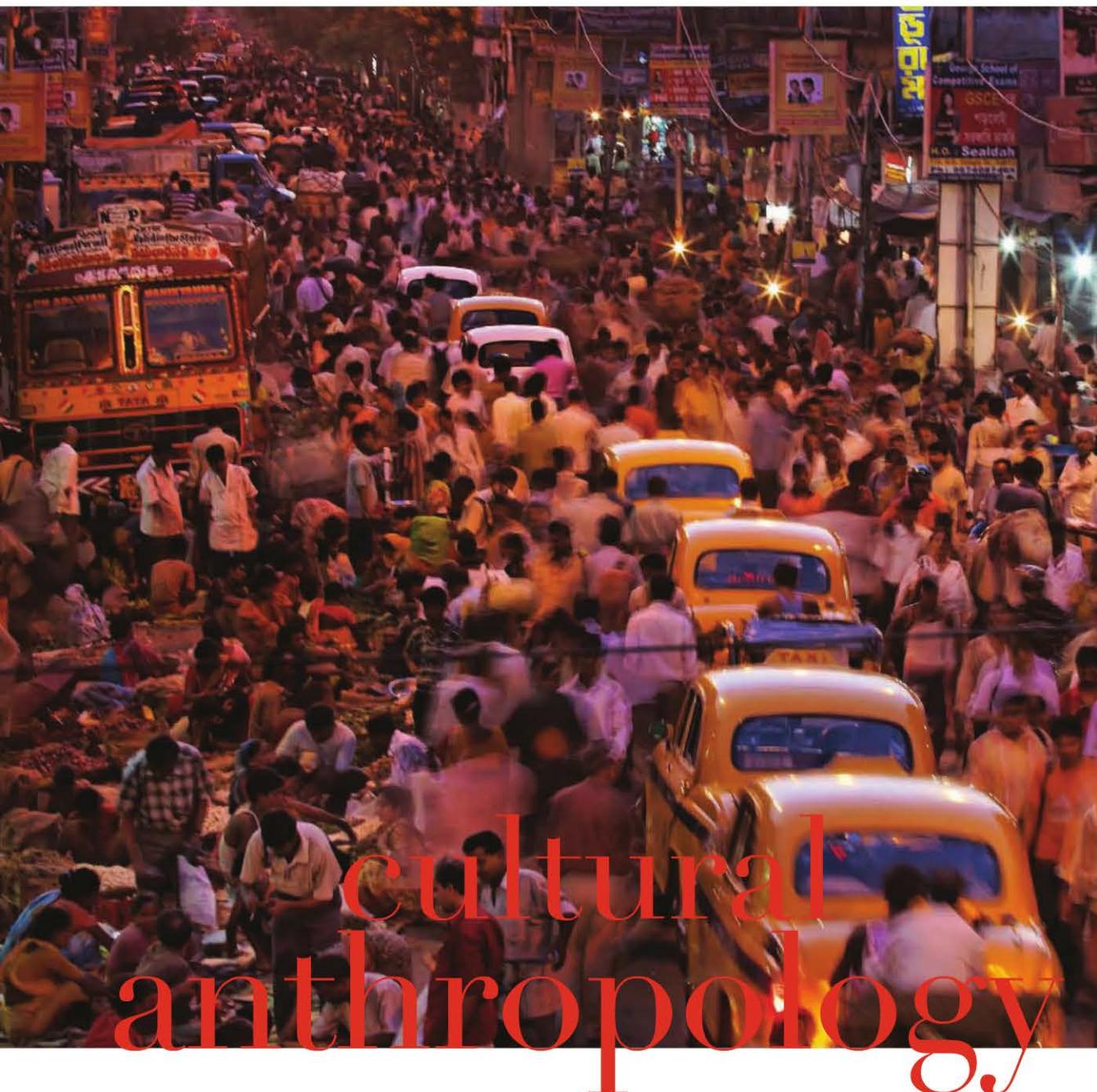
Seven Billion

Dharavi: Mumbai's Shadow City

Indian Renaissance

Africa's Last Frontier: Ethiopia's Omo Valley Celt Appeal

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LEARNING READER



cultural anthropology



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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 16 15 14 13 12

Table of Contents

- v About the Series
 - vi Preface
 - 2 Seven Billion**
 - 27 Discussion Questions
 - Questions for Further Reflection
 - 28 Dharavi: Mumbai's Shadow City**
 - 47 Discussion Questions
 - Questions for Further Reflection
 - 48 Indian Renaissance**
 - 65 Discussion Questions
 - Questions for Further Reflection
- 66 **Africa's Last Frontier: Ethiopia's Omo Valley**
- 87 Discussion Questions
- Questions for Further Reflection
- 88 **Celt Appeal**
- 105 Discussion Questions
- Questions for Further Reflection

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About the Series

Cengage Learning and National Geographic Learning are proud to present the *National Geographic Learning Reader Series*. This ground breaking series is brought to you through an exclusive partnership with the National Geographic Society, an organization that represents a tradition of amazing stories, exceptional research, first-hand accounts of exploration, rich content, and authentic materials.

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Few organizations present this world, its people, places, and precious resources in a more compelling way than National Geographic. Through this reader series we honor the mission and tradition of National Geographic Society: to inspire people to care about the planet.

Concerned with understanding the immense diversity of human social and cultural phenomena, cultural anthropology is a wide-ranging field of study. At a fundamental level, cultural anthropologists, in some way or another, are interested in how people participate in the construction of social realities and cultural worlds. To understand the ways in which this occurs, cultural anthropologists must consider a wide range of subjects, from the historical to the economic, the interests of powerful to the struggles of the powerless, collective formations to personal imaginations, virtual to face-to-face interactions, symbolic realms to material trappings, and micro to macro levels. Furthermore, cultural anthropologists pay attention not just to *people*, but also more specifically to the *things* and *acts* that are meaningful to them. What all this amounts to is being able to properly place the subjects of research *in context*, for it is within particular contexts that things “make sense.”

Cultural anthropologists derive their data from a number of sources and methods, such as participant-observation, numerous interview formats, surveying, and archival research. An important thing that differentiates cultural anthropological studies from other social scientific endeavors is often their emphasis on long-term fieldwork, or research projects studying particular phenomena, groups, practices, and/or places in-depth. This approach enables a thorough, first-hand understanding of the complexities of people’s lived experiences and nuances in their systems of meaning. However, such involvement can also raise many ethical dilemmas. Importantly, the choices cultural anthropologists make regarding their positions and situations in fieldwork become part of their data as well. More and more, anthropologists are becoming concerned not only with generating a holistic understanding of humanity, but also how this understanding can be put to use in working through the pressing issues people face in our current era. Indeed, as people, places, and things all over the world are becoming increasingly interconnected, the need for anthropological approaches and concepts is also becoming ever greater.

This reader provides an entry point into the field of cultural anthropology through its range of sociocultural accounts and by raising critical questions about the contexts that characterize people’s lives and communities. Each article introduces different contexts, sets of practices, systems of meaning, and groups of people. In addition, the articles of this reader tap into some of the problems and issues that people face in many parts of the world. In many cases, competing points of view are presented that call on the reader to contextualize and critically examine the claims that people make. The questions at the beginning and end of each article are designed to highlight each article’s central tensions and cultural anthropological themes,

while also challenge the reader to consider questions of ethics and methodology, by doing further research, or to relate the experiences and issues presented in the articles to oneself in some way.

The first article looks at the larger picture of the distribution of the world's human population to examine the political and economic processes that structure opportunities, livelihoods, and the broader sociocultural organization of the planet. With over seven billion people on the planet, humans now are impacting the Earth and each other in unprecedented ways, and it becomes crucial to understand the dynamics of these interactions. This article also introduces some of the themes that are explored in greater detail in subsequent articles. The second article portrays the experiences of those living in Dharavi, a sizeable slum in Mumbai, India. While providing a glimpse into what life is like for Dharavi's residents and how they see their situations, it also shows the interests that people in positions of power have for such places as well. The third article moves to the United States, and highlights voices of American Indians who are working to renew their cultural practices, beliefs, and identities. Centuries of ethnocide and marginalization frame the many issues American Indians face in the contemporary U.S., however many American Indian groups are creating new avenues for economic prosperity, social justice, and political strength. The fourth article follows the life of Dunga, a young man from the Omo Valley in Ethiopia. The personal story of what he wanted for his life reveals insights into configurations of masculinity, subsistence practices, kinship obligations, and gender roles, while at the same time reflecting some of the larger sociocultural and economic tensions that surround "modernizing" projects. The last article traces the roots and recent resurgence of Celtic cultures in Europe. Language, religion, and aspects of expressive culture provide valuable entry points into understanding how people create "culture," reinvent traditions, and cultivate senses of identity and belonging. These articles offer a glimpse into the immense variation of human social and cultural life, as well as its political, economic, and historical underpinnings, to provide a starting point in grasping the scope and possibilities of cultural anthropology and its utility in today's world.

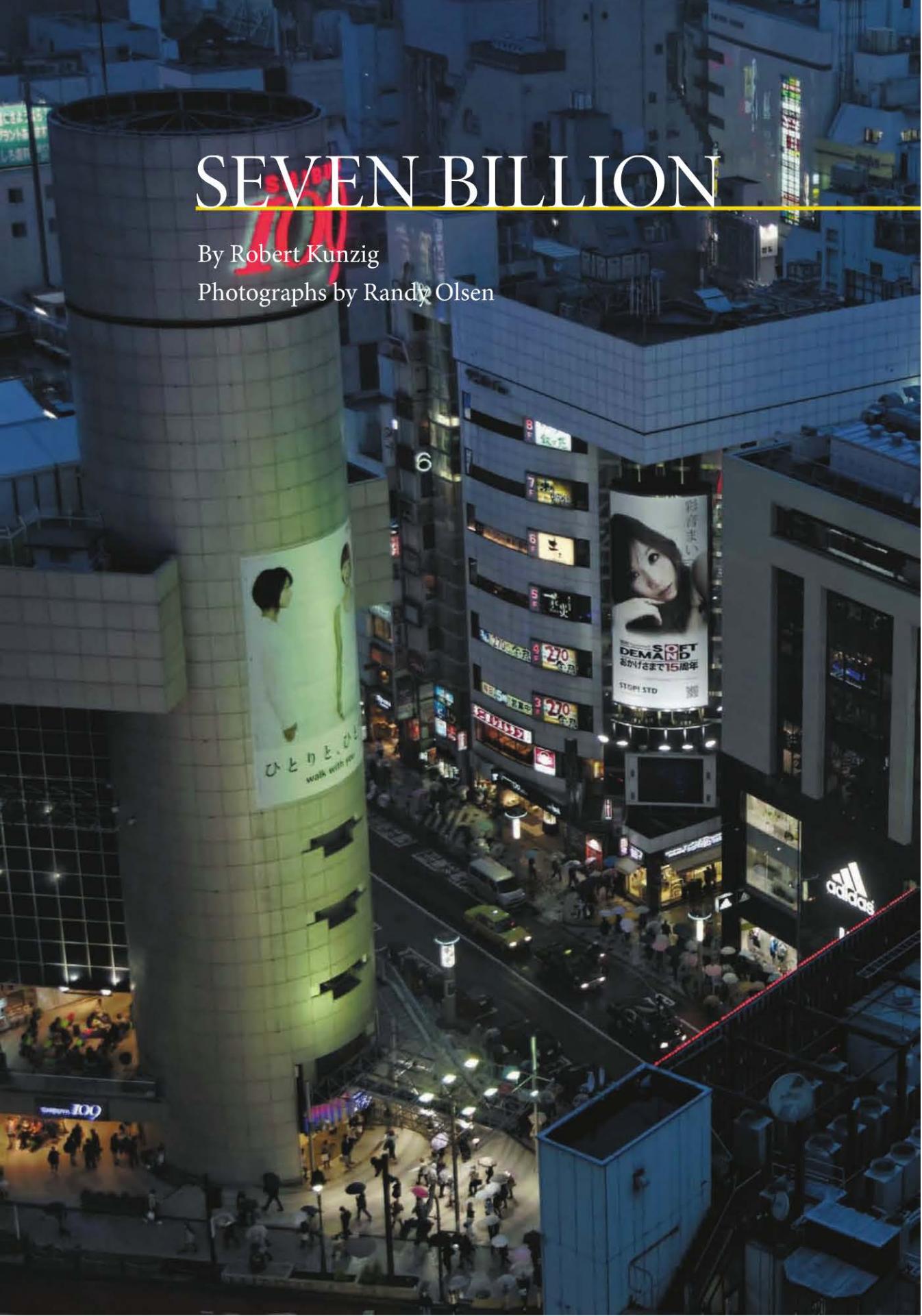


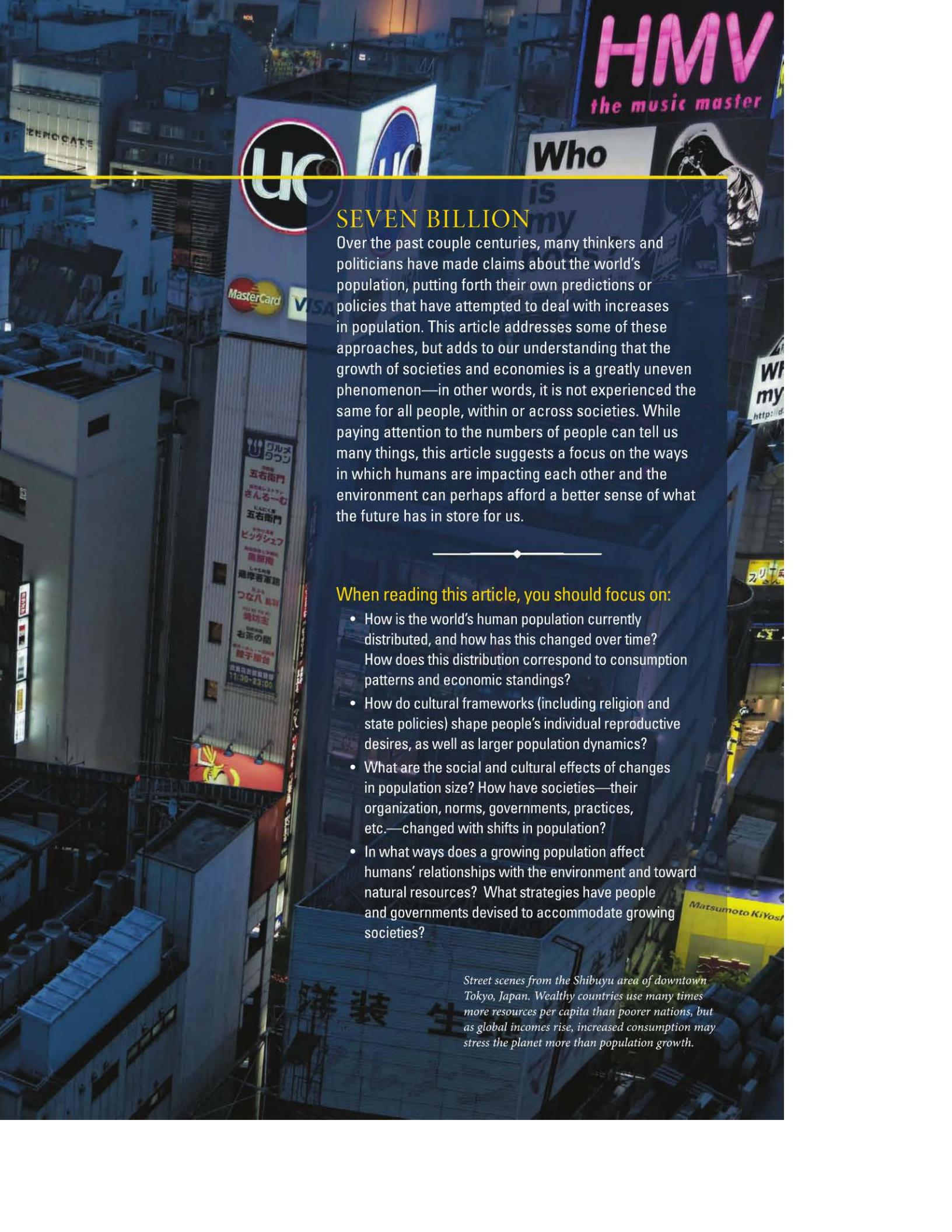
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SEVEN BILLION

By Robert Kunzig

Photographs by Randy Olsen





HMV
the music master

SEVEN BILLION

Over the past couple centuries, many thinkers and politicians have made claims about the world's population, putting forth their own predictions or policies that have attempted to deal with increases in population. This article addresses some of these approaches, but adds to our understanding that the growth of societies and economies is a greatly uneven phenomenon—in other words, it is not experienced the same for all people, within or across societies. While paying attention to the numbers of people can tell us many things, this article suggests a focus on the ways in which humans are impacting each other and the environment can perhaps afford a better sense of what the future has in store for us.

When reading this article, you should focus on:

- How is the world's human population currently distributed, and how has this changed over time? How does this distribution correspond to consumption patterns and economic standings?
- How do cultural frameworks (including religion and state policies) shape people's individual reproductive desires, as well as larger population dynamics?
- What are the social and cultural effects of changes in population size? How have societies—their organization, norms, governments, practices, etc.—changed with shifts in population?
- In what ways does a growing population affect humans' relationships with the environment and toward natural resources? What strategies have people and governments devised to accommodate growing societies?

Street scenes from the Shibuya area of downtown Tokyo, Japan. Wealthy countries use many times more resources per capita than poorer nations, but as global incomes rise, increased consumption may stress the planet more than population growth.



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PULSING WITH PEOPLE

India—its steaming streets crammed with vendors, pedestrians, and iconic Ambassador taxis, Kolkata throbs with some 16 million people—and more pour in every day from small towns. In 1975 only three cities worldwide topped ten million. Today 21 such megacities exist, most in developing countries, where urban areas absorb much of the globe's rising population.

A LOOK AT THE DISTRIBUTION AND DYNAMICS OF THE WORLD'S GROWING POPULATION.

One day in Delft in the fall of 1677, Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, a cloth merchant who is said to have been the long-haired model for two paintings by Johannes

Vermeer—"The Astronomer" and "The Geographer"—abruptly stopped what he was doing with his wife and rushed to his worktable. Cloth was Leeuwenhoek's business but microscopy his passion. He'd had five children already by his first wife (though four had died in infancy), and fatherhood was not on his mind. "Before six beats of the pulse had intervened," as he later wrote to the Royal Society of London, Leeuwenhoek was examining his perishable sample through a tiny magnifying glass. Its lens, no bigger than a small raindrop, magnified objects hundreds of times. Leeuwenhoek had made it himself; nobody else had one so powerful. The learned men in London were still trying to verify Leeuwenhoek's earlier claims that unseen "animalcules" lived by the millions in a single drop of lake water and even in French wine. Now he had something more delicate to report: Human semen contained animalcules too. "Sometimes more than a thousand," he wrote, "in an amount of material the size of a grain of sand." Pressing

There will soon
be **seven billion**
people on the
planet.

the glass to his eye like a jeweler, Leeuwenhoek watched his own animalcules swim about, lashing their long tails. One imagines sunlight falling through leaded windows on a face lost in contemplation, as in the Vermeers. One feels for his wife.

Leeuwenhoek became a bit obsessed after that. Though his tiny peephole gave him privileged access to a never-before-seen microscopic universe, he spent an enormous amount of time looking at spermatozoa, as they're now called. Oddly enough, it was the milt he squeezed from a cod one day that inspired him to estimate, almost casually, just how many people might live on Earth.

Nobody then really had any idea; there were few censuses. Leeuwenhoek started with an estimate that around a million people lived in Holland. Using maps and a little spherical geometry, he calculated that the inhabited land area of the planet was 13,385 times as large as Holland. It was hard to imagine the whole planet being as densely peopled as

Adapted from "Population: Seven Billion" by Robert Kunzig: National Geographic Magazine, January 2011.

Holland, which seemed crowded even then. Thus, Leeuwenhoek concluded triumphantly, there couldn't be more than 13.385 billion people on Earth—a small number indeed compared with the 150 billion sperm cells of a single codfish! This cheerful little calculation, writes population biologist Joel Cohen in his book *How Many People Can the Earth Support?*, may have been the first attempt to give a quantitative answer to a question that has become far more pressing now than it was in the 17th century. Most answers these days are far from cheerful.

Historians now estimate that in Leeuwenhoek's day there were only half a billion or so humans on Earth. After rising very slowly for millennia, the number was just starting to take off. A century and a half later, when another scientist reported the discovery of human egg cells, the world's population had doubled to more than a billion. A century after that, around 1930, it had doubled again to two billion. The acceleration since then has been astounding. Before the 20th century, no human had lived through a doubling of the human population, but there are people alive today who have seen it triple. Sometime in late 2011, according to the UN Population Division, there will be seven billion of us.

And the explosion, though it is slowing, is far from over. Not only are people living longer, but so many women across the world are now in their childbearing years—1.8 billion—that the global population will keep growing for another few decades at least, even though each woman is having fewer children than she would have had a generation ago. By 2050 the total number could reach 10.5 billion, or it could stop at eight billion—the difference is about one child per woman. UN demographers consider the middle road their best estimate: They now project that the population may reach nine billion before 2050—in 2045. The eventual tally will depend on the choices individual couples make when they engage in that most intimate of human acts, the one Leeuwenhoek interrupted so carelessly for the sake of science.

With the population still growing by about 80 million each year, it's hard not to be alarmed. Right now on Earth, water tables are falling, soil is eroding, glaciers are melting, and fish stocks are vanishing. Close to a billion people go hungry each day. Decades from now, there will likely be two billion more mouths to feed, mostly in poor countries. There will be billions more people wanting and deserving to boost themselves out of poverty. If they follow the path blazed by wealthy countries—clearing forests, burning coal and oil, freely scattering fertilizers and pesticides—they too will be stepping hard on the planet's natural resources. How exactly is this going to work?

T

here may be some comfort in knowing that people have long been alarmed about population. From the beginning, says French demographer Hervé Le Bras, demography has been steeped in talk of the apocalypse. Some of the field's founding papers were written just a few years after Leeuwenhoek's discovery by Sir William Petty, a founder of the Royal Society. He estimated that world population would double six times by the Last Judgment, which was expected in about 2,000 years. At that point it would exceed 20 billion people—more, Petty thought, than the planet could feed. "And then, according to the prediction of the Scriptures, there must be wars, and great slaughter, &c.," he wrote.

As religious forecasts of the world's end receded, Le Bras argues, population growth itself provided an ersatz mechanism of apocalypse. "It crystallized the ancient fear, and perhaps the ancient hope, of the end of days," he writes. In 1798 Thomas Malthus, an English priest and economist, enunciated his general law of population: that it necessarily grows faster than the food supply, until war, disease, and famine arrive to reduce the number of people. As it turned out, the last plagues great enough to put (Continued on page 8)

HOW POPULATION BOOMS

As living conditions improve, a country enters successive phases of a process called the demographic transition. The death rate falls, but there's a lag before the birthrate falls too. The result: Population soars. Each phase is marked by a redistribution of the population's age groups, as shown in the pyramids at bottom.

PHASE 1: Preindustrial

Example: None since war-torn Rwanda in the 1990s

BIRTHRATE
High birthrate matches high death rate.

DEATH RATE
Disease, poor living conditions, and warfare lead to a high death rate that sometimes exceeds the birthrate.

POPULATION
A high birthrate and high death rate create a young population of fairly constant size.

PHASE 2: Boom Begins

Uganda, Nigeria, Angola

Birthrate remains high.

Better sanitation, health care, and food supply cause the death rate to drop.

Population booms as the death rate declines.

PHASE 3: Still Rising

India, Brazil, Bangladesh, U.S.*

Birthrate declines as women gain access to education and engage in family planning.

Population is still rising from Phase 2 boom.

Death rate continues to decline.

PHASE 4: Leveling Off

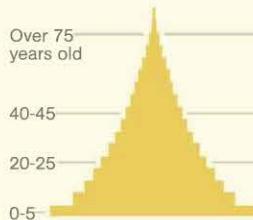
Japan, Russia, Italy, China

Population stabilizes as births and deaths come into balance.

Birthrate drops to replacement level or even below.

Death rate remains low or increases slightly due to older population.

POPULATION PYRAMIDS



A wide base and narrow top characterize populations with a high birthrate and high death rate.



As conditions improve, the death rate declines, and the pyramid tiers for older ages begin to fill out.



A population with fewer children emerges as the birthrate falls; life expectancy increases.



In an aging population, annual deaths may exceed births; without immigration, population may fall.

*THE U.S. HAS CHARACTERISTICS OF PHASES 3 AND 4: A RELATIVELY HIGH BIRTHRATE AS WELL AS AN AGING POPULATION.
MARIEL FURLONG, NGM STAFF
SOURCE: CARL HAUB, POPULATION REFERENCE BUREAU

(Continued from page 6) a dent in global population had already happened when Malthus wrote. World population hasn't fallen, historians think, since the Black Death of the 14th century.

In the two centuries after Malthus declared that population couldn't continue to soar, that's exactly what it did. The process started in what we now call the developed countries, which were then still developing. The spread of New World crops like corn and the potato, along with the discovery of chemical fertilizers, helped banish starvation in Europe. Growing cities remained cesspools of disease at first, but from the mid-19th century on, sewers began to channel human waste away from drinking water, which was then filtered and chlorinated; that dramatically reduced the spread of cholera and typhus.

Moreover in 1798, the same year that Malthus published his dyspeptic tract, his compatriot Edward Jenner described a vaccine for smallpox—the first and most important in a series of vaccines and antibiotics that, along with better nutrition and sanitation, would double life expectancy in the industrializing countries, from 35 years to 77 today. It would take a cranky person to see that trend as gloomy: "The development of medical science was the straw that broke the camel's back," wrote Stanford population biologist Paul Ehrlich in 1968.

Ehrlich's book, *The Population Bomb*, made him the most famous of modern Malthusians. In the 1970s, Ehrlich predicted, "hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death," and it was too late to do anything about it. "The cancer of population growth . . . must be cut out," Ehrlich wrote, "by compulsion if voluntary methods fail." The very future of the United States was at risk. In spite or perhaps because of such language, the book was a best seller, as Malthus's had been. And this time too

When child mortality declines, couples eventually have fewer children—but that transition takes a generation.

the bomb proved a dud. The green revolution—a combination of high-yield seeds, irrigation, pesticides, and fertilizers that enabled grain production to double—was already under way. Today many people are undernourished, but mass starvation is rare.

Ehrlich was right, though, that population would surge as medical science spared many lives. After World War II the developing countries got a sudden transfusion of preventive care, with the help of institutions like the World Health Organization and UNICEF. Penicillin, the smallpox vaccine, DDT (which, though later controversial, saved millions from dying of malaria)—all arrived at once. In India life expectancy went from 38 years in 1952 to 64 today; in China, from 41 to 73. Millions of people in developing countries who would have died in childhood survived to have children themselves. That's why the population explosion spread around the planet: because a great many people were saved from dying.

And because, for a time, women kept giving birth at a high rate. In 18th-century Europe or early 20th-century Asia, when the average woman had six children, she was doing what it took to replace herself and her mate, because most of those children never reached adulthood. When child mortality declines, couples eventually have fewer children—but that transition usually takes a generation at the very least. Today in developed countries, an average of 2.1 births per woman would maintain a steady population; in the developing world, "replacement fertility" is somewhat higher. In the time it takes for the birthrate to settle into that new balance with the death rate, population explodes.

Demographers call this evolution the demographic transition. All countries go through it in their own time. It's a hallmark of human progress: In a country that has completed the transition, people have wrested from nature at least some control over death

and birth. The global population explosion is an inevitable side effect, a huge one that some people are not sure our civilization can survive. But the growth rate was actually at its peak just as Ehrlich was sounding his alarm. By the early 1970s, fertility rates around the world had begun dropping faster than anyone had anticipated. Since then, the population growth rate has fallen by more than 40 percent.

The Fertility Decline that is now sweeping the planet started at different times in different countries. France was one of the first. By the early 18th century, noblewomen at the French court were knowing carnal pleasures without bearing more than two children. They often relied on the same method Leeuwenhoek used for his studies: withdrawal, or coitus interruptus. Village parish records show the trend had spread to the peasantry by the late 18th century; by the end of the 19th, fertility in France had fallen to three children per woman—without the help of modern contraceptives. The key innovation was conceptual, not contraceptive, says Gilles Pison of the National Institute for Demographic Studies in Paris. Until the Enlightenment, “the number of children you had, it was God who decided. People couldn’t fathom that it might be up to them.”

Other countries in the West eventually followed France’s lead. By the onset of World War II, fertility had fallen close to the replacement level in parts of Europe and the U.S. Then, after the surprising flip known as the baby boom, came the bust, again catching demographers off guard. They assumed some instinct would lead women to keep having enough children to ensure the survival of the species. Instead, in country after developed country, the fertility rate fell below replacement level. In the late 1990s in Europe it fell to 1.4. “The evidence I’m familiar with, which is anecdotal, is that women couldn’t care less about replacing the species,” Joel Cohen says.

The end of a baby boom can have two big economic effects on a country. The first is the “demographic dividend”—a blissful few decades when the boomers swell the labor force and the number of young and old dependents is relatively small, and there is thus a lot of money for other things. Then the second effect kicks in: The boomers start to retire. What had been considered the enduring demographic order is revealed to be a party that has to end. The sharpening American debate over Social Security and last year’s strikes in France over increasing the retirement age are responses to a problem that exists throughout the developed world: how to support an aging population. “In 2050 will there be enough people working to pay for pensions?” asks Frans Willekens, director of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute in The Hague. “The answer is no.”

In industrialized countries it took generations for fertility to fall to the replacement level or below. As that same transition takes place in the rest of the world, what has astonished demographers is how much faster it is happening there. Though its population continues to grow, China, home to a fifth of the world’s people, is already below replacement fertility and has been for nearly 20 years, thanks in part to the coercive one-child policy implemented in 1979; Chinese women, who were bearing an average of six children each as recently as 1965, are now having around 1.5. In Iran, with the support of the Islamic regime, fertility has fallen more than 70 percent since the early ’80s. In Catholic and democratic Brazil, women have reduced their fertility rate by half over the same quarter century. “We still don’t understand why fertility has gone down so fast in so many societies, so many cultures and religions. It’s just mind-boggling,” says Hania Zlotnik, director of the UN Population Division.

“At this moment, much as I want to say there’s still a problem of high fertility rates, it’s only about 16 percent of the world population, mostly in Africa,” (Continued on page 12)



EMPTIED COUNTRYSIDE

Russia—Traffic is light—a horse cart with grain, a puppy in pursuit—on a road passing an abandoned granary and church in Novotishevoye, one of thousands of Russian villages depopulating as people move to cities and have fewer kids. To combat a low birthrate, the government has promised to pay \$11,500 to women who have a second child.



(Continued from page 9) says Zlotnik. South of the Sahara, fertility is still five children per woman; in Niger it is seven. But then, 17 of the countries in the region still have life expectancies of 50 or less; they have just begun the demographic transition. In most of the world, however, family size has shrunk dramatically. The UN projects that the world will reach replacement fertility by 2030. "The population as a whole is on a path toward nonexplosion—which is good news," Zlotnik says.

The bad news is that 2030 is two decades away and that the largest generation of adolescents in history will then be entering their childbearing years. Even if each of those women has only two children, population will coast upward under its own momentum for another quarter century. Is a train wreck in the offing, or will people then be able to live humanely and in a way that doesn't destroy their environment? One thing is certain: Close to one in six of them will live in India.

I have understood the population explosion intellectually for a long time. I came to understand it emotionally one stinking hot night in Delhi a couple of years ago... The temperature was well over 100, and the air was a haze of dust and smoke. The streets seemed alive with people. People eating, people washing, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, and screaming. People thrusting their hands through the taxi window, begging. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people, people. —Paul Ehrlich

In 1966, when Ehrlich took that taxi ride, there were around half a billion Indians. There are 1.2 billion now. Delhi's population has increased even faster, to around 22 million, as people have flooded in from small towns and villages and crowded into sprawling shantytowns. Early last June in the stinking hot city, the summer monsoon had not yet arrived to wash the dust from the innumerable

construction sites, which only added to the dust that blows in from the deserts of Rajasthan. On the new divided highways that funnel people into the unplanned city, oxcarts were heading the wrong way in the fast lane. Families of four cruised on motorbikes, the women's scarves flapping like vivid pennants, toddlers dangling from their arms. Families of a dozen or more sardined themselves into buzzing, bumblebee-colored auto rickshaws designed for two passengers. In the stalled traffic, amputees and wasted little children cried for alms. Delhi today is boomerly different from the city Ehrlich visited, and it is also very much the same.

At Lok Nayak Hospital, on the edge of the chaotic and densely peopled nest of lanes that is Old Delhi, a human tide flows through the entrance gate every morning and crowds inside on the lobby floor. "Who could see this and not be worried about the population of India?" a surgeon named Chandan Bortamuly asked one afternoon as he made his way toward his vasectomy clinic. "Population is our biggest problem." Removing the padlock from the clinic door, Bortamuly stepped into a small operating room. Inside, two men lay stretched out on examination tables, their testicles poking up through holes in the green sheets. A ceiling fan pushed cool air from two window units around the room.

Bortamuly is on the front lines of a battle that has been going on in India for nearly 60 years. In 1952, just five years after it gained independence from Britain, India became the first country to establish a policy for population control. Since then the government has repeatedly set ambitious goals—and repeatedly missed them by a mile. A national policy adopted in 2000 called for the country to reach the replacement fertility of 2.1 by 2010. That won't happen for at least another decade. In the UN's medium projection, India's population will rise to just over 1.6 billion people by 2050. "What's inevitable is that India is going to exceed the population of China by 2030," says A. R. Nanda, former head of the Population

Foundation of India, an advocacy group. “Nothing less than a huge catastrophe, nuclear or otherwise, can change that.”

Sterilization is the dominant form of birth control in India today, and the vast majority of the procedures are performed on women. The government is trying to change that; a noscalpel vasectomy costs far less and is easier on a man than a tubal ligation is on a woman. In the operating theater Bortamuly worked quickly. “They say the needle pricks like an ant bite,” he explained, when the first patient flinched at the local anesthetic. “After that it’s basically painless, bloodless surgery.” Using the pointed tip of a forceps, Bortamuly made a tiny hole in the skin of the scrotum and pulled out an oxbow of white, stringy vas deferens—the sperm conduit from the patient’s right testicle. He tied off both ends of the oxbow with fine black thread, snipped them, and pushed them back under the skin. In less than seven minutes—a nurse timed him—the patient was walking out without so much as a Band-Aid. The government will pay him an incentive fee of 1,100 rupees (around \$25), a week’s wages for a laborer.

The Indian government tried once before to push vasectomies, in the 1970s, when anxiety about the population bomb was at its height. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay used state-of-emergency powers to force a dramatic increase in sterilizations. From 1976 to 1977 the number of operations tripled, to more than eight million. Over six million of those were vasectomies. Family planning workers were pressured to meet quotas; in a few states, sterilization became a condition for receiving new housing or other government benefits. In some cases the police simply rounded up poor people and hauled them to sterilization camps.

The excesses gave the whole concept of family planning a bad name. “Successive

China is already below replacement fertility, thanks in part to its coercive one-child policy.

governments refused to touch the subject,” says Shailaja Chandra, former head of the National Population Stabilisation Fund (NPSF). Yet fertility in India has dropped anyway, though not as fast as in China, where it was

nose-diving even before the draconian one-child policy took effect. The national average in India is now 2.6 children per woman, less than half what it was when Ehrlich visited. The southern half of the country and a few states in the northern half are already at replacement fertility or below.

In Kerala, on the southwest coast, investments in health and education helped fertility fall to 1.7. The key, demographers there say, is the female literacy rate: At around 90 percent, it’s easily the highest in India. Girls who go to school start having children later than ones who don’t. They are more open to contraception and more likely to understand their options.

So far this approach, held up as a model internationally, has not caught on in the poor states of northern India—in the “Hindi belt” that stretches across the country just south of Delhi. Nearly half of India’s population growth is occurring in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, where fertility rates still hover between three and four children per woman. More than half the women in the Hindi belt are illiterate, and many marry well before reaching the legal age of 18. They gain social status by bearing children—and usually don’t stop until they have at least one son.

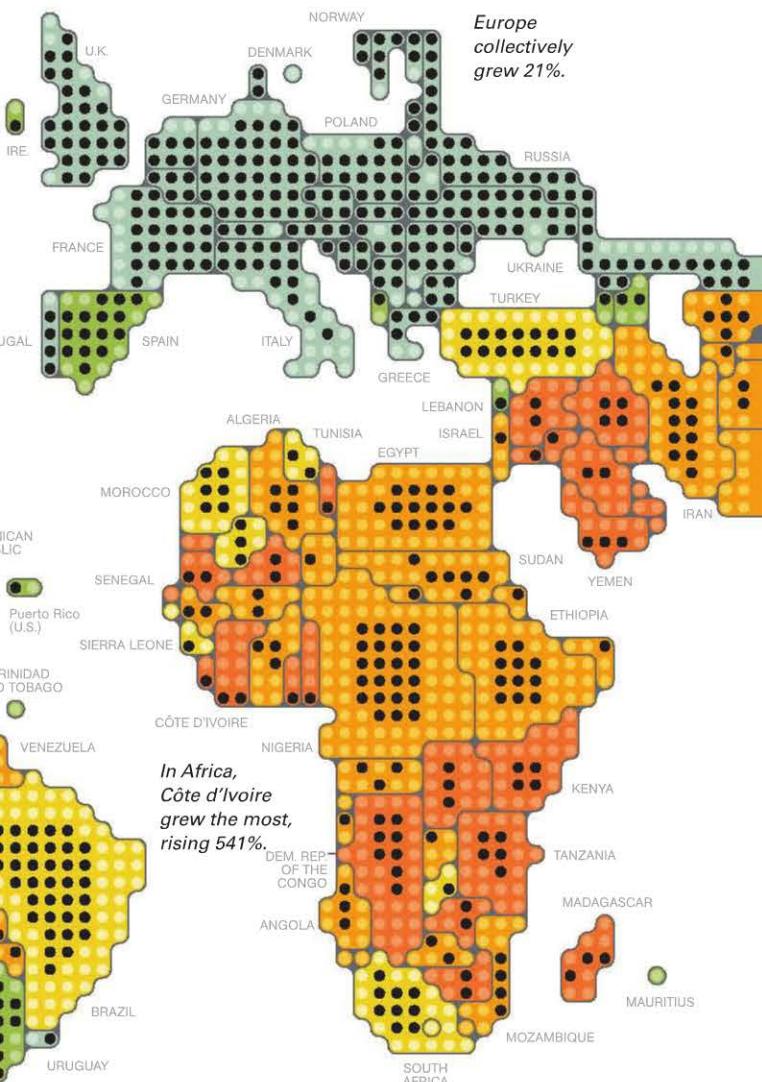
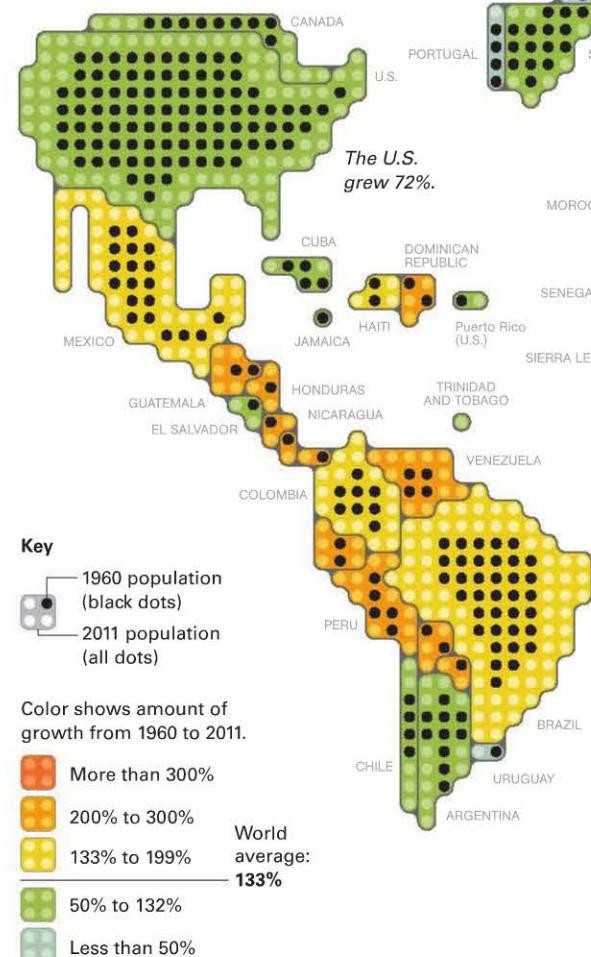
As an alternative to the Kerala model, some point to the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, where sterilization “camps”—temporary operating rooms often set up in schools—were introduced during the ’70s and where sterilization rates have remained (Continued on page 18)

POPULATION

The less developed world will account

The Shape of Seven Billion

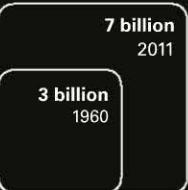
Each country in this cartogram is sized according to its projected population in 2011. Black dots represent the country's population in 1960; light dots are population added since then. Each dot represents two million people. Colors indicate the amount of growth (detailed below). Nations with populations under 1.5 million are not shown.



There are more than twice as many people on the planet today as there were in 1960.

World population has never doubled this quickly before, but it is unlikely to double again. The era of explosive growth is expected to end by 2050, at more than 9 billion people, with an estimated range of 8 to 10.5 billion people.

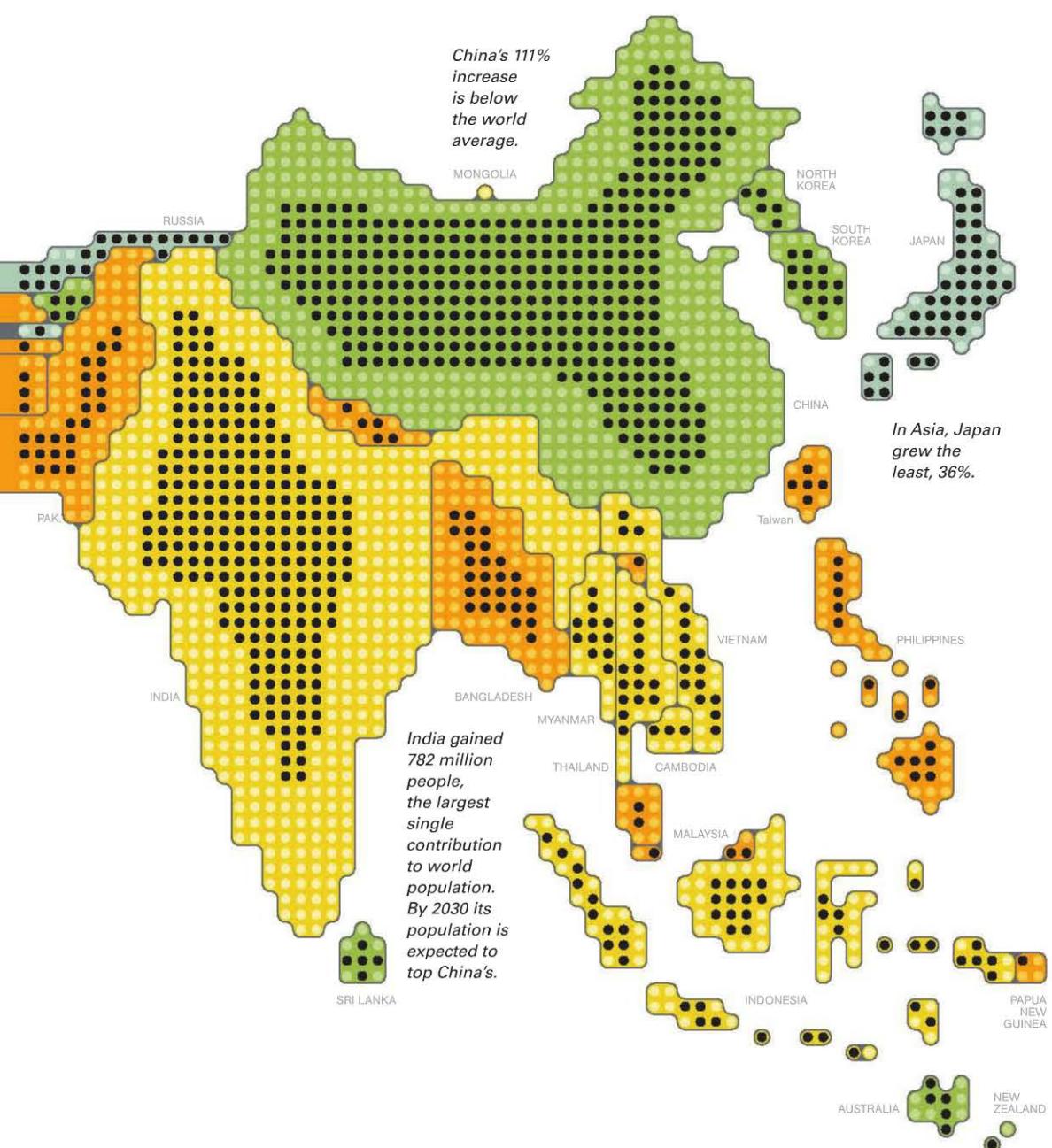
World population



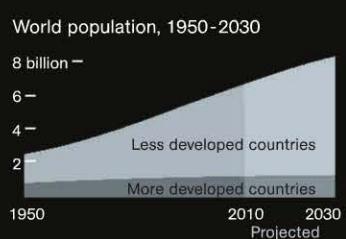
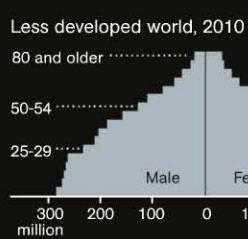
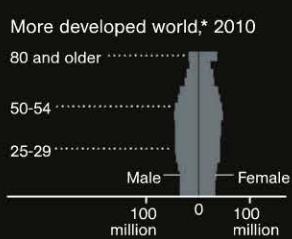
Youthful momentum

Age-distribution pyramids (right) show why the overwhelmingly young populations of developing countries will produce almost all the future population increase. Even with falling birthrates, the world's population is still growing by about 80 million people a year.

for more than 95 percent of future population growth.



JOHN TOMANO, NGM STAFF. CARTOGRAM: XNR PRODUCTIONS AND JOHN TOMANO
SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS



* "MORE DEVELOPED" IS DEFINED IN THESE UN STATISTICS AS THE U.S., CANADA, EUROPE, JAPAN, AUSTRALIA, AND NEW ZEALAND.

In Kireka, Uganda, women break rocks to be used in construction materials.





SEVEN BILLION 17

(Continued from page 13) high as improved hospitals have replaced the camps. In a single decade beginning in the early 1990s, the fertility rate fell from around three to less than two. Unlike in Kerala, half of all women in Andhra Pradesh remain illiterate.

Amarjit Singh, the current executive director of the NPSF, calculates that if the four biggest states of the Hindi belt had followed the Andhra Pradesh model, they would have avoided 40 million births—and considerable suffering. “Because 40 million were born, 2.5 million children died,” Singh says. He thinks if all India were to adopt high-quality programs to encourage sterilizations, in hospitals rather than camps, it could have 1.4 billion people in 2050 instead of 1.6 billion.

Critics of the Andhra Pradesh model, such as the Population Foundation’s Nanda, say Indians need better health care, particularly in rural areas. They are against numerical targets that pressure government workers to sterilize people or cash incentives that distort a couple’s choice of family size. “It’s a private decision,” Nanda says.

In Indian cities today, many couples are making the same choice as their counterparts in Europe or America. Sonalde Desai, a senior fellow at New Delhi’s National Council of Applied Economic Research, introduced me to five working women in Delhi who were spending most of their salaries on private-school fees and after-school tutors; each had one or two children and was not planning to have more. In a nationwide survey of 41,554 households, Desai’s team identified a small but growing vanguard of urban one-child families. “We were totally blown away at the emphasis parents were placing on their children,” she says. “It suddenly makes you understand—that is why fertility is going down.” Indian children on average are much better educated than their parents.

People packed into slums need help, but the problem that needs solving is poverty, not overpopulation.

That’s less true in the countryside. With Desai’s team I went to Palanpur, a village in Uttar Pradesh—a Hindi-belt state with as many people as Brazil. Walking into the village we passed a cell phone tower but also rivulets of

raw sewage running along the lanes of small brick houses. Under a mango tree, the keeper of the grove said he saw no reason to educate his three daughters. Under a neem tree in the center of the village, I asked a dozen farmers what would improve their lives most. “If we could get a little money, that would be wonderful,” one joked.

The goal in India should not be reducing fertility or population, Almas Ali of the Population Foundation told me when I spoke to him a few days later. “The goal should be to make the villages livable,” he said. “Whenever we talk of population in India, even today, what comes to our mind is the increasing numbers. And the numbers are looked at with fright. This phobia has penetrated the mind-set so much that all the focus is on reducing the number. The focus on people has been pushed to the background.”

It was a four-hour drive back to Delhi from Palanpur, through the gathering night of a Sunday. We sat in traffic in one market town after another, each one hopping with activity that sometimes engulfed the car. As we came down a viaduct into Moradabad, I saw a man pushing a cart up the steep hill, piled with a load so large it blocked his view. I thought of Ehrlich’s epiphany on his cab ride all those decades ago. People, people, people, people—yes. But also an overwhelming sense of energy, of striving, of aspiration.

The annual meeting of the Population Association of America (PAA) is one of the premier gatherings of the world’s demographers. Last April the (Continued on page 20)



Economic growth structures employment opportunities, which are often distributed differently across lines of gender, class, and race or ethnicity. Here, girls from rural countryside learn to be maids for the newly wealthy in Tongzhou District, Beijing, China.



HIGH-TECH CAREGIVERS

Japan—A talking robot helps 69-year-old Nabeshima Akiko shop in a test conducted by researchers from Keihanna Science City near Kyoto. Making up 23 percent of the population, the 29 million elderly in Japan far outnumber the young, an unprecedented situation that raises concerns about who—or what—will support the old in the years ahead.

(Continued from page 18) global population explosion was not on the agenda. “The problem has become a bit passé,” Hervé Le Bras says. Demographers are generally confident that by the second half of this century we will be ending one unique era in history—the population explosion—and entering another, in which population will level out or even fall.

But will there be too many of us? At the PAA meeting, in the Dallas Hyatt Regency, I learned that the current population of the planet could fit into the state of Texas, if Texas were settled as densely as New York City. The comparison made me start thinking like Leeuwenhoek. If in 2045 there are nine billion people living on the six habitable continents, the world population density will be a little more than half that of France today. France is

not usually considered a hellish place. Will the world be hellish then?

Some parts of it may well be; some parts of it are hellish today. There are now 21 cities with populations larger than ten million, and by 2050 there will be many more. Delhi adds hundreds of thousands of migrants each year, and those people arrive to find that “no plans have been made for water, sewage, or habitation,” says Shailaja Chandra. Dhaka in Bangladesh and Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are 40 times larger today than they were in 1950. Their slums are filled with desperately poor people who have fled worse poverty in the countryside.

Whole countries today face population pressures that seem as insurmountable to us as India’s did to Ehrlich in 1966. Bangladesh

is among the most densely populated countries in the world and one of the most immediately threatened by climate change; rising seas could displace tens of millions of Bangladeshis. Rwanda is an equally alarming case. In his book *Collapse*, Jared Diamond argued that the genocidal massacre of some 800,000 Rwandans in 1994 was the result of several factors, not only ethnic hatred but also overpopulation—too many farmers dividing the same amount of land into increasingly small pieces that became inadequate to support a farmer's family. "Malthus's worst-case scenario may sometimes be realized," Diamond concluded.

Many people are justifiably worried that Malthus will finally be proved right on a global scale—that the planet won't be able to feed nine billion people. Lester Brown, founder of Worldwatch Institute and now head of the Earth Policy Institute in Washington, believes food shortages could cause a collapse of global civilization. Human beings are living off natural capital, Brown argues, eroding soil and depleting groundwater faster than they can be replenished. All of that will soon be cramping food production. Brown's Plan B to save civilization would put the whole world on a wartime footing, like the U.S. after Pearl Harbor, to stabilize climate and repair the ecological damage. "Filling the family planning gap may be the most urgent item on the global agenda," he writes, so if we don't hold the world's population to eight billion by reducing fertility, the death rate may increase instead.

Eight billion corresponds to the UN's lowest projection for 2050. In that optimistic scenario, Bangladesh has a fertility rate of 1.35 in 2050, but it still has 25 million more people than it does today. Rwanda's fertility rate also falls below the replacement level, but its population still rises to well over twice what it was before the genocide. If that's the optimistic

It's too late to keep the new middle class of 2030 from being born. But it's not too late to change the ways we all consume.

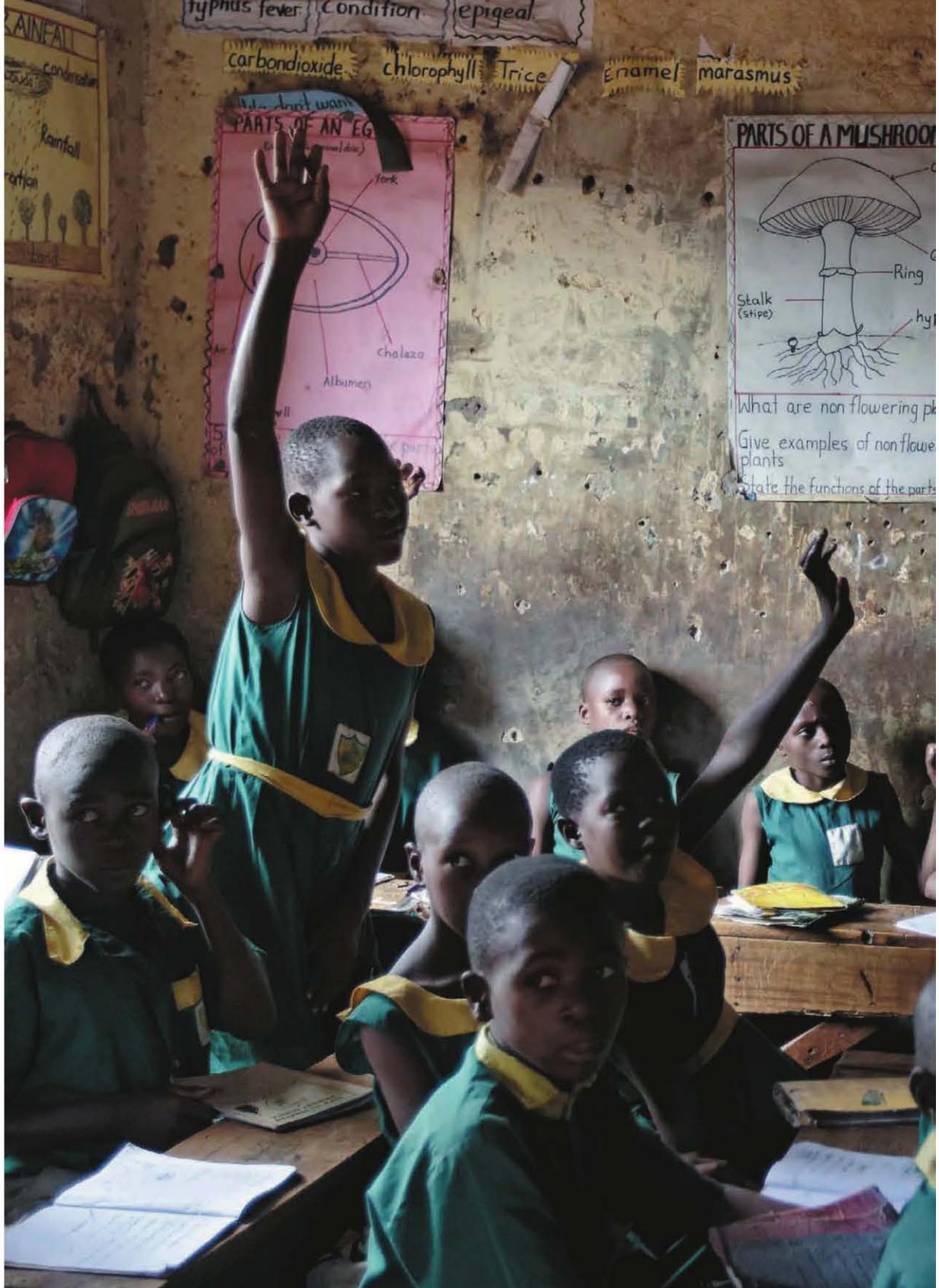
scenario, one might argue, the future is indeed bleak.

But one can also draw a different conclusion—that fixating on population numbers is not the best way to confront the future. People packed into slums need help, but the problem that needs solving is pov-

erty and lack of infrastructure, not overpopulation. Giving every woman access to family planning services is a good idea—"the one strategy that can make the biggest difference to women's lives," Chandra calls it. But the most aggressive population control program imaginable will not save Bangladesh from sea level rise, Rwanda from another genocide, or all of us from our enormous environmental problems.

Global warming is a good example. Carbon emissions from fossil fuels are growing fastest in China, thanks to its prolonged economic boom, but fertility there is already below replacement; not much more can be done to control population. Where population is growing fastest, in sub-Saharan Africa, emissions per person are only a few percent of what they are in the U.S.—so population control would have little effect on climate. Brian O'Neill of the National Center for Atmospheric Research has calculated that if the population were to reach 7.4 billion in 2050 instead of 8.9 billion, it would reduce emissions by 15 percent. "Those who say the whole problem is population are wrong," Joel Cohen says. "It's not even the dominant factor." To stop global warming we'll have to switch from fossil fuels to alternative energy—regardless of how big the population gets.

The number of people does matter, of course. But how people consume resources matters a lot more. Some of us leave much bigger footprints than others. The central challenge for the future of people and the planet is how to raise (*Continued on page 26*)



A day and boarding school in the Nakulabye neighborhood of Kampala, Uganda. Youth account for the largest demographic in developing nations such as this.

CONSUMPTION

Wealthy nations use the most

Appetites of the Seven Billion

How much impact does each country have on Earth's resources? One way to approximate a nation's consumption is to look at its gross domestic product (GDP)—the total production of goods and services in a year by its residents, firms, and government. In this cartogram, countries are sized according to their GDP for 2009. Black dots show GDP in 1980, or latest year available; light dots show growth since then. Each dot represents \$20 billion.* A country's color indicates its GDP per person (detailed in the key below).



*TO COMPARE THE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT OF THE COUNTRIES ON THIS MAP, GDP WAS CONVERTED TO CONSTANT INTERNATIONAL DOLLARS USING PURCHASING POWER PARITY RATES. IN THIS CONVERSION AN INTERNATIONAL DOLLAR HAS THE SAME PURCHASING POWER THAT A U.S. DOLLAR HAS IN THE UNITED STATES.

The world's gross domestic product* more than doubled from 1980 to 2009.

Economic development in China and India accounts for much of the recent rise and will continue to drive it. Global economic growth, and the improved standard of living it offers, means that resources are being consumed at record levels.

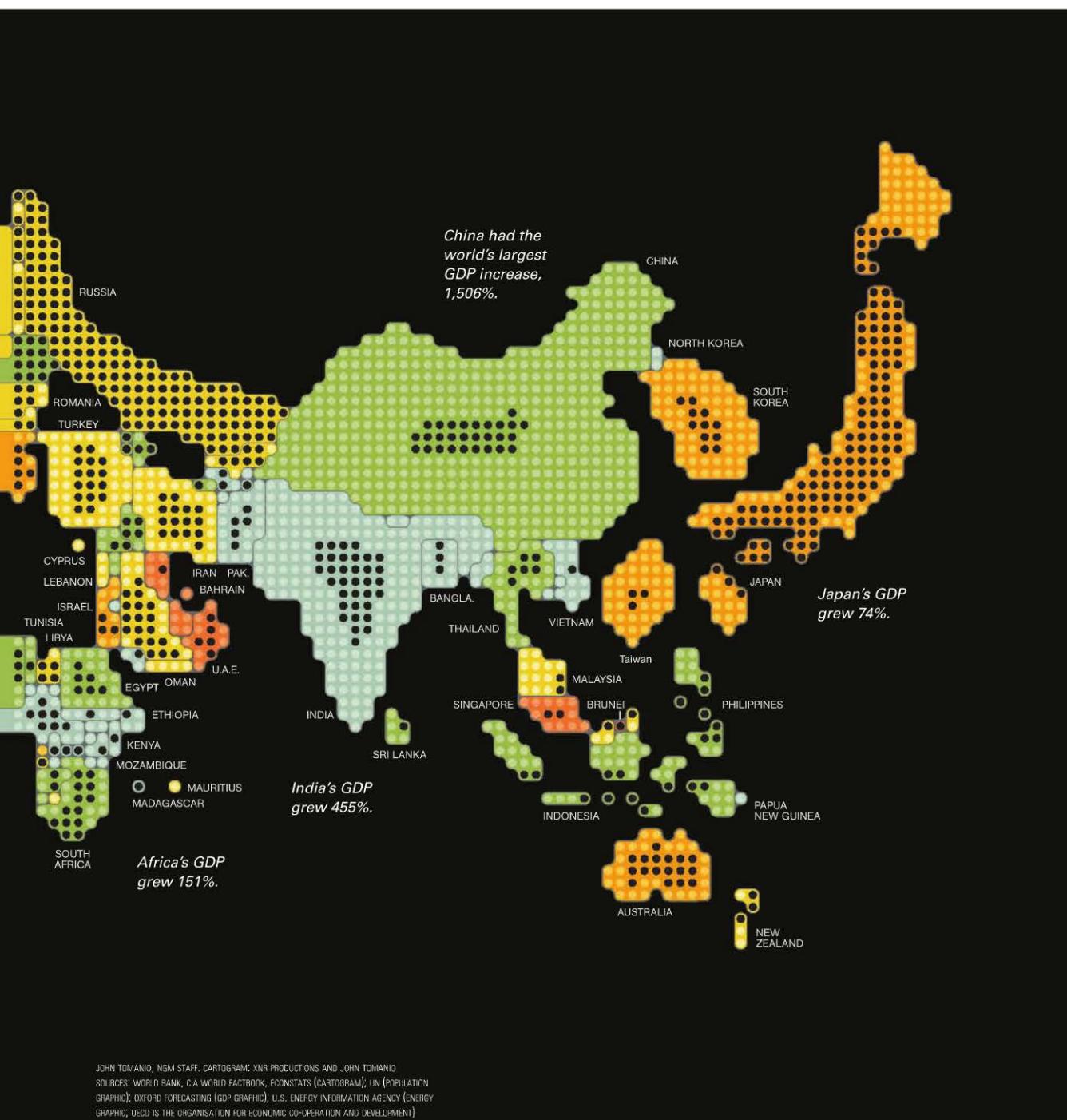
World GDP

\$72.5 trillion
2009
\$29.8 trillion
1980

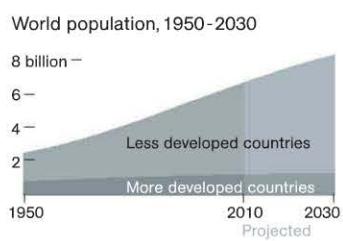
Demand on natural resources will continue to increase.

Earth's finite resources will be stressed both by rising prosperity and sheer numbers of people (graphs, right). The consumption of resources now enjoyed in the wealthiest nations will be difficult to sustain worldwide.

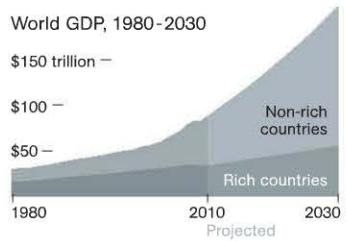
resources now, but emerging economies are catching up fast.



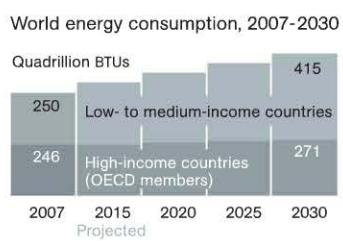
JOHN TOMANO, NGM STAFF; CARTOGRAM: XNR PRODUCTIONS AND JOHN TOMANO
SOURCES: WORLD BANK, CIA WORLD FACTBOOK, ECONSTATS (CARTOGRAM); UN (POPULATION GRAPHIC); OXFORD FORECASTING (GDP GRAPHIC); U.S. ENERGY INFORMATION AGENCY (ENERGY GRAPHIC); OECD IS THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT



"MORE DEVELOPED" IS DEFINED IN THESE UN STATISTICS AS THE U.S., CANADA, EUROPE, JAPAN, AUSTRALIA, AND NEW ZEALAND.



"RICH" INCLUDES THE UN'S MORE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES PLUS CYPRUS, HONG KONG, ISRAEL, SINGAPORE, SOUTH KOREA, AND TAIWAN.



OECD MEMBERS ARE THE UN'S MORE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES PLUS CHILE, ISRAEL, MEXICO, SOUTH KOREA, AND TURKEY.

(Continued from page 21) more of us out of poverty—the slum dwellers in Delhi, the subsistence farmers in Rwanda—while reducing the impact each of us has on the planet.

The World Bank has predicted that by 2030 more than a billion people in the developing world will belong to the “global middle class,” up from just 400 million in 2005. That’s a good thing. But it will be a hard thing for the planet if those people are eating meat and driving gasoline-powered cars at the same rate as Americans now do. It’s too late to keep the new middle class of 2030 from being born; it’s not too late to change how they and the rest of us will produce and consume food and energy. “Eating less meat seems more reasonable to me than saying, ‘Have fewer children!’” Le Bras says.

How many people can the Earth support? Cohen spent years reviewing all the research, from Leeuwenhoek on. “I wrote the book thinking I would answer the question,” he says. “I found out it’s unanswerable in the present state of knowledge.” What he found instead was an enormous range of “political numbers, intended to persuade people” one way or the other.

For centuries population pessimists have hurled apocalyptic warnings at the congenital optimists, who believe in their bones that humanity will find ways to cope and even improve its lot. History, on the whole, has so far favored the optimists, but history is no certain guide to the future. Neither is science. It

cannot predict the outcome of *People v. Planet*, because all the facts of the case—how many of us there will be and how we will live—depend on choices we have yet to make and ideas we have yet to have. We may, for example, says Cohen, “see to it that all children are nourished well enough to learn in school and are educated well enough to solve the problems they will face as adults.” That would change the future significantly.

The debate was present at the creation of population alarmism, in the person of Rev. Thomas Malthus himself. Toward the end of the book in which he formulated the iron law by which unchecked population growth leads to famine, he declared that law a good thing: It gets us off our duffs. It leads us to conquer the world. Man, Malthus wrote, and he must have meant woman too, is “inert, sluggish, and averse from labour, unless compelled by necessity.” But necessity, he added, gives hope:

“The exertions that men find it necessary to make, in order to support themselves or families, frequently awaken faculties that might otherwise have lain for ever dormant, and it has been commonly remarked that new and extraordinary situations generally create minds adequate to grapple with the difficulties in which they are involved.”

Seven billion of us soon, nine billion in 2045. Let’s hope that Malthus was right about our ingenuity.

Discussion Questions

- What are the strategies and factors that have contributed to increasing or decreasing populations around the world?
- What is the role of the consumption of material goods regarding the Earth's ability to support a rising population? Is consumption more of a problem than population, or is it the other way around?
- What perspectives does the article provide into the relationship between poverty and population growth? What are the ways that this relationship has been conceptualized and incorporated into policy-making decisions around the world?
- How is population growth linked to other sociocultural practices, processes, and configurations, such as subsistence, class, aging, gender, migration, and kinship? How do these things change in relation to one another?

Questions for Further Reflection

- What are the ways that shifts in population both create and limit opportunities for people around the

world? How are these opportunities unevenly distributed within and between countries, and what factors are at work to create this inequality?

- Why is population growth worrisome for some, but not for others? What are other problems that are discussed as equally or more pressing than population growth?
- At whom are population control policies often aimed, and why? Do you think such policies are ethical or necessary?
- Whose perspectives play the most dominant role in determining population control policies? How might we begin to understand the circumstances that lead to people's decisions (or the lack thereof) toward having children?
- Numbers and statistics feature prominently in this article and in articulating demographic trends in general. Why are statistics such a powerful way to represent things? What might a methodology looking solely at statistics obscure in our understanding of the world's population?



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DHARAVI: MUMBAI'S SHADOW

As more and more people come to live in cities—with about one third living in slum conditions—understanding the processes that shape urban spaces is becoming increasingly important. In this article, the author presents the various, often competing, perspectives that characterize an impoverished neighborhood in the Indian city of Mumbai. The contrast between the experiences of Dharavi's residents and the aspirations of city planners and developers reveals insights into the class interests, politics, and relations of power that shape contemporary urban spaces.

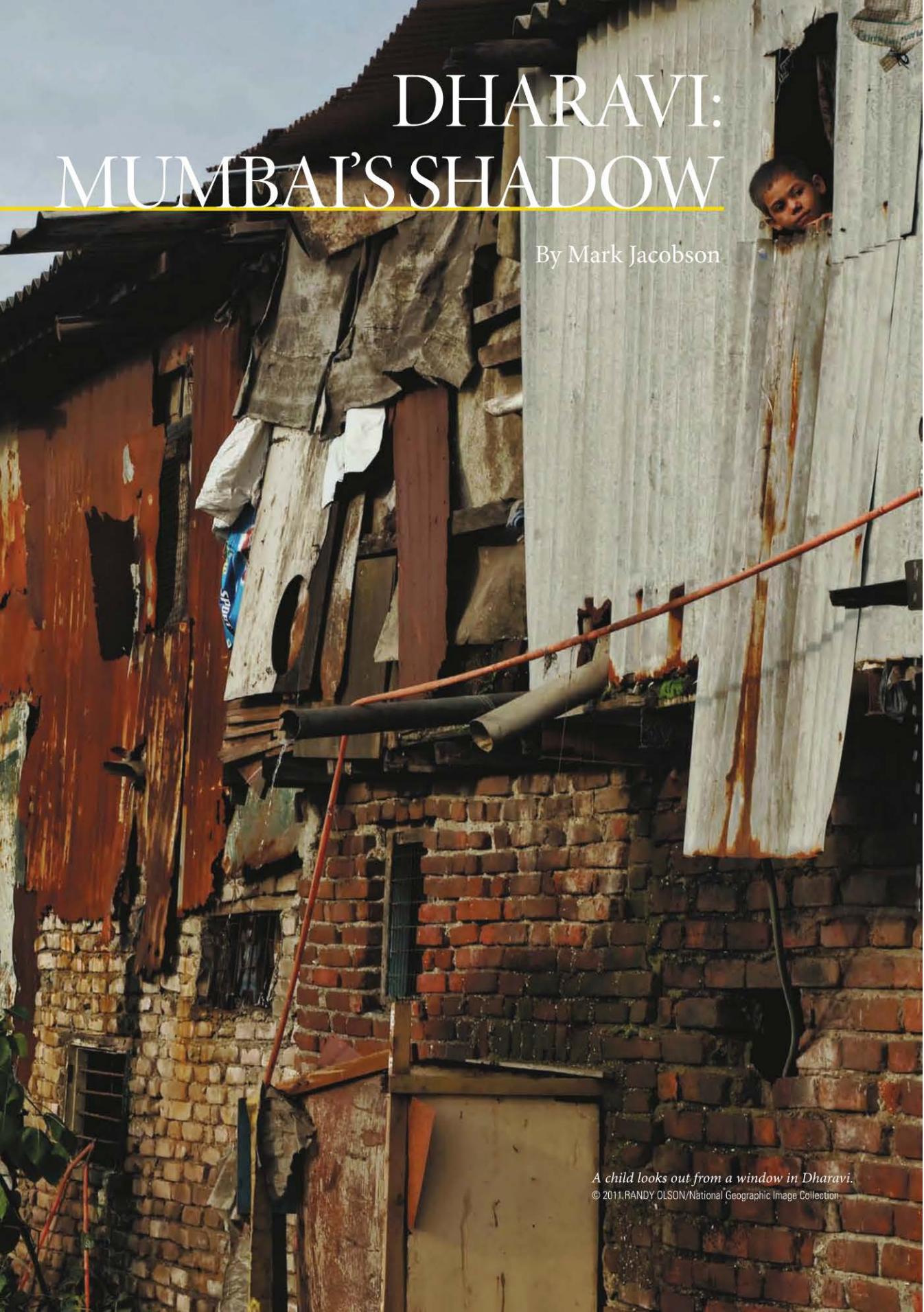
When reading this article, you should focus on:

- What is a “slum?” How are they created and what are the living and working conditions of such places? How many and which groups of people live there? How do people come to live there? How are informal sectors related to larger social, political, and economic processes both within and across nations?
- How do residents of slums view where they live? What are their lives like? How do they talk about their living conditions and make sense of their places in society and chances for economic prosperity?
- What are the various interests that politicians and businesspeople have in Dharavi? How and why do their proposals for solving the “problem” of Dharavi differ from the needs and desires of residents?



DHARAVI: MUMBAI'S SHADOW

By Mark Jacobson



A child looks out from a window in Dharavi.
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The chance to earn a few dollars a day — and save for family and future — draws laborers from across India to Dharavi, whose off-the-books, largely unregulated industries churn out some 500 million dollars' worth of goods. Here, young men are breaking down discarded technological devices. Such work is often done by hand, increasing the risk of injury and exposure to the harmful metals and compounds within.

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MUMBAI'S POLITICS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND DISPLACEMENT.

All cities in India are loud, but nothing matches the 24/7 decibel level of Mumbai, the former Bombay, where the traffic never stops and the

horns always honk. Noise, however, is not a problem in Dharavi, the teeming slum of one million souls, where as many as 18,000 people crowd into a single acre. By nightfall, deep inside the maze of lanes too narrow even for the *putt-putt* of auto rickshaws, the slum is as still as a verdant glade. Once you get accustomed to sharing 300 square feet of floor with 15 humans and an uncounted number of mice, a strange sense of relaxation sets in—ah, at last a moment to think straight.

Dharavi is routinely called “the largest slum in Asia,” a dubious attribution sometimes conflated into “the largest slum in the world.” This is not true. Mexico City’s Neza-Chalco-Itza barrio has four times as many people. In Asia, Karachi’s Orangi Township has surpassed Dharavi. Even in Mumbai, where about half of the city’s swelling 12 million population lives in what is euphemistically referred to as “informal” housing, other slum pockets rival Dharavi in size and squalor.

Dharavi remains unique among slums.

Yet Dharavi remains unique among slums. A neighborhood smack in the heart of Mumbai, it retains the emotional and historical pull of a

subcontinental Harlem—a square-mile center of all things, geographically, psychologically, spiritually. Its location has also made it hot real estate in Mumbai, a city that epitomizes India’s hopes of becoming an economic rival to China. Indeed, on a planet where half of humanity will soon live in cities, the forces at work in Dharavi serve as a window not only on the future of India’s burgeoning cities, but on urban space everywhere.

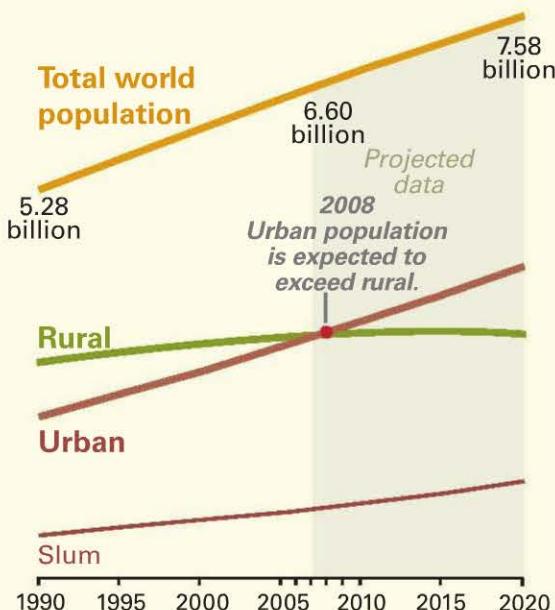
Ask any longtime resident—some families have been here for three or more generations—how Dharavi came to be, and they’ll say, “We built it.” This is not far off. Until the late 19th century, this area of Mumbai was mangrove swamp inhabited by Koli fishermen. When the swamp filled in (with coconut leaves, rotten fish, and human waste), the Kolis were deprived of their fishing grounds—they would

*Adapted from “Dharavi: Mumbai’s Shadow City”
by Mark Jacobson: National Geographic Magazine,
May 2007.*

A RISING TIDE OF SLUM DWELLERS

Next year, for the first time in history, the number of people living in cities is projected to surpass those in rural areas. And odds are the person who tips the momentous urban-rural balance will be moving into a slum.

The United Nations defines a slum as an urban area where most residents live in crowded, illegal housing that lacks clean water and adequate sanitation. Today the UN estimates that more than a billion people live in slums—a third of the urban population—with the number expected to swell as the rural exodus continues. Without improvement in basic infrastructure, aid officials warn that a “silent tsunami” of illness and death could overwhelm



soon shift to bootlegging liquor—but room became available for others. The Kumbhars came from Gujarat to establish a potters’ colony. Tamils arrived from the south and opened tanneries. Thousands traveled from Uttar Pradesh to work in the booming textile industry. The result is the most diverse of slums, arguably the most diverse neighborhood in Mumbai, India’s most diverse city.

Stay for a while on the three-foot-wide lane of Rajendra Prasad Chawl, and you become acquainted with the rhythms of the place. The morning sound of devotional singing is followed by the rush of water. Until recently few people in Dharavi had water hookups. Residents such as Meera Singh, a wry woman who has lived on the lane for 35 years, used to walk a mile to get water for the day’s cleaning and cooking. At the distant spigot she would have to pay the local “goons” to fill her buckets. This is how it works in the bureaucratic twilight zone of informal housing. Deprived of public services because of their illegal status, slum dwellers often find themselves at the mercy of the “land mafia.” There are water goons, and electricity goons. In this regard, the residents of Rajendra Prasad Chawl are

fortunate. These days, by DIY hook or crook, nearly every household on the street has its own water tap. And today, like every day, residents open their hoses to wash down the lane as they stand in the doorways of their homes to brush their teeth.

This is how Dharavi wakes up. On 90 Feet Road, named for its alleged width (even if 60 Feet Road, the slum’s other main drag, is considerably wider), the cab drivers coax their battered Fiats to life. In the potters’ neighborhood, black smoke is already pouring from six-foot-square kilns. By the mucky industrial canal, the recyclers are in full swing. In Dharavi nothing is considered garbage. Ruined plastic toys are tossed into massive grinders, chopped into tiny pieces, melted down into multicolored pellets, ready to be refashioned into knockoff Barbie dolls. Here every cardboard box or 55-gallon oil drum has another life, and another one after that.

Mornings at Rajendra Prasad Chawl are equally hectic. With the eight furniture makers to whom she rents part of her apartment gone for the day, Meera Singh combs the hair of her grandchildren: Atul, 7, Kan-chan, 10, and Jyoti, 12. Soon the apartment,

home to 15, is empty, save for Meera and her twentysomething son, Amit, he of the dashing mustache and semi-hipster haircut. A couple of years ago, the Singh family, like everyone else in Dharavi, sat in front of the television to see local singer Abhijit Sawant win the first *Indian Idol* contest. But now Meera is watching her favorite TV personality, the orange-robed yoga master, Baba Ramdev, who demonstrates an anti-aging technique: rubbing your fingernails against each other at a rapid pace.

"Why listen to this fool?" dismisses Amit.

"You know nothing," Meera shoots back. "His hair is black, and he is more than 80 years old."

"Eighty? He's no more than 40. Don't fall for these cheating tricks."

Meera shakes her head. She gave up trying to talk sense to Amit long ago. "His head is in the clouds," she says. She wishes he'd get a job as did his brother Manoj, who sews jeans in one of Dharavi's *kaarkhanas*, or sweatshops. But this is not for him, Amit says. A thinker, he sees his life in terms of "a big picture." Central to this conceit is the saga of how the Singhs came to Dharavi in the first place. Members of the Kshatriyas, regarded as second only to Brahmans in the caste system, Amit's great uncles were *zamindars*, or landlords, in the service of the British. Stripped of privilege after independence, the family moved from Uttar Pradesh to Mumbai, where Amit's father worked in the textile mills. The collapse of the mills in the 1970s landed the family in Dharavi.

It is this story of chance and fate ("A hundred years ago we would have been bosses," he says) that spurs Amit's outsize sense of self. He's always got a dozen things going. There's his soap powder pyramid scheme, his real estate and employment agency gambits. New is his exterminator firm, for which he has distributed hundreds of handbills ("No bedbug! No rat!"), claiming to be Dharavi's "most trusted" vermin remover, despite having yet to exterminate one cockroach.

The people of Dharavi—they are my genuine heroes.

Also on Amit's agenda is the *Janhit Times*, a tabloid he envisions as a hard-hitting advocate of grassroots democracy. The first edition featured a story about an allegedly corrupt Dharavi policeman.

Amit's headline: "A Giant Bastard, a Dirty Corrupted Devil, and Uniformed Goon." Cooler heads, pointing out the policeman wielded a lethal lathi (bamboo nightstick), suggested a milder approach. Reluctantly Amit went with "A Fight for Justice."

Even though the paper has yet to print its first edition, Amit carries a handsome press pass, which he keeps with his stack of business cards. This leads his mother to remark, "That's you, many cards, but no businesses." Looking at her son, she says, "You are such a dreamer."

It is an assessment that Amit, who just decided to open a rental car agency in hopes of diversifying his portfolio in the mode of "a Richard Branson of Dharavi," does not dispute.

"Talk about doing something about Mumbai slums, and no one pays attention. Talk about Dharavi, and it is Mission Impossible, an international incident," says Mukesh Mehta as he enters the blond-paneled conference room of the Maharashtra State Administration Building. For nine years, Mehta, a 56-year-old architect and urban designer, has honed his plan for "a sustainable, mainstreamed, slum-free Dharavi." At today's meeting, after many PowerPoint presentations, the plan is slated for approval by the state chief minister, Vilasrao Deshmukh.

Dharavi is to be divided into five sectors, each developed with the involvement of investors, mostly nonresident Indians. Initially, 57,000 Dharavi families will be resettled into high-rise housing close to their current residences. Each family is entitled to 225 square feet of housing, with its own indoor plumbing. In return for erecting the "free" buildings, private firms will be given handsome incentives to build for-profit housing to be sold at (high) market rates.

"All that remains is the consent," Mehta tells Deshmukh, a sour-looking gentleman in a snow-white suit sitting with his advisers at the 40-foot conference table. Normally, it is required that 60 percent of Dharavi residents approve of the plan.

But Deshmukh announces that formal consent is not needed because Mehta's plan is a government-sponsored project. All he must do is give the residents a month to register complaints. "A 30-day window, not a day more," Deshmukh says with impatient finality.

Later, as his driver pilots his Honda Accord through traffic, Mehta is smiling. "This is a good day," he says. "A dream come true."

At first glance, Mehta, resident of an elegant apartment building on swank Napean Sea Road, a longtime member of the British Raj-era Bombay Gymkhana and Royal Bombay Yacht Club, does not appear to be a Dharavi dreamer.

"You could say I was born with a golden spoon in my mouth," he remarks at his West Bandra office overlooking the Arabian Sea. "My father came to Bombay from Gujarat without a penny and built a tremendous steel business. An astrologer told him his youngest son—me—would be the most successful one, so I was afforded everything." These perks included a top education, plus a sojourn in the U.S., where Mehta studied architecture at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

"For me, America has always been the inspiration," says Mehta, who made a fortune managing his father's steel business before deciding to develop real estate on Long Island's exclusive North Shore. "Great Gatsby country," he says, detailing how he built high-end houses and lived in Centre Island, a white community with "the richest of the rich"—such as Billy Joel, who recently listed his mansion for 37.5 million dollars.

"The slums were the furthest thing from my mind," Mehta says. This changed when he returned to Mumbai. He saw what everyone else did—that the city was filled with a few rich people, a vast number of poor people, and hardly anyone in the middle. This was most evident in the appalling housing situation. The

city was split between the Manhattan-priced high-rises that dotted the south Mumbai skyline and those brownish areas on the map marked with the letters ZP for *zopadpatti*, aka slums.

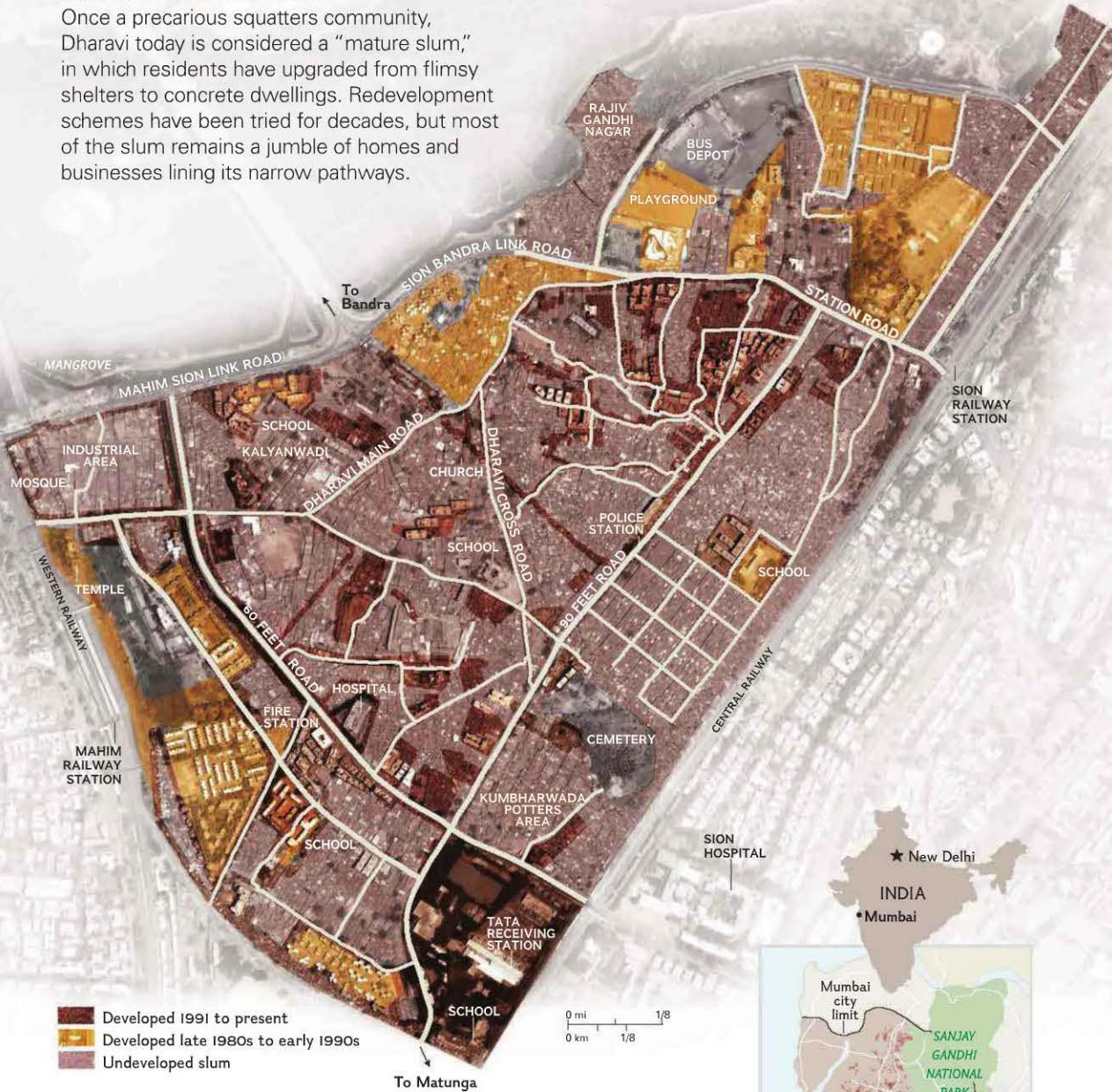
Downtown business people railed that the slums were choking the life out of the city, robbing it of its rightful place in the 21st century. After all, India was no longer a post-colonial backwater famous only for the most wretched people of the Earth and the gurus who appealed to gullible Beatles. Now, when a computer broke in Des Moines, the help desk was in Bangalore. Economists were predicting exactly when the Indian GNP was likely to surpass that of the United States. If Mumbai was going to achieve its stated destiny of becoming a world-class metropolis, a rival to China's soaring Shanghai, how could that happen when every bit of open space was covered with these eyesores, these human dumps where no one paid taxes? For Mukesh Mehta, if India were to become the ideal consumer society, it would have to develop a true middle class—and housing would be the engine. The slums would have to be reclaimed.

But which slums? There were so many of them. Then it jumped out, as clear as real estate's incontrovertible first axiom, *location, location, location*: Dharavi, right in the middle of the map. It was a quirk of geography and history, as any urban planner will tell you (the American inner city aside): Large masses of poor people are not supposed to be in the center of the city. They are supposed to be on the periphery, stacked up on the outskirts. Dharavi had once been on the northern fringe, but ever growing Mumbai had sprawled toward the famous slum, eventually surrounding it.

It didn't take a wizard to see the advantages of Dharavi's position. Served by two railway lines, it was ideally situated for middle-class commuters. Added to this was the advent of the Bandra-Kurla Complex, a global corporate enclave located directly across the remaining mangrove swamps, as close to Dharavi as Wall Street is to (Continued on page 38)

A CITY WITHIN A CITY

Once a precarious squatters community, Dharavi today is considered a "mature slum," in which residents have upgraded from flimsy shelters to concrete dwellings. Redevelopment schemes have been tried for decades, but most of the slum remains a jumble of homes and businesses lining its narrow pathways.

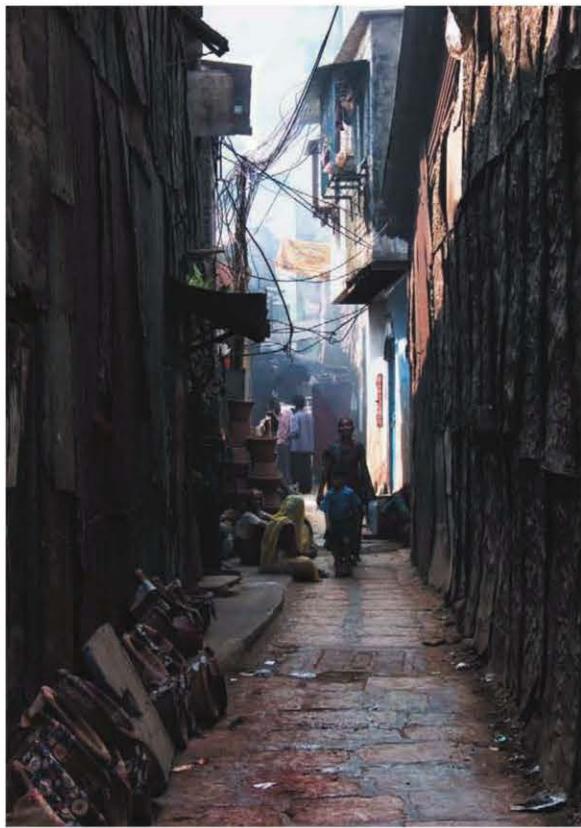


In a city where half of the 12 million inhabitants live in shantytowns, Dharavi ranks as perhaps the most well established of Mumbai's slums, with an intricate system of neighborhoods, work districts, schools, mosques, and churches. One of Asia's largest slums, it is home to a million people squeezed onto 550 acres of swampy landfill in the

heart of India's financial capital. Because of Dharavi's central location, just across from the Bandra-Kurla Complex, city officials want to raze the slum, move the poor to high-rises, and redevelop the area to attract more affluent residents. Because previous schemes have failed, leaving behind "vertical slums," many residents oppose the renewal plan.

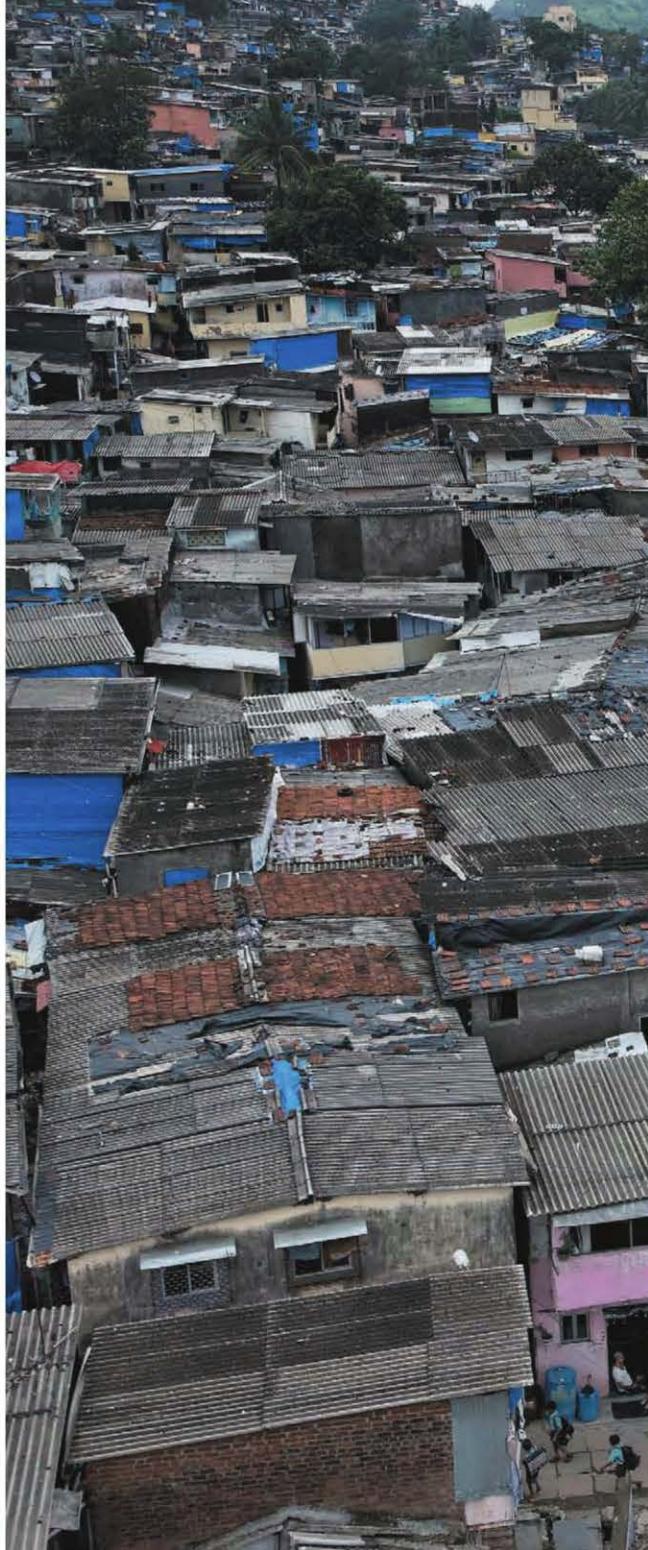


SOURCES: MUKESH MEHTA AND PRANJALI PRADHAN, MM CONSULTANTS; UN HABITAT (GRAPH); IMAGE BY DIGITALGLOBE. NGM MAPS



A woman and child in an alley in the potters area of Dharavi. Pottery is the traditional work of the Kumbhar caste, who set up their communal clay pits and kilns in the 1940s. The Kumbhars fear that any slum renewal will shrink their space or force them to relocate.

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Bisected by 60 Feet Road, Dharavi borders a mangrove swamp and the upscale Bandra neighborhood to the north.

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DHARAVI: MUMBAI'S SHADOW 37

(Continued from page 34) Brooklyn Heights. Sterile and kempt, the BKC was the future, right on the doorstep of the zopadpatti.

"I approached it as a developer. In other words, as a mercenary," says Mehta, satellite images of Dharavi spread across his desk. "But something happened. I opened an office in Dharavi, started talking to people, seeing who they were, how hard they worked, and how you could be there for months and never once be asked for a handout."

It was then, Mehta says, "I had an epiphany. I asked myself if these people were any different from my father when he first came from Gujarat. They have the same dreams. That was when I decided to dedicate the rest of my life to fixing the slums. Because I realized: The people of Dharavi—they are my genuine heroes."

Back on rajendra prasad chawl, news of the plan's approval was met with a decidedly mixed response. Meera Singh barely looked up from Baba Ramdev's lecture. She had heard often the stories about Dharavi's supposed transformation. Nothing much ever happened. Why should Mukesh Mehta's scheme be any different? Moreover, what reason would possess her to move into a 225-square-foot apartment, even if it were free? She has nearly 400 square feet. "Informal housing" has been good to her. She receives 1,100 rupees a month from the furniture workers and another thousand from renting her basement. Why should she give this up for a seven-story apartment building where she'll be saddled with fees, including "lift" charges? She doesn't like to ride in elevators. They give her the creeps.

Amit Singh was more outspoken. Mehta's plan was nothing more than "a scam, a chunk of fool's gold." Amit was already drafting an editorial in the *Janhit Times* demanding a citizen's arrest of "the gangster Mehta."

In a place with one toilet for every few hundred people (the so-called politics of defecation is a perennial hot button in India), the prospect

of having one's own bathroom would seem to be a powerful selling point for the plan. But even if a stir broke out last summer when gurus declared that the waters of Mahim Creek, the slum's reeking unofficial public toilet, had miraculously turned "sweet" (leading to much gastro-intestinal trauma), many Dharavi locals were unmoved by the idea of a personal loo.

"What need do I have of my own toilet?" asks Nagamma Shilpiri, who came to Dharavi from Andhra Pradesh 20 years ago and now lives with her crippled father and 13 other relatives in two 150-square-foot rooms. Certainly, Shilpiri is embarrassed by the lack of privacy when she squats in the early morning haze beside Mahim Creek. But the idea of a personal flush toilet offends her. To use all that water for so few people seems a stupid, even sinful, waste.

Everyone in Dharavi had their own opinion about how and why the plan was concocted to hurt them in particular. The most nuanced assessment came from Shaikh Mobin, a plastics recycler in his mid-30s. Mobin has lived his whole life in Dharavi, but he'd never call himself a slum dweller. His recycling business, started by his grandfather, passed to his father, and now to him ("the post-consumer economy, turning waste into wealth," he says), had made Mobin a relatively rich man. He and his family live in a marble-floored flat at the 13-floor Diamond Apartments, "Dharavi's number one prestige address."

Mobin is a supporter of development in Dharavi. Change is necessary. Polluting industries like recycling have no business being in the center of a modern metropolis. Mobin was already making plans to move his factory several miles to the north. But this didn't mean he is happy with what is happening in the place of his birth.

Much of his critique is familiar. The government's failure to create housing for middle-income people was responsible for the existence of the slums, Mobin contends. Many people in Dharavi make enough money to live elsewhere, "a house like you see on TV." But

since no such housing exists, they are doomed to the slum. Mobin doubts Mukesh Mehta's private developers will help. All over Dharavi are reminders of developmental disasters. Near Dharavi Cross Road, members of

the L.P.T. Housing Society, their houses torn down in preparation for their promised apartments, have spent the past eight years living in a half-finished building without steady electricity or water, at the mercy of the goons and the malarial Mumbai heat.

But when it comes down to it, Mobin says, Dharavi's dilemma is at once much simpler and infinitely more complex: "This is our home." This is what people such as Chief Minister Deshmukh and Mukesh Mehta will never understand, Mobin says. "Mukesh Mehta says I am his hero, but what does he know of my life? He is engaged in *shaikhchilli*, which is dreaming, dreaming in the day. Does it occur to him that we do not wish to be part of his dream?"

Such sentiments cause Mukesh Mehta distress. "If someone calls me a dreamer, I plead guilty," he says, finishing his crème caramel at the Bombay Yacht Club. To be sure, Mehta has made some fanciful statements regarding Dharavi's future. His idea to install a golf driving range has met with widespread guffaws. "Golf? What is this golf?" asked Shilpiri's crippled father. The other day Mehta was fantasizing about constructing a 120,000-seat cricket stadium in the slum. Asked where fans would park, Mehta looked stricken.

"Parking! Oh, my God," he exclaimed. "I'm going to be up all night trying to figure that out."

But being a dreamer doesn't mean he is "unrealistic," Mehta says. He has been around the block of India's bruising bureaucracy. He has learned hard lessons along the way. One is that "sometimes the last thing people in power

Dharavi's dilemma is at once much simpler and infinitely more complex.

want is to get rid of slums." Much of what Mehta calls "slum perpetuation" has to do with the infamous "vote bank"—a political party, through a deep-rooted system of graft, lays claim to the vote of a particular

neighborhood. As long as the slum keeps voting the right way, it's to the party's advantage to keep the community intact. A settlement can remain in the same place for years, shelters passing from makeshift plastic tarps to corrugated metal to concrete. But one day, as in the case of Dharavi, the slum might find itself suddenly in the "wrong" place. Once that happens, the bulldozer is always a potential final solution. A few years ago, the Maharashtra government, under the direction of Chief Minister Deshmukh, in a spasm of upgrading supposedly aimed at closing the "world-class" gap, demolished 60,000 hutments, some in place for decades. As many as 300,000 people were displaced.

This, Mehta says, is what his plan is devised to avoid. "No one wants to be that unhappy guy driving the bulldozer." Preferring "the talking cure," Mehta says if anyone, anywhere, doesn't think his plan is the best possible outcome for Dharavi, he will sit with them for as long as it takes, to convince them. A few days later, at Kumbharwada, he got his chance.

To many, the Kumbhar potters are the heart and soul of Dharavi. Their special status derives not only from their decades-long residence but also from the integrity of their work. While Dharavi is famous for making use of things everyone throws away, the Kumbhars create the new.

Savdas family members have been Dharavi potters for generations, but Tank Ranchhod Savdas once imagined another kind of life. "I had big dreams," he says. "I thought I would be a lawyer." But Tank's father died in 1986,



On a streetcorner in Dharavi.

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and “as the oldest son I took up this business.” Not that he has any regrets. “During busy times, I make hundreds of pots a day, and I get pleasure from each one,” he says.

Recently, however, the formerly “Mr. Tank” has begun to fear for the future of Kumbhars in Dharavi. Increasing numbers of the community’s young men have become merchant seamen, or computer specialists at the Bandra-Kurla Complex. Kumbharwada is full of teenage boys who have never used a potter’s wheel, unthinkable only a few years ago.

And now there is this plan. Just talking about “a slum-free Dharavi” is enough to make Tank shake with anger. How dare anyone claim that Kumbharwada is “a slum” in need of rehabilitation! Kumbharwada is home to working people, men and women who have always made their own way. If Mukesh Mehta was so enamored of the U.S., couldn’t he see Kumbharwada was a sterling example of the supposed American dream?

“Look at my house,” Tank demands, showing off the 3,000-square-foot home and workshop he built and now shares with his two brothers and their families. “Why should we move from here, to there?”

By “there,” Tank means the Slum Rehabilitation Authority high-rise under construction behind Kumbharwada. Freshly painted, the building has a sprightly look, but soon lack of maintenance will turn it into a replica of every other SRA building: a decaying Stalinist-styled pile, covered with Rorschach-like mildew stains. Inside is a long, dank hallway with 18 apartments on either side, which Amit Singh calls “36 rooms of gloom.”

“That is a slum,” says Tank, “a vertical slum.” Told that Mehta says he’s willing to talk with anyone unhappy with the plan, Tank says, “Then bring him here. Tomorrow.”

On his cell phone from Hyderabad, Mehta, “not risk averse,” says “ten o’clock.” But he is skeptical the meeting will accomplish much.

I’ve offered them the moon and been repaid with crushing indifference.

He’s spoken with the potters many times. Proposals allowing them to keep the majority of their space have been rejected, as was his idea to maximize the potters’ profits by adding ornamental ceramics to

their traditional vessels and religious objects. “I’ve offered them the moon and been repaid with crushing indifference,” Mehta bemoans. Plus, he never knows which alleged leadership group represents whom. It’s a frustrating situation that one afternoon causes the Americanized Mehta to shout, “Your trouble is you have too many chiefs and not enough Indians!”

Yet when ten o’clock rolls around, there he is, impeccably attired in a tan suit, cuff links gleaming in the sunlight, in the courtyard in front of Tank’s house. Perhaps a hundred people have assembled, sitting on plastic chairs. Most are potters, but there are others, too, such as Amit Singh and several colleagues from the *Janhit Times*. After politely listening to Mehta’s short form of the plan (he has brought his PowerPoint presentation, but sunlight prevents its deployment), the objections begin. It is outrageous that this was even being discussed, people say. “We have been making pots for 130 years,” one man shouts. “This land is ours.”

Mehta is sympathetic to the Kumbhar position. But there are a few “realities” they must understand. First, the assumption that the community owns the Kumbharwada grounds by virtue of the British Raj-era Vacant Land Tenancy act is incorrect. Mehta says the Kumbhars’ long-term lease ran out when the act was repealed in 1974. Also, there is the pollution issue. Every day the potters’ brick kilns send huge black clouds into the air. It’s gotten so bad that nearby Sion Hospital is complaining that the smoke is aggravating patients’ pulmonary ailments.

The Kumbhars are vulnerable on these issues, Mehta says. Chief Minister Deshmukh would be within his rights (*Continued on page 46*)





Two men on the balcony of a tenement. If city planners prevail, high-rise residential blocks, like this, and industrial parks will replace the dense web of metal-roofed homes and shops in Dharavi.

© 2008 ABRAHAM NOWITZ/National Geographic Image Collection

DARAVI MEMORIES SHADOW 43





A Dharavi street by night.

© 2011 RANDY OLSON/National Geographic Image Collection

(Continued from page 41) to send the dreaded bulldozers rolling down 90 Feet Road. The Kumbhars should trust him, Mehta says. His very presence proves his sincerity. "People said if I came here, I should wear a hard hat. But you see me, bareheaded." At the very least, the Kumbhars should allow him to conduct a census of the area. This information would help him fight for them, get them the best deal.

With the return of the late monsoon rains, the session breaks up. Mehta gets back into his chauffeured car feeling upbeat. "A good meeting," he says. The fact that the Kumbhars seemed to agree to the census was a good sign, Mehta says, driving off through puddles.

Back at Kumbharwada, Tank is asked what he has learned from the meeting. Surrounded by perhaps 20 potters, Tank says, "We have learned that Mukesh Mehta's plan is of no use to us." Would they participate in the census? "We'll think about it," says Tank.

In any event, there is no time to talk about it now. The meeting has taken almost two hours. With orders piling up, there is work to be done.

Mukesh Mehta's plan is scheduled to be implemented sometime this year, not that Dharavi is excessively fixated on it during holiday season, a time to, as a sign in the window of Jayanthian fireworks store on

90 Feet Road says, "enjoy the festivals with an atom bomb." Today is Ganesh Chaturthi, and much of Dharavi (the Hindus, anyway) are in the streets beating giant drums and blaring Bollywood-inflected songs on car-battery-powered speakers in celebration of Lord Ganesh. Ganesh, the roly-poly elephant god, has special significance in Dharavi, being considered the deity of "removing obstacles."

One such obstacle is in evidence at the outset of the parade marking the end of the ten-day festival for which people make giant *murtis*, or likenesses, of the god. These effigies are borne through the streets to Mahim Beach and then tossed into the water. One group has constructed a ten-foot-high Ganesh from silvery papier-mâché. They have not, however, bothered to measure the narrow lane through which the Ganesh will need to pass to reach Dharavi Main Road. After much discussion and a tortuous 50-foot journey during which many Dharian "obstacles," including a ganglia of illegally connected electric wires, needed to be removed, the murti makes it through with a quarter inch to spare. Not a bit of the god's silvery skin is nicked.

As the Ganesh is lifted onto a flatbed truck for its journey to Mahim Beach, one resident turns and says, "You see. The Ganesh is undamaged. This is our talent. We deal with what is."

Discussion Questions

- What are the different narratives about how Dharavi developed? Why is Dharavi now of interest to politicians and businesspeople?
- In what ways does living and working in the “informal sector” create opportunities for people, even as it opens them up to exploitation, unsafe conditions, and continued marginalization?
- What are the everyday lives of Dharavi’s residents like? How do they make a living? What are the ways that they attain satisfaction and happiness amidst living in Dharavi?

Questions for Further Reflection

- What challenges does the case of Dharavi illustrate for the increasing worldwide trend of urban living? Considering the different voices expressed in this article (and in “Seven Billion”), what do you see as an equitable approach to the problems that increasing population and urbanization present?

- How do those in positions of power view slums differently than do those who live there? What do their views or desires have in common? How do they differ in terms of who benefits from policies or development plans that either want to keep the slum in place or get rid of it? What are the various perspectives on how to alleviate poverty and social exclusion, and to foster economic prosperity?
- Development projects and gentrification occur in countries all over the world. Using this article as a case study, what are some of the reasons why such projects can actually disadvantage those they purport to help, and sometimes leave people worse off than before? To what extent did developers take seriously the needs, desires, and experiences of Dharavi’s residents? How do these two parties’ ways of thinking about Dharavi differ, and what may be the basis of such differences? Based on this, what kind of solution would you propose for mediating these groups’ demands?



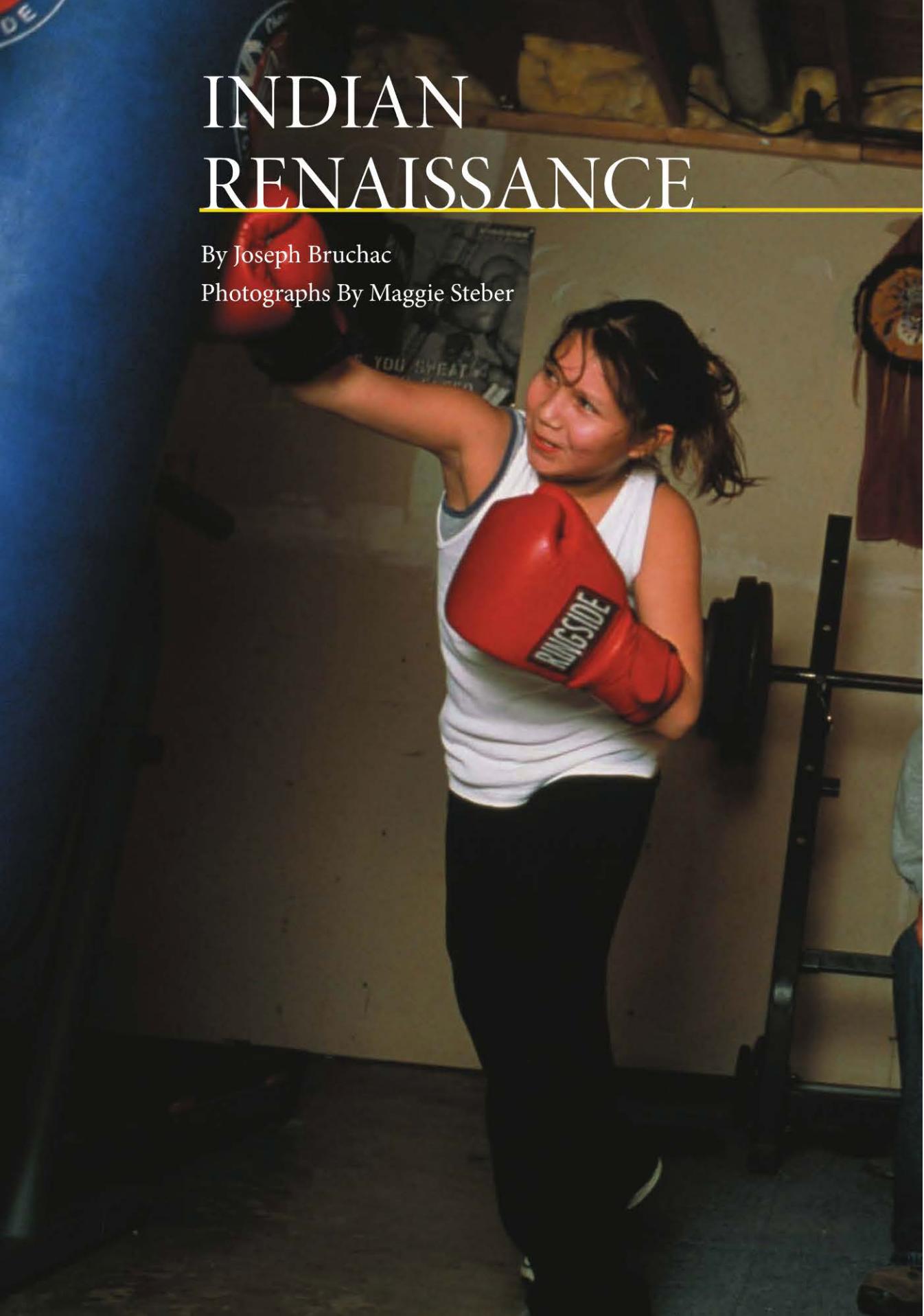
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INDIAN RENAISSANCE

By Joseph Bruchac

Photographs By Maggie Steber





INDIAN RENAISSANCE

A long history of oppression, that continues today, has affected irrevocably the status of American Indians, as attested by higher than average rates of poverty and the loss of native languages, knowledges, and practices. But in addition, many American Indian groups in the United States have sought ways to renew their cultural traditions, while also seeking political and economic empowerment. This article examines these emergent themes, providing a glimpse into the diversity of American Indian experiences and histories in the United States.

When reading this article, you should focus on:

- How are American Indians working to renew their cultural practices, beliefs, and identities around the U.S.? What effects has this had on their lives and communities, and what remains ahead?
- In what ways have past events shaped the current living conditions of American Indians?
- What are the avenues through which Indians are able to strengthen their communities and traditions, and continue their fight for social and political justice?

Lakota Indian girl practicing her boxing moves as instructor looks on.



American Indians hold a cleansing ceremony at a Smithsonian storage facility in Bronx, New York. Through social scientific research over the past century and a half, as well as through other means, many important pieces of American Indian groups' material culture have come to rest in university or museum archives. The passage of the Native American Graves Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 established the rights of American Indian groups to reclaim the human and material remains taken from them in the past.

COUNTERING CENTURIES OF OPPRESSION AND NEGLECT, AMERICAN INDIANS

TRAVEL THE ROAD TO RENEWAL.

From the top of Coffee Butte in the land of the Cheyenne River Sioux, you can see 50 miles in every direction. As I circled my gaze, I could see black dots on the wide, grassy plain below. Buffalo. I picked out one herd, then another, another and another. A herd in each of the four directions: good omen.

"Look," said Dennis Rousseau, of the tribe's Game, Fish, and Parks Department, "over there."

I followed his stare to a group of brown specks on a ridge, two miles to our east. "Wild horses," he said. "Coming our way."

I watched as perhaps a dozen animals flowed toward us down the slope, smooth as rushing water. They were half a mile away, led by a brown stallion, head up, alert to any danger. Sure enough, distant as we were, the stallion caught wind of us. He stopped abruptly on top of a hill, stared, then turned, driving the horses before him, out of sight as quick as the flash of a hawk's wing.

Wild horses are back on the reservation after an absence of 140 years, trucked in from Nevada, where they were being shot at and killed by poachers only a few years ago. Their return, like seeing buffalo in all directions, was enough to stir the blood of at least one old East

A herd in
each of the four
directions:
good omen.

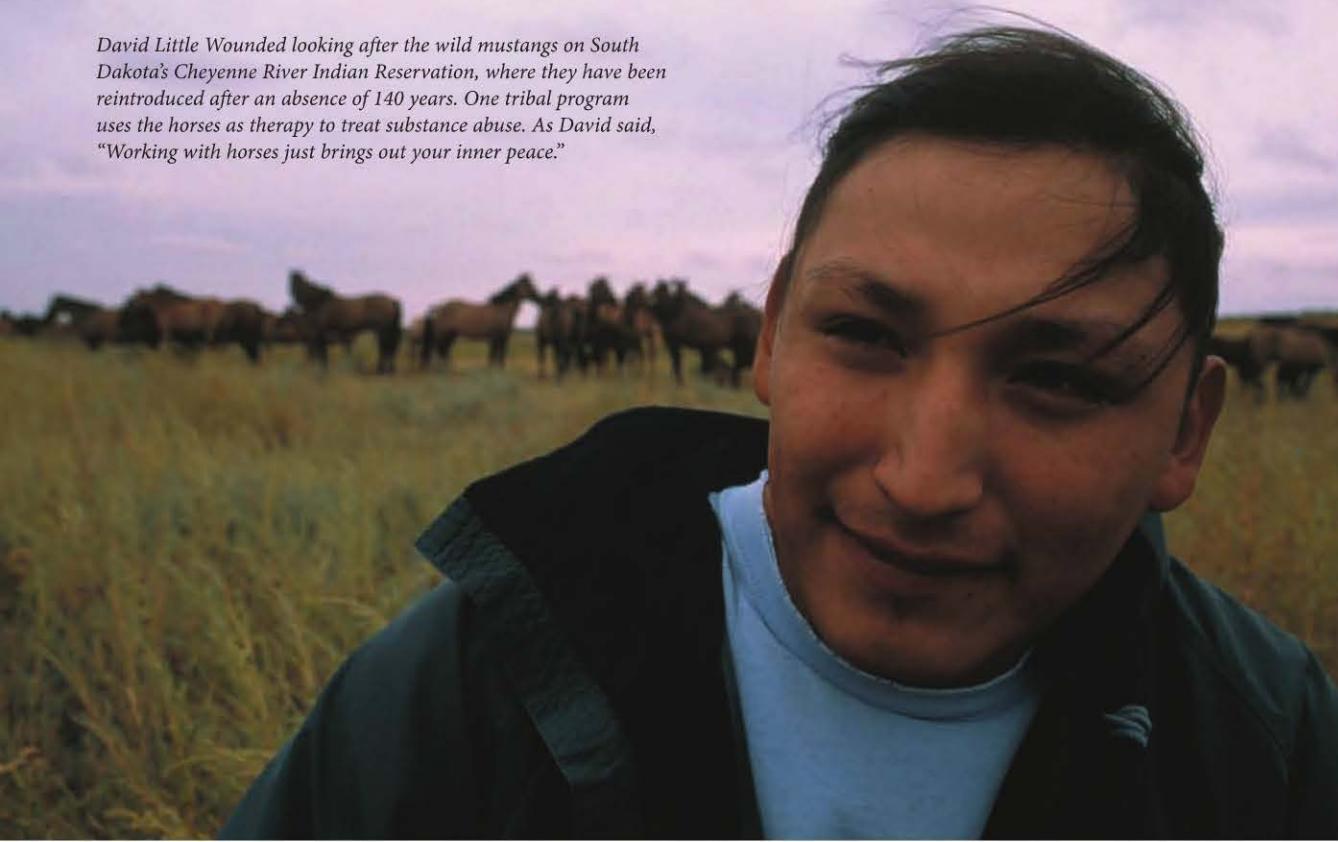
Coast Indian: me. For the first time in generations, "the buffalo, the elk, and the mustang are all back on the reservation," said Dennis, lowering his binoculars. "One of our holy men told me that means something really good is going to happen."

I'd come to Cheyenne River looking for something good: the same spirit of revival and hope that I'd heard about in Indian communities across the United States, from the stone-cold canyons of Manhattan to the quietest hogan in the desert Southwest. In a thousand small ways, that revival—cultural, political, economic, spiritual—may wind up transforming the lives of 4.1 million Native Americans, the vast majority of whom today live somewhere besides a reservation.

And yet, as I'd driven across South Dakota to get here, I'd expected this place to be different. Confined to some of the driest, most unforgiving real estate in North America, Sioux reservations on the Great Plains are among the poorest in the country. Just south of Cheyenne River, people on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

Adapted from "Indian Renaissance" by Joseph Bruchac: National Geographic Magazine, September 2004.

David Little Wounded looking after the wild mustangs on South Dakota's Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, where they have been reintroduced after an absence of 140 years. One tribal program uses the horses as therapy to treat substance abuse. As David said, "Working with horses just brings out your inner peace."



live on a third of what the average American earns and are three times as likely to be jobless. They also commit suicide twice as often. In this part of America, whole landscapes seem raw with the memory of what went on here in the late 19th century. This is the land of the Custer campaigns and the Ghost Dance, where Lakota Sioux resisted the coming of the whites and the loss of their sacred lands with every beat of their hearts. Sitting Bull's grave is out here.

Approaching Cheyenne River after sundown, I hit the search button on the radio and landed on the biggest station around—KLND, Indian owned and operated—just in time to catch a dedication. “For all you lovebirds out there, whether you’re snaggin’, shakin’, or married,” said the deejay. “Here’s Lil’ Kim!” If nothing else, young Americans of all colors have music in common: 50 Cent and Eminem are just as popular with Indians as they are with other American kids. Short hair, tattoos, and baggy pants are everywhere you look. Even adult men who used to wear shoulder-length

hair have gone to the buzz cut, in a quiet revolt against Indian stereotypes.

A while later, at my motel, I tuned in channel 30 on cable and saw an ad from Emmanuel Red Bear—who also goes by the Lakota name of Tatanka Iyotake, the same name as his great-great-grandfather, Sitting Bull—making it known that he is a certified Lakota language instructor, an experienced emcee for powwows, honorings, and giveaways, and is also available for suicide counseling and gang awareness workshops. It was a vision of hope that made me sit up in my chair.

The next day I caught another glimpse of hope, this time in black and white. On the wall of Dennis Rousseau’s office hangs one of those reservation maps I’ve grown familiar with over the years, showing the checkerboard pattern of lands once reserved for Indians. Today about half of the original 2.8-million-acre Cheyenne River reservation is in tribal hands; the rest was expropriated by federal allotment acts between 1887 and 1934 and sold. *(Continued on page 56)*

LIFE ON THE REZ

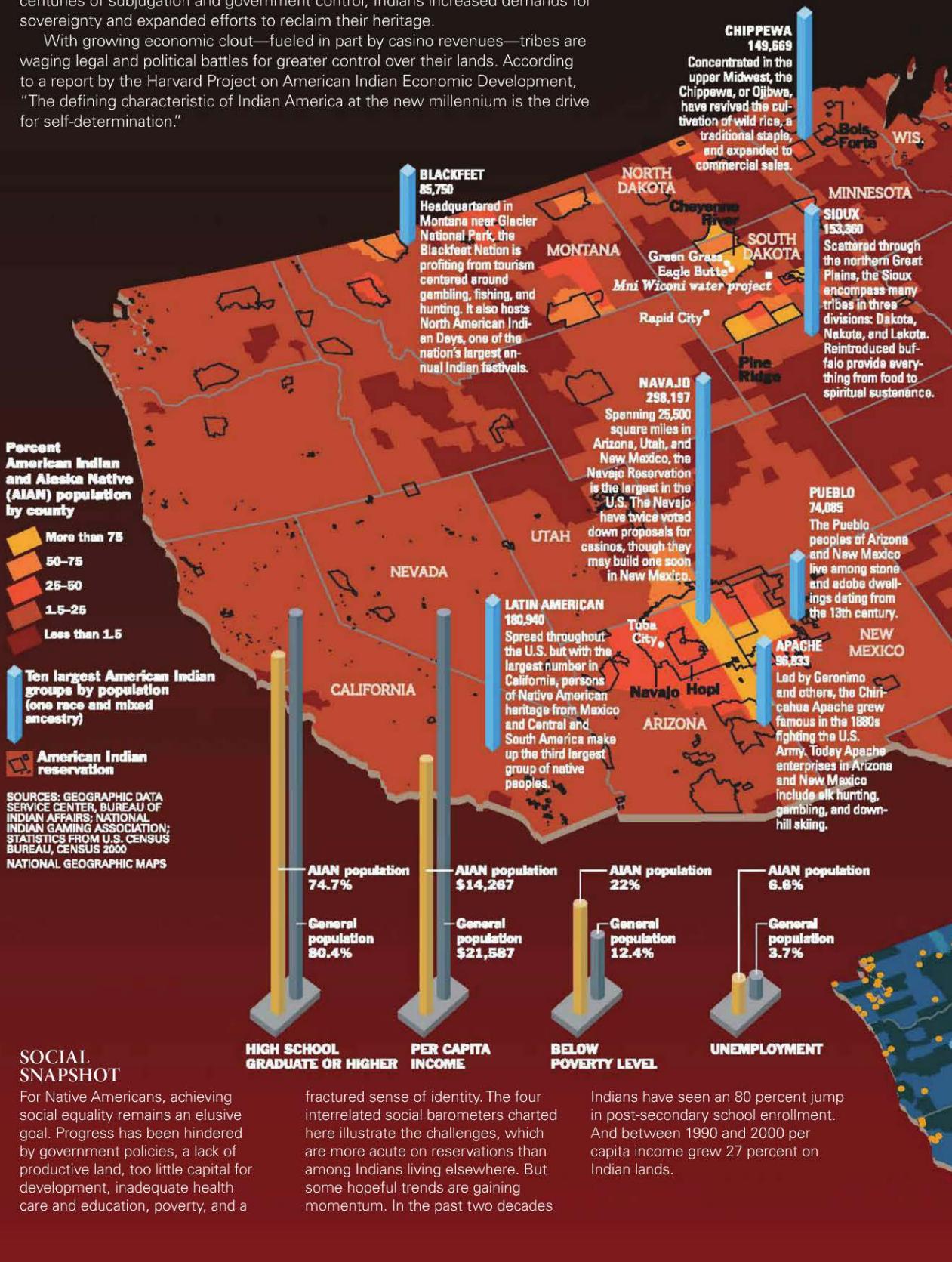
Children get lessons in calf roping as Sunday afternoon winds down in Tuba City, Arizona, on the Navajo Indian Reservation. The reservation, at 25,500 square miles—about the size of West Virginia—is the nation's largest. The Navajo Nation has about 250,000 members, more than half of whom live on the reservation.

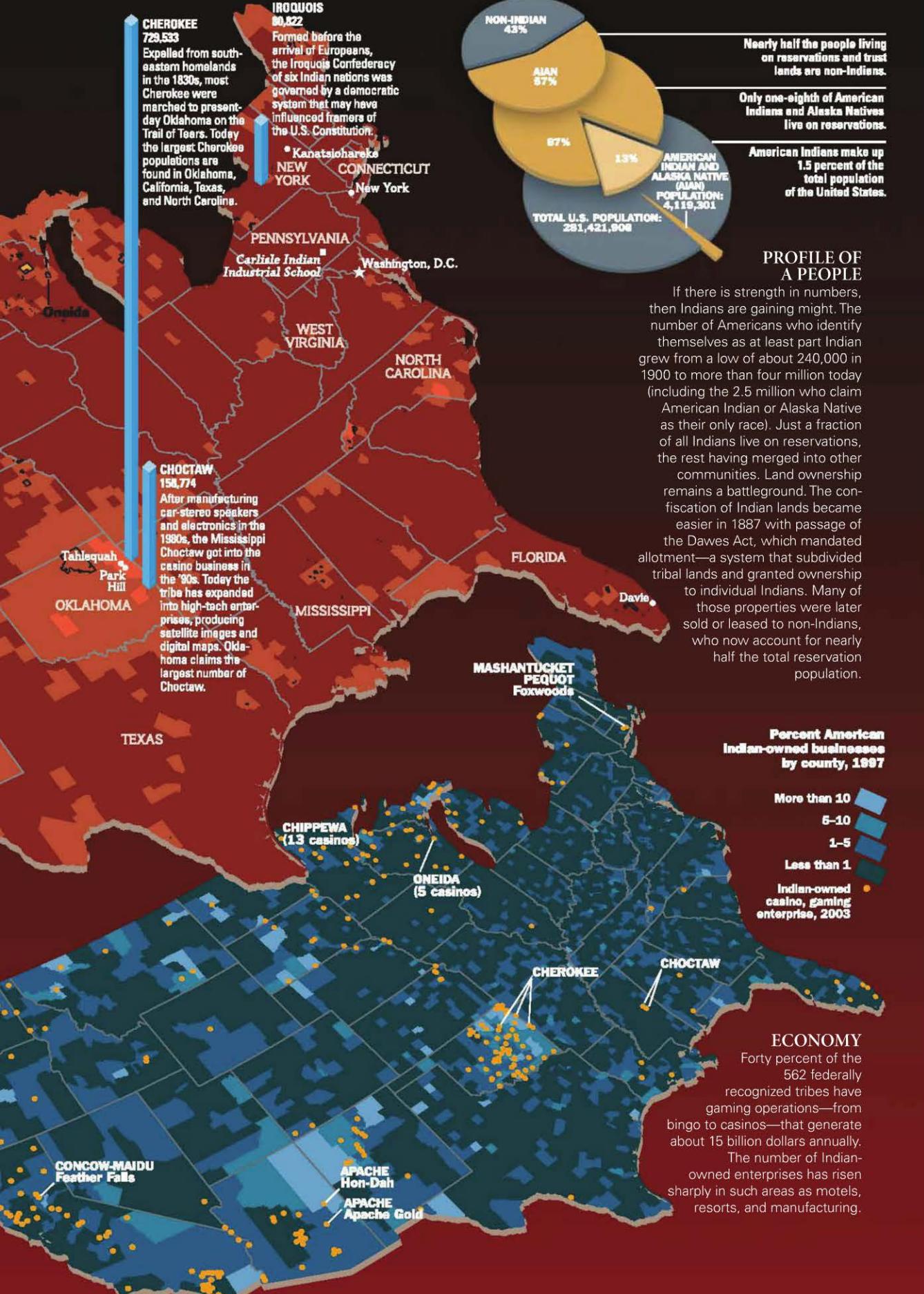


RIPPLES OF RENEWAL

Cultural and economic energy is flowing across Indian Country—in the archipelago of reservations remaining from once vast territories, and in the myriad communities around the nation where Indians have made their homes. This revival was ignited with the political activism of the 1960s when, after centuries of subjugation and government control, Indians increased demands for sovereignty and expanded efforts to reclaim their heritage.

With growing economic clout—fueled in part by casino revenues—tribes are waging legal and political battles for greater control over their lands. According to a report by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, "The defining characteristic of Indian America at the new millennium is the drive for self-determination."





(Continued from page 52) to whites. But the tribe is making a huge investment in its future by seeking a federal loan to buy back 22,140 acres, including the grazing land where their buffalo herd now roams.

With more than 3,000 animals, the Cheyenne River herd is the largest tribally owned buffalo herd in America, and one of the best managed. Tribal biologists, for example, plant micro-chips in young buffalo to identify and monitor each animal from a command post in Rousseau's office. Some of the animals are sold commercially, but most of the meat, which passes USDA inspection, goes to schools and other tribal programs such as the Elderly Nutrition Center, part of an effort to reintroduce buffalo meat, which is leaner than beef, as a staple of the reservation diet.

Long-term, says Dennis, the goal is to reestablish buffalo culture on the reservation, with benefits both practical and spiritual. "The buffalo, which is sacred, is still providing for us by giving us a paycheck and putting food on the table," said Dennis. "Nature put the buffalo on this Earth for a reason. So I guess it's come full circle."

Full circle. That's an apt metaphor for the state of Native America in September 2004. For more than a century, Indians in the United States survived in the white man's shadow by humbling themselves, becoming invisible, learning to survive, if barely, on handouts from the federal government. Inevitably, the fabric of Indian communities, their dignity and identity, were left as shredded and thin as the few remnant buffalo herds on the Great Plains, ghostly reminders of a rich and glorious past.

Today that situation is changing as Indians across the U.S. exert new influence over their lives and their communities. One of the most visible signs of change is what some call the "new buffalo"—the casino, which for better or worse has become Indian country's most

Just a little offering to the Great Spirit, asking for a good harvest.

potent symbol of economic empowerment, mostly due to the success, and notoriety, of gaming tribes like the Mashantucket Pequot in Connecticut, whose Foxwoods casino will gross more than a billion dollars this year.

Other tribes have followed the Pequot and opened casinos of their own: Hon-Dah and Apache Gold in Arizona, Feather Falls in California, Cherokee Casino in Oklahoma. Still, only 40 percent of federally recognized tribes run gaming operations, and not all Indian casinos earn substantial income. Even those that do are subject to the oversight of nontribal bureaucracies at both the state and federal levels. Many Indians also question the long-term viability of gaming, which depends, like a fad, on the tastes of a fickle public.

With this uncertain future in mind, the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin has directed casino profits toward tribal development and used them to buy new land, pave roads, and even build an elementary school in the shape of a huge turtle, revered by the Oneida. "A generation ago our children went to school in old clothes and were taunted by the kids who were better off," says Bobbi Webster, the tribe's public relations director. "Today those other kids are jealous."

The Oneida are also diversifying their portfolio. With three other tribes, they founded Four Fires, a business consortium designed to explore opportunities beyond gaming. Their first joint venture is a 43-million-dollar hotel near the National Museum of the American Indian, opening this month in Washington, D.C. Embodying the renaissance in Indian country, this museum, which houses one of the world's largest collections of Indian art and culture, was funded in part by millions of dollars in casino revenues, donated by tribes like the Pequot and Oneida.

The Chippewa of northern Minnesota went a different route, investing half a million dollars of their casino profits to revitalize the mainstay of their traditional life: wild rice, an annual aquatic grass that grows only a few places in the world. One of (Continued on page 59)

Casino manager Chrissy Winn walks the casino at the Quinault Tribal Resort in Ocean Shores, Washington, before opening hours.





Apache Edgar Perry teaches his grandson Lamar Ray the Crown dance. In past generations, many Indian religious practices were banned by the U.S. government and later restricted by a lack of access to sacred sites and ceremonial objects. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act, enacted in 1978, guarantees Native Americans the right to worship freely.



Five times a week, Pearl Bearing hikes to a roadside tank to fetch water on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation. Many Pine Ridge homes have no running water. But a lack of federal funding threatens completion of the Mni Wi-coni project, which is bringing Missouri River water to eleven counties and three reservations.

(Continued from page 56) them, happily, is Nett Lake on the Bois Forte Chippewa reservation—the largest contiguous wild rice lake in the world, where native people have been gathering manoomin since the time of the ancestors.

Historically the rice harvest brought this community together, kept it intact, and provided a major source of income. However, in the 1970s and '80s outside growers with new methods drove the price to a fraction of what the Indians were getting. Bois Forte rice production also waned as Nett Lake became overgrown with reeds and other vegetation. That changed in 2003, when the tribal council decided to allow motorized barges and cutting equipment, paid for by casino money, onto the sacred lake to clear out the sedges, bulrushes, and water lilies that had created bogs and choked off the flow of water needed to grow rice.

To see how the restoration was going, I paddled out onto Nett Lake one morning with Ron Boshey and his 32-year-old son, Barry Day. Once we were clear of the shore, Ron pulled a cigarette from his pocket and stripped off the paper. Then he balled the tobacco in his hand and sprinkled it over the water as he spoke a few words of Chippewa.

"Just a little offering to the Great Spirit," he explained. "Asking for a good harvest."

Leaning hard into his pole, Barry sent us cruising silently into the nearest rice bed, which rippled like a wheat field in our passing wake. Then he steered us into a patch where the rice grains were ripe brown. Ron reached out with a pair of slender wooden sticks, called knockers, which he used to strip rice into the bottom of the canoe, moving his arms with the fluid grace of a tai chi master. Soon the canoe was filled with long quills of rice. I noticed other boats moving in the reeds nearby, and I felt as if we'd all hit the jackpot.

I was on a train clattering south along the Hudson River, heading toward a place as Indian as anywhere in the United States: New York City. Famously traded to (or stolen by) the Dutch in 1626, New York today is home to more than 85,000 Native Americans. About 85 percent of

Indians in the United States now live off the reservation, and every large city in the U.S. has its own Indian community. This is partly due to a government relocation program, begun in 1952, that sent thousands of Indians around the country in search of work.

Brad Bonaparte is one of these urban Indians, a 42-year-old Mohawk artist and ironworker whose father and grandfather walked the high steel with wrenches and welding torches, making the city's skyline. Every workday he puts on a brown hard hat bearing the insignia of an eagle feather, a potent symbol of blessing and protection worn by many Mohawk ironworkers.

Brad remembers admiring the World Trade Center from his apartment in Jersey City. "I used to see those towers at night, and always thought how cool it would be to have the job of changing the lightbulbs on the antenna." After the towers came down on 9/11, Brad was one of the many Mohawk who worked to clear the debris and search for remains, putting in 12-hour days for three and a half months. And like everyone else working in the ruins, Brad's crew soon carried burdens heavier than concrete and steel.

"Every kind of priest was there, from the Catholics to the Buddhists, but there was no one for us Indians. One day we heard there was a tobacco burning ceremony a few blocks away, at the New York branch of the National Museum of the American Indian, so we all just walked off the job and went there." It helped. A few days later Brad's crew found the radio tower he'd dreamed about. "I ended up standing on it," he says, "but not in the way I thought."

For Brad and many thousands of other Indians, Native identity is a growing source of strength that helps them cope with the mainstream America that flows all around them. Yet it can also be a source of turmoil. I speak from personal experience: Like many Native Americans today, my heritage is mixed. My mother was Abenaki, my father was Slovak, and it didn't really dawn on me that I was Indian until I was in my teens. Even then, it took a long time for my own mother to accept that I was the first of my family in three generations to go "public," to seek out relatives and elders who could teach

Native American actors from the movie Edge of America being interviewed in a television studio in Rapid City, Dakota. The film, says Cheyenne-Arapaho director Chris Eyre, is not about whether you win or lose, "but how you represent yourself and your community."



me the stories and language my Abenaki grandfather never shared with me. For a while my mother referred to me as, "My son, the Indian," until my younger sister Margaret asked, "But Mom, what does that make you and me?"

Good question. Such confusion, often laced with self-hatred, is surprisingly widespread, even in communities where Native blood predominates. "Are you proud to be Lakota?" I heard a Sioux man ask a six-year-old on Pine Ridge Reservation, in South Dakota. "Nuh-uh, I'm not a Indian," the little boy said before running away.

That anxiety, like so much that impedes Native Americans, is a legacy of U.S. government policies. For half a century the tone of Indian education was set by government boarding schools such as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, founded in 1879 by Richard Henry Pratt, a U.S. Army officer whose philosophy was "Kill the Indian and save the man." Schools like Carlisle removed Indian kids from their families at an early age; some were kept until they were adults. If they spoke their native languages, they were severely punished. No wonder, then, that today surprisingly few Indians speak their native tongue or know much about their own traditional culture.

Tom Porter is an elder of the Mohawk Nation living in upstate New York whose grandfather and great-grandfather both attended the Carlisle School. He remembers the gray-faced men he knew as a child: "When they came home, they were just like a computer that has no feelings." He never heard his grandfather speak a word of Mohawk, one of the Iroquoian languages.

By 1997 about 5 percent of Iroquois still spoke their native tongue; of those, most speakers were in their 70s and 80s. Concerned that the Mohawk were on the verge of losing their language altogether, Porter initiated what he calls a "Carlisle School in reverse" to jump-start his own personal Indian renaissance in a new Mohawk community. Called Kanatsiohareke (meaning "place of the clean pot"), Porter's community offers several two-week immersion courses in Mohawk language each summer, taught by fluent speakers.

The results, though modest, are measurable. Forty or more students take the courses every summer, including several dozen or so who



"We don't want money, we want land," says Nick Tilsen, at right. An 1868 treaty preserved the Black Hills for the Lakota, but the U.S. government took the land anyway. In 1980 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Lakota claim, offering financial compensation—but no land.

have become fluent enough in Mohawk to speak at ceremonial occasions. One day as I watched a language class, I noticed that one of the instructors, Bonnie Jane Maracle—whose Indian name is Lehnhtononkwas—looked younger than most of her students. "I'm one of the 2002 graduates," she said, beaming. "A few years ago I could barely talk Mohawk, but now I've learned enough to teach the Mohawk phonics class."

The Cherokee Nation, with tribal headquarters in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, also offers language immersion classes to help preserve Cherokee culture. The courses are based on a syllabary developed by the Cherokee's peripatetic genius, Sequoyah, in the early 19th century that helped the Cherokee to become the most literate of Indian nations, with its own newspapers and schools. The Cherokee also developed political skills that they sharpened in the 1830s, as leaders such as Chief John Ross lobbied Congress, in vain, against the forced removal of 16,000 Cherokee from tribal homelands in the southeast U.S., culminating in the infamous Trail of Tears.

Today, in a clear sign of renewal, the Cherokee are again showing their gift for cultural and political sophistication—a balance of tradition and practicality that has helped them endure the near-death experience of their expulsion to Oklahoma. (*Continued on page 64*)





Off the coast of Seattle, Washington, an American Indian group works to maintain their maritime traditions.

INDIAN RENAISSANCE INC.

(Continued from page 61) the periodic landgrabs and neglect of the U.S. government, and a litany of other injustices, from a lack of potable water to anti-Indian demagoguery in Congress.

Led by Principal Chief Chad Smith, the Cherokee Nation runs a dynamic lobbying program, with a full-time office in Washington that deals with government's convoluted bureaucracies—ranging from Congress, which writes the federal laws governing relations with Indian tribes, to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which administers U.S. policy. Smith himself spends a lot of time in Washington calling on legislators and federal agencies, and notes that the American Indian experience seems to run in cycles—"adversity, survival, adaptation, and occasional prosperity—over and over."

At the moment, the cycle tends toward adversity. Some powerful lawmakers, focused on casinos, seem to think that every Indian in the country is getting rich—even the Oklahoma Cherokee, who earn just 3 percent of their income from bingo parlors and casinos, or the Hopi, who have shied away from gambling. The Bush Administration proposes to cut more than 100 million dollars from federal Indian programs in 2005, which means that health clinics across Indian country will close on the weekends and jobs will be harder to find.

"People always think Indians are trying to get away with something," Smith observes—especially when Indians have something that others want. The Trail of Tears began, he says, with "the discovery of gold on our lands." He chuckles. "And now one of our biggest assets is casino gold. It's all part of the cycle."

Alarmed by the mood in Congress and attacks on Indian sovereignty, 115 members of the House of Representatives have joined the Congressional Native American Caucus, a bipartisan group that represents tribal interests on Capitol Hill. And the National Congress of American Indians is mounting a national grassroots campaign to turn out a million Indian voters in November.

"Everything that happens in Congress directly affects the lives of our people, which is why we're fighting so hard to be heard," says

Kimberly Teehee, a Cherokee who works as senior adviser to the caucus. "Indians have more political muscle than people realize."

I looked for signs of Indian renewal all over this country, and I found them, but I kept coming back to buffalo. One buffalo in particular. I saw him only once, in South Dakota months ago, but he's with me still, like a recurring dream.

Dennis Rousseau and I were out in Sioux country, where Sitting Bull led his band of survivors toward a vision that only he could see. Just before sunset Dennis and I decided to drive out in search of the buffalo herd one more time, just for the fun of it.

As soon as we left the main road, we were surrounded by prairie dogs. Their burrows dotted the landscape on both sides of us, their quick whistles raised the alarm from hill to hill. A round head poked up out of one burrow, swiveled toward us, ducked out of sight. A burrowing owl materialized, followed by the wide wings of a ferruginous hawk. Both were hunting for prairie dogs. The hawk passed; a mead-owlark popped up from the grass and flew in the opposite direction. It was as if I'd traveled back 200 years, to a time before the slaughter, the plows, the heavy hooves of cattle.

Then a wind kicked up, blowing dust across the grass. For a moment the land looked like a yellow ocean rippled by waves.

Dennis nodded. "The buffalo will be coming down here into that wind," he said.

"Facing into the storm?"

"Cattle," Dennis said, "just let the storm push them. But not buffalo. They know there's an end to the storm, so they go into it."

"Like Sitting Bull did," I said.

"That's right," Dennis said. "That's right."

Soon we saw a solitary bull, head down, pushing forward against the weight of the wind. We followed him over a small rise and found ourselves in the midst of hundreds of buffalo. Young bulls, calves, yearlings, cows. They were peaceful and fully alive, charged with a power that seemed to flow from the old, enduring earth itself. Dennis took this in, gave me a look.

"The wonders," he said, "of buffalo."

Discussion Questions

- What are factors that have contributed to American Indians' strategies toward cultural renewal discussed in the article? What are the obstacles they face in doing so? What different paths has this development taken across the groups discussed in the article, and why?
- How have past events contributed to the current economic and political marginalization of Indian groups across the U.S.?
- What roles do language, religion, and place have for senses of cultural identity among American Indians? How does this help to understand both the intent and disastrous effects of the U.S. government's appropriation of Indian lands and policy of "Kill the Indian and save the man"?

Questions for Further Reflection

- Search the web for news or other updates about a particular American Indian group or issue discussed in the article. Also, see the coverage and

report of U.N. special rapporteur on indigenous rights James Anaya's 2012 visit to Indian reservations across the U.S. How do these sources relate to what is discussed in the article?

- In what ways does the author's inclusion of his identity and experiences in the text strengthen our understanding of the current conditions of many American Indians in the U.S.?
- How can we explain the ways that American Indians—their sovereignty/autonomy, practices, claims to land, religious beliefs, etc.—have been treated legally and socially in the U.S.? What parallels does this have with the histories and situations of other minority groups in the U.S. (or elsewhere), but also how are they different?
- What stereotypes or negative perceptions about American Indians are addressed and dispelled through this article? More generally, how do entrenched expectations or perceptions of people play into their social and legal treatment by others?



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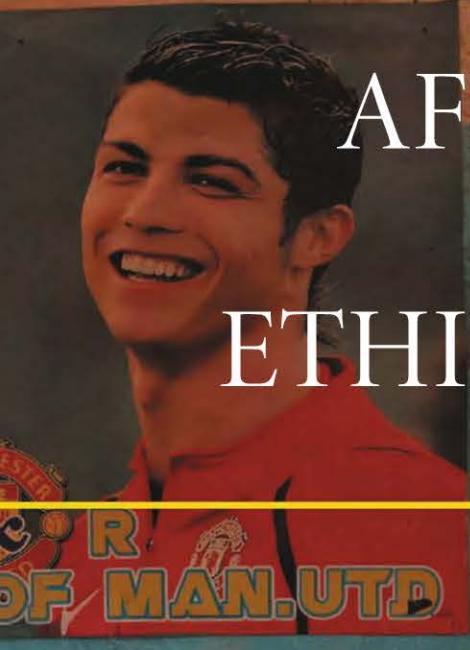
AFRICA'S LAST FRONTIER: ETHIOPIA'S OMO VALLEY

Centering around the life story of Dunga, a young man from the Omo Valley in Ethiopia, this article provides an example of the ways in which people negotiate the tensions of their own desires with the obligations they feel toward their families and communities. The larger context in which Dunga's story is situated has much to say about the demands that shape the ways peoples' livelihoods and practices change through "modernizing" projects.

When reading this article, you should focus on:

- How are both Ethiopians and their government envisioning and enacting futures for the country of Ethiopia? How are (and whose) lives and communities being transformed, and why?
- What are the Ethiopian government's goals, interests, and strategies for "modernizing" the country? What is the standard of "modernization" that the government is using in changing the country? How have the groups along the Omo accommodated and resisted the changes taking place, and what are their reasons for doing so?
- How does Dunga's life story illustrate the sociocultural and economic tensions surrounding "modernizing" projects?
- What draws tourists to places like Ethiopia and the Omo Valley? What are the beliefs that tourists tend to hold about the people and practices of this region, and how have these beliefs been formed? What stake does tourism have in the lifeways of groups such as the Kara?





AFRICA'S LAST FRONTIER: ETHIOPIA'S OMO VALLEY

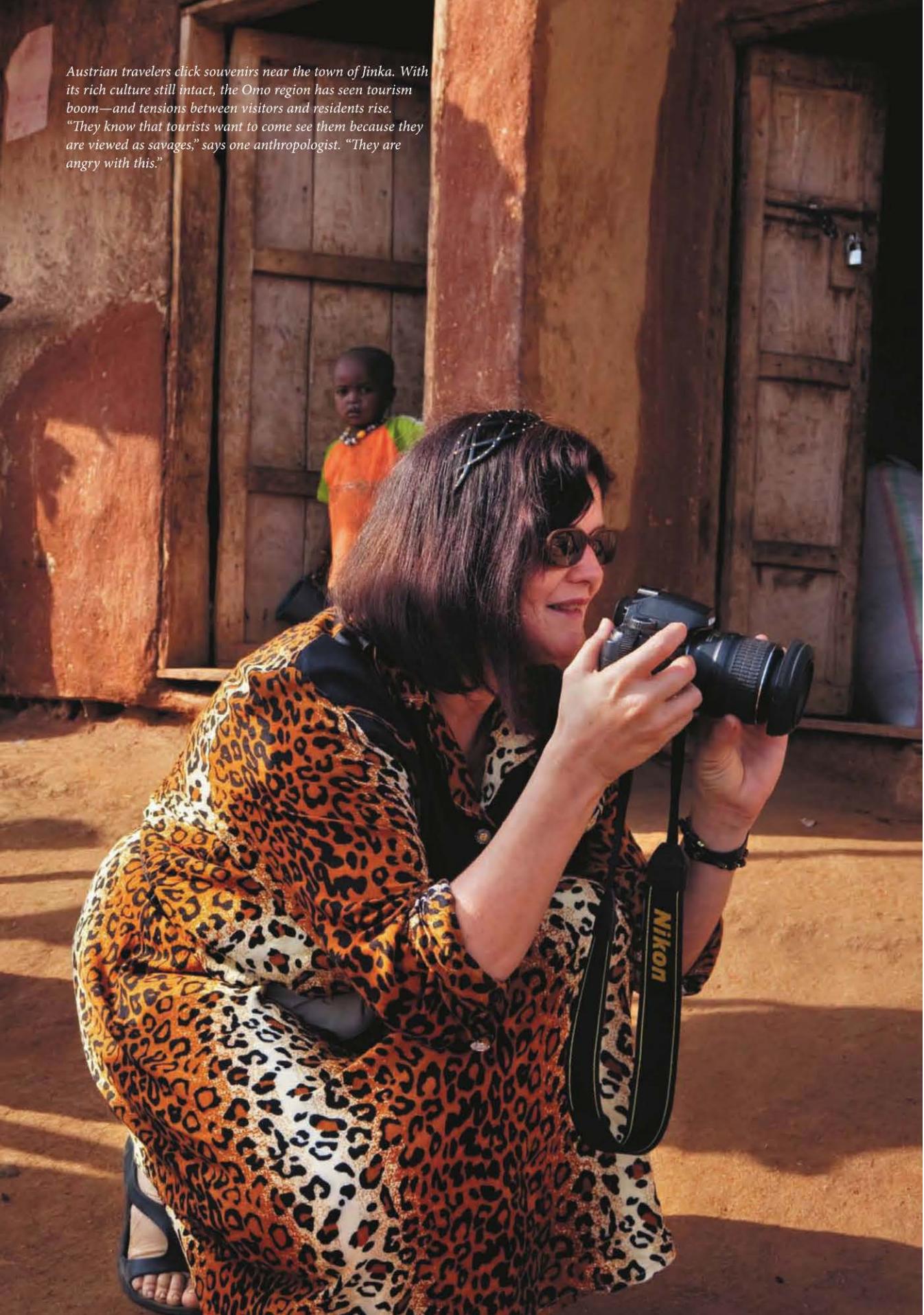
By Neil Shea

Photographs by Randy Olson



Hamar women in a bar on market day.

Austrian travelers click souvenirs near the town of Jinka. With its rich culture still intact, the Omo region has seen tourism boom—and tensions between visitors and residents rise. “They know that tourists want to come see them because they are viewed as savages,” says one anthropologist. “They are angry with this.”



BALANCING THE DEMANDS OF THE PRESENT WITH VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE IN ETHIOPIA'S OMO VALLEY.

Dunga Nakuwa cups his face in his hands and remembers his mother's voice. She has been dead nearly two years, but for Dunga's tribe the dead are never very far away. In the villages they are buried just below the huts of the living, separated from hearths and sleeping skins by only a few feet of dry, depleted soil. They remain near in the mind too. This is why Dunga still hears his mother: When will you take revenge on your brother's killer?

When she was alive, she had occasionally asked this, each time giving the vendetta new life just as Dunga was trying to escape it. He had become the eldest son after his brother, Kornan, was killed by a member of an enemy tribe. It had been an ambush, a choreographed execution. The nature of it, so premeditated, only deepened the insult.

Dunga's father had also been killed by a warrior from the same tribe, and the duty of vengeance had fallen first on his older brother. But after Kornan was killed, the double weight fell to Dunga along paths of tradition worn as hard as the trails leading down to the river.

Yet it's true: The Omo region, still one of Africa's most intact cultural landscapes, is changing.

Men from his tribe, the Kara, are renowned marksmen. They had resisted the invasions of the far larger and better armed tribe, the Nyangatom. In both tribes a man who kills an enemy is decorated with special scars dug into the flesh of his shoulder or abdomen. Faced with the murder of his kin, a man would

demand vengeance.

And so, in his mother's question, Dunga hears another: When will you finally become a man?

Dunga is small, slender, not yet 30. His hands are soft from years spent reading books, not living in the bush. He wears a silver crucifix, a symbol of newly acquired beliefs. We sit in a small restaurant in a town several days' walk from his homeland, his face knotted against the memories. Knowing that I also have brothers, he asks, "What would you have done?" In the West revenge is left to courts. But in this corner of Ethiopia, there is little

Adapted from "Africa's Last Frontier: Ethiopia's Emo Valley" by Neil Shea: National Geographic Magazine, March 2010.

history of such institutions. There are only the demands of the dead.

Dunga was born at Dus, a village of stick-and-grass huts set on a bluff high above the Omo River. From the central highlands the river flows wide and deep and fast toward the country's southwestern border, where it pours into Kenya's Lake Turkana. In its 500-mile course the river curls through gorges of volcanic rock and channels of ancient mud.

Near the Kenyan border the Omo carves serpentine oxbows as the countryside flattens, and ribbons of forest appear along its banks. Riverine creatures, including crocodiles and hippos, become more abundant. The landscape grows thick with tribes, including the Kara, Mursi, Hamar, Suri, Nyangatom, Kwegu, and Dassanech, a population of roughly 200,000. Herdsmen drive animals through the bush, and farmers pole upstream and downstream in lumpy canoes. Depending on the season, the riverbanks are golden with the stubble of past harvests or sheathed in the moist green of new crops.

Dus lies three hours by truck from the nearest road, and in the wet season it is islanded in a sea of mud. Like many settlements along the Omo, the village is a cluster of huts with goat pens and grain cribs set at the periphery, everything sun bleached, everything washed in dust. Some days dust devils gather outside the village, pacing in the bush like malevolent spirits, spitting soil into the air.

Cattle and goats are a family's most meaningful possessions here, but it is the crops, nourished by the Omo River, that sustain the people of Dus and other villages. After the Omo's seasonal floods soak and replenish the riverbanks, Kara farmers pierce the dark mud with sticks and drop in seeds of sorghum or corn. It is simple, ancient, little different from what the Egyptians did along the Nile. If the floods are meager, the harvest is poor, but the system has kept the Kara here for a long time. The river's predictability allows the 2,000 or so

Kara a life without the restless movement of some of their neighbors, who must constantly drive their animals to new pasture. The name of the village—Dus—means, roughly, "I have seen other places, but it is good here. I'll stay."

For generations the tribes of the Omo were shielded from the outside world by mountains, savanna, and by Ethiopia's unique status as the only African nation never to have been colonized by Europeans. In the late 1960s and '70s, anthropologists began recognizing what that meant—people living near the river had largely escaped the colonial blundering and conflict that shredded other societies. The tribes remained intact, migrating, warring, and making peace in ways that had vanished almost everywhere else. Hints of this Africa still appear in the ornamental clay lip plates worn as symbols of beauty by Mursi women or in the seasonal dueling contests of the Suri, who tie on armor made of goat hide and fight each other with long poles. There is still the Hamar ritual in which women demand to be whipped until they bleed, and there's the cattle-jumping initiation rite, in which boys run along the backs of cattle to prove they are ready for manhood.

Today the Omo Valley is a destination for wealthy tourists who cross vast, uncomfortable distances to witness those same rituals—vanloads of white faces, most from Europe, hoping for something of the Africa that exists in the Western imagination, all wild animals and face paint and dancing. Tourists say they have come to see the Omo before it becomes like everywhere else, as though a McDonald's might suddenly descend from the sky.

Yet it's true: The Omo region, still one of Africa's most intact cultural landscapes, is changing. The big game are mostly gone, hunted out with weapons that flow in from wars across the borders in Sudan or Somalia. Aid organizations deliver food, build schools, and plan irrigation projects, all of which make life more stable but inevitably, unstoppably, change the way it has long been lived. The government, which (Continued on page 72)

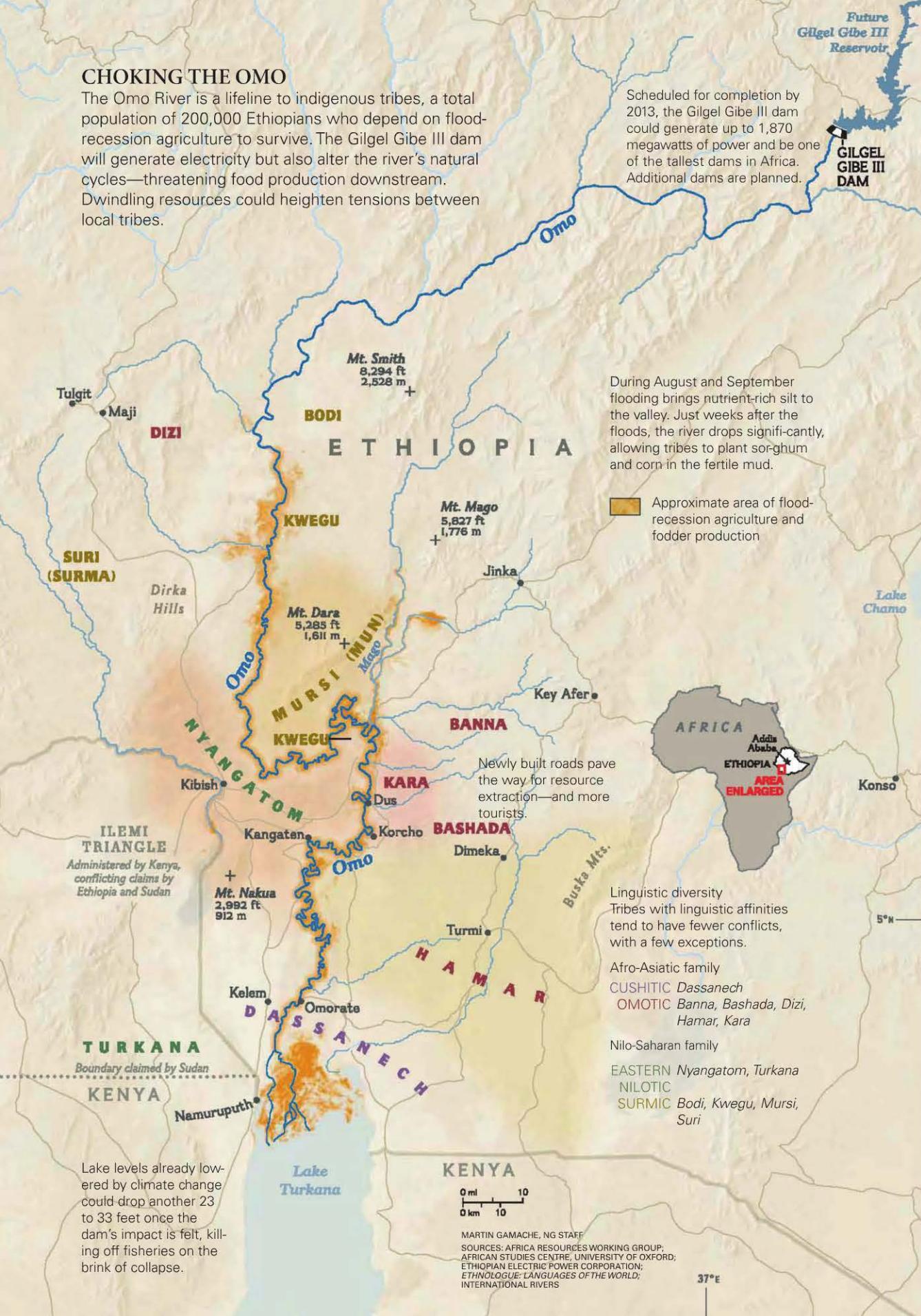
CHOKING THE OMO

The Omo River is a lifeline to indigenous tribes, a total population of 200,000 Ethiopians who depend on flood-recession agriculture to survive. The Gilgel Gibe III dam will generate electricity but also alter the river's natural cycles—threatening food production downstream.

Dwindling resources could heighten tensions between local tribes.

Scheduled for completion by 2013, the Gilgel Gibe III dam could generate up to 1,870 megawatts of power and be one of the tallest dams in Africa. Additional dams are planned.

**GILGEL
GIBE III
DAM**



(Continued from page 70) for generations essentially ignored this place, now works to modernize Omo tribes, and some officials speak as if timetables have been drawn up describing exactly when

and how the old ways will be replaced. Not long before my visit, government representatives offered new incentives to tame the warring tribes and incorporate them into the nation. Blood feuds, like the one tugging at Dunga Nakuwa, are meant to be a thing of the past.

It was the cattle that betrayed Dunga's secret. When he disappeared, leaving his family's herd in the bush, the beasts circled around and grazed their way home, a cloud of dust rising behind them. At the village, Dunga's brother, Kornan, was surprised the animals were returning so soon—without Dunga.

This was in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Lions, leopards, and hyenas roamed the savanna. Elephants and buffalo occasionally came bulldozing out of the bush. Enemy tribes patrolled it too: The Nyangatom, the people who had killed the brothers' father, had been pushing into the area, armed with automatic rifles. Since their father's murder, Kornan had taken charge of family matters, but he wasn't worried about his brother's safety. He had an idea where Dunga had gone, and he was furious.

The brothers had grown up as Kara boys do—chasing animals through the bush with bows and arrows. They pulled guard duty in the sorghum fields, slinging clay pellets at thieving birds. They learned to beware of crocodiles during the wet season, when the Omo runs high and dark with sediment. And they learned the foundation of male responsibility: care for the herds.

Along the Omo, cattle and goats embody wealth and prestige. Without them a man is considered poor and, in most tribes, cannot get married because he has nothing to offer as

Abandoning your cattle is like dumping your family's savings into the river.

a bride-price. In time of famine the animals can be sold for food or their milk, and blood can be slowly siphoned off, like interest. Abandoning your cattle is like dumping your family's savings into the river.

Kornan selected a slender

stick, then marched to the nearby schoolhouse and found Dunga there. The brothers were close, but this? Leaving the herd for school? Kornan beat Dunga until the boy wept. Some 15 years later Dunga tenses as he remembers the blows. The next morning, sore and chastened, Dunga led the cattle to water at dawn. But a few days later he ran away to school again. And Kornan beat him again.

"I loved Kornan," Dunga said. "He was a father for me, he was everything. But my mind was going to school."

The beatings hardened Dunga's resolve, but they seemed to soften Kornan's. He had been to school himself for a few years, and he eventually realized punishment wouldn't dissuade Dunga. They struck a deal. The boy could go to school as long as he achieved good grades. If his performance fell, he'd be back in the bush with the herd. Dunga was ecstatic. He advanced to a boarding school in a nearby town, each grade taking him deeper into a new world. He returned home less frequently.

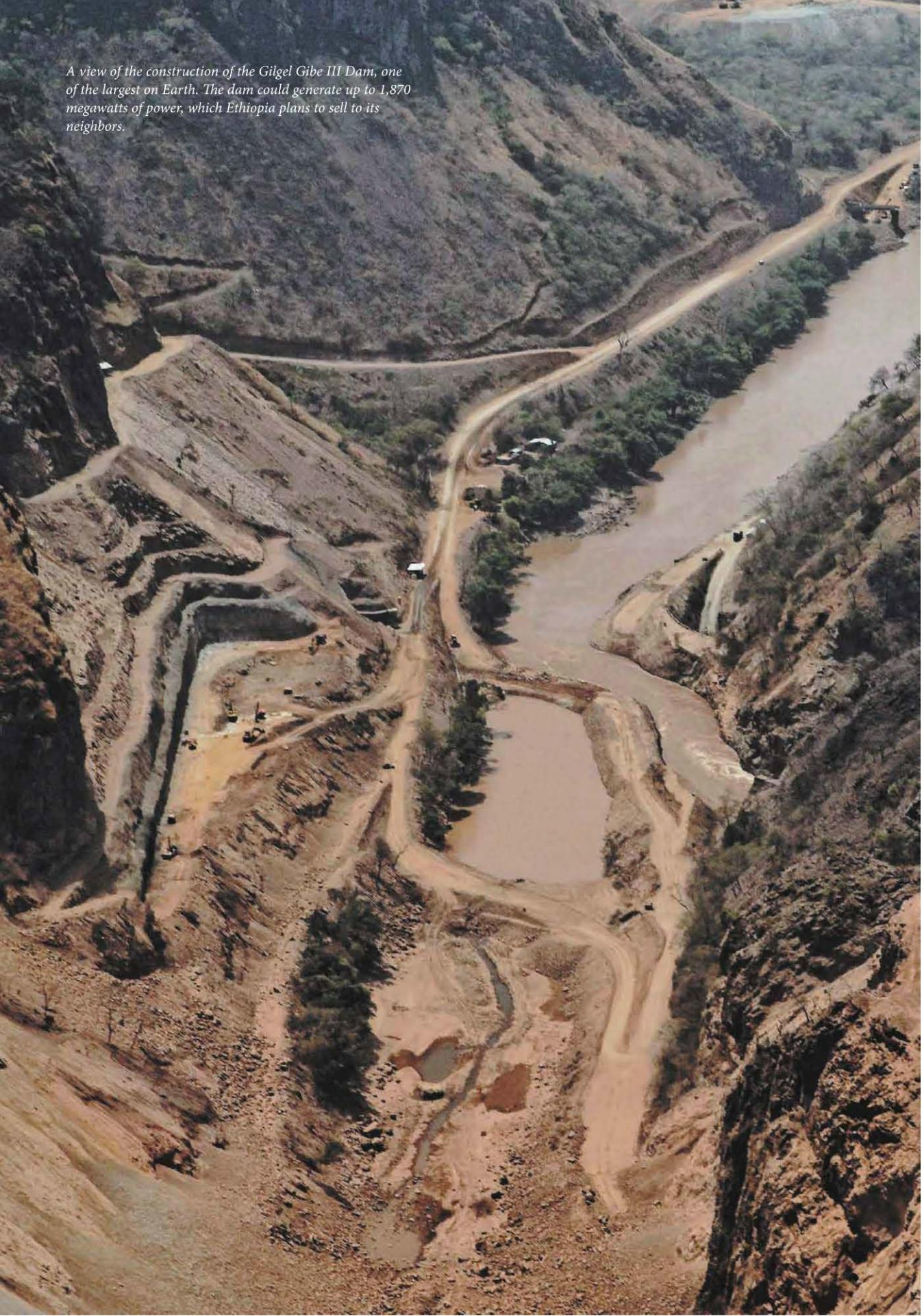
Meanwhile, Kornan had become a respected young leader. He had a wife, several children, and a reputation as an unrivaled hunter. The wives of other men presented Kornan with bullets and said, Take this and go hunting for me. They placed orders for meat or skins. But the task of avenging his father's murder still lay ahead. Relatives, friends, and elders urged him to set things right. You're a strong hunter, people said. When will you go after your father's killer?

This is one way change is coming to the Omo: In the wilderness, amid swirling dust and the gnawing (Continued on page 76)

Hamar girls in boarding school in Dimeka.



A view of the construction of the Gilgel Gibe III Dam, one of the largest on Earth. The dam could generate up to 1,870 megawatts of power, which Ethiopia plans to sell to its neighbors.







A man during his initiation ritual, sometimes called cattle jumping. Male friends and relatives hold the animals in place as the jumper runs along their backs. Afterward, the young Hamar man must adhere to a diet including blood, milk, and honey until he marries.

(Continued from page 72) sounds of heavy machinery, a dam is being built 320 miles upriver from the Kara homeland. The construction site is enormous, with camps, bunkhouses, cookhouses, and winding service roads. The dam, called Gilgel Gibe III, will be one of the largest dams in the world. It will create an equally massive reservoir, and the water will be used to generate up to 1,870 megawatts of power that Ethiopia plans to sell to energy-strapped neighbors, such as Kenya and Sudan. It is not scheduled for completion until 2013, but contracts have already been signed.

Gibe III will bring cash to Ethiopia and produce much needed electricity in a country where only 33 percent of the population has electrical power. But it will also reduce

the river's flow and tame the seasons of flood and recession that the tribes living downstream, such as the Kara, the Nyangatom, and others, rely on to nourish their crops. The indigenous tribes have little power to oppose a project that has official blessings and massive momentum. Many are unaware of the dam's potential to transform their lives; many others support the government, even if they do not fully understand its plans.

In Dunga's village each month around the new moon, near where the Omo River empties into Lake Turkana, the man who speaks to crocodiles descends in darkness to perform a short ceremony that protects his people from the massive creatures that cruise the Omo. He carries a bundle of leafy branches, dips

them into the water, then shakes them upriver and downriver, while speaking with an authority not given by men.

"You, crocodiles! Listen! This place is mine, from my father, from my father's father. Stay away from here. Let my people and their herds come down to drink, and let the children swim. If you come close, my bullets will find you!"

He then lays the branches on the mud and steps down into the black water, joining its silt and its secrets, and he bathes.

The man has a special relationship with the ancient reptiles, as his father did before him. The ties between human clan and crocodile are strong and deep. The crocodiles even speak to him in his dreams.

"What do they tell you?" I ask.

"That is none of your business," he replies.

Whatever the crocodiles tell, they also listen, for as far back as collective memory reaches, no crocodile has taken a human below the village. A wave of nods from old men arranged in a circle around us on their wooden stools attest to this truth. "What about the pregnant woman who was killed last year?"

"Well. She didn't listen." The man waves his hand downriver. "She was killed over there. I do not protect that place."

The elders nod, the caveat is plain. The woman had strayed onto someone else's property.

I ask the man about Gibe III. Suddenly the scene changes, as it always does when I mention the dam. A crowd presses in. Some have heard of this thing. The man asks, "What, exactly, is a dam?"

And then they all want to know what it will do to their lives.

Once the Kara controlled land on both sides of the Omo River, but gradually the Nyangatom pushed them across to

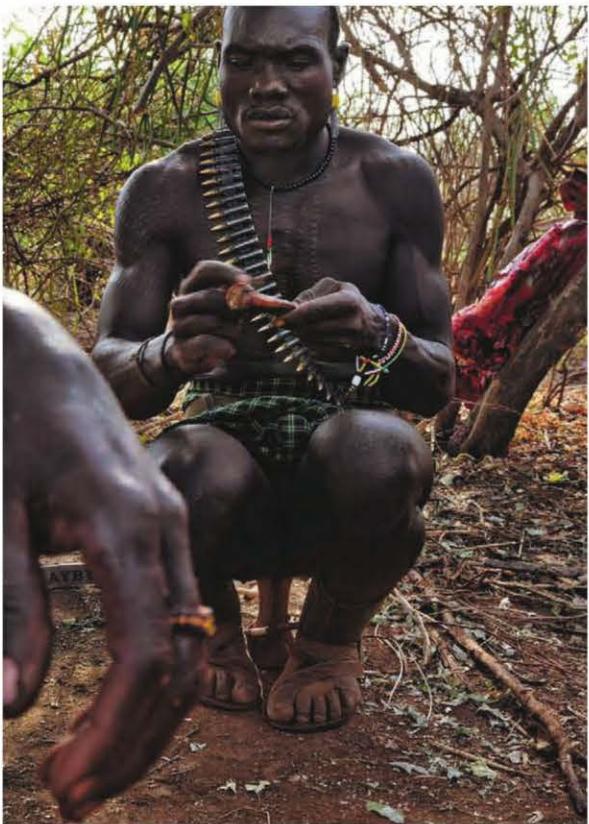
**I ask the king why,
if he can summon
rain, he has not
done it earlier to
avoid the looming
drought.**

only the eastern side. A seminomadic tribe from southwestern Ethiopia, the Nyangatom were one of the first groups in the region to gain access to automatic rifles, mostly from Sudan. During the 1980s and '90s they enlarged their territory, bullying neighbors, like the Kara, who still carried spears. Their population grew. They began changing the order of the Omo.

The Kara didn't give up territory easily, however. By Dunga's last years of secondary school, most Omo tribes had guns, and tensions boiled. The Ethiopian government did little to stop the intertribal warfare. Kara sharpshooters hid in trees along the riverbank, sniping at Nyangatom who approached the water. The Nyangatom sometimes crossed in small raiding parties, setting their rifles on automatic. Other times they crossed in massive groups. It was during this time that Kornan went with his cousin on a hunting trip in the bush. Much of the big game had been decimated, but the bush still sheltered gazelles, kudu, bushbuck, even elephants in places. It was a matter of stalking through thickets of thorn trees and seeing what awaited.

When the hunters came upon a group of Nyangatom warriors, a firefight erupted. Kornan shot a Nyangatom in the stomach before retreating, and the man later died. He had not intended to kill the man, so it did not fulfill the vendetta for his father's murder. At the same time, Kornan knew what he had begun. He knew that now he would be hunted too.

Despite their war the Kara often bought ammunition from the Nyangatom. It was complicated, but even conflict didn't prevent a good sale. Kornan had given a man from the Kwegu, a small tribe that lived on both sides of the river, money to buy bullets. The Kwegu (*Continued on page 80*)



Despite recent peace deals between Omo tribes, most remain well armed and proud of their fierceness, as revealed in scars running down the center of this Nyangatom man's chest. The scars, and others on his shoulder, offer a warning: He has killed at least two enemies from other tribes.



Across societies, important transitions to different stages of one's life often are marked by ritual, or a certain set of ordered, meaningful practices. The ritual enacts this transition, and afterwards the persons who endured the rite of passage take on different privileges and obligations in their families, communities, and/or society. Here, a Banna man whips a woman during an initiation ritual, a practice that has become the focus of both the objectifying demands of tourism, as well as indicative of the things that are seen as needing to change in order for groups along the Omo to become 'modern.'



(Continued from page 77) man never delivered, and Kornan grew angry. After a while the dealer invited Kornan over for coffee at his hut on the Nyangatom side of the river to settle the matter. It was a normal request; tribes all through the Omo do business and make social calls over gourds filled with a weak, thin liquid brewed from coffee-bean husks. Kornan took his AK-47 and his *borkoto*, the small saddle-shaped stool Kara leaders carry at all times, and he crossed the wide, brown river.

Kornan was in enemy territory, so he would have been alert. But he didn't know the meeting had been arranged by the younger brother of the warrior he had killed that day in the bush. Kornan met the Kwedu man under a shelter of sticks. Coffee simmered in a clay pot; the men chatted. When a group of Nyangatom approached and sat nearby, making small talk, Kornan was on guard, but nothing happened. It was hot, even in the shade, and eventually he relaxed, setting his rifle aside.

The conversation wandered. The Kwedu man said he had been hoping to carve a large gourd into a bowl. Would Kornan help him? Even if he was irritated with this Kwedu, Kornan was a man of action. He took the gourd and began cutting. The Kwedu said he needed to relieve himself and ducked out of the shelter. It was a signal. Kornan, focused on the gourd, missed it.

He didn't notice one of the Nyangatom stand and slowly walk behind him outside the shelter. The man fired once into Kornan's back, then fled as he bled into the dust.

t didn't take long for news of Kornan's murder to spread. Enraged Kara spilled across the river, attacking the Nyangatom. If they saw the irony—that their actions would only prolong the revenge cycle that had claimed their friend—they ignored it.

Kornan's friends ferried his body back across the river. That evening they sought out Dunga

in the town of Dimeka, but the Kara do not deliver bad news directly. There's a problem, they kept saying. You must come home with us now. In darkness the group traveled toward home, Dunga fearing the worst. The next morning, as they neared Kornan's village, the men finally told Dunga his brother was dead.

In that moment Dunga became responsible for everything—his family's land and its herds, the well-being of his mother and Kornan's wife and children. He became responsible for vengeance. He couldn't sleep under the weight of it. Whenever he returned home, revenge was waiting for him, in his mother's inquiries, in all the history of his people. Killing a Nyangatom would be easy; the bush was so enormous. You might wait in ambush by the river, when the cattle were driven down to drink. Or in the fields of sorghum lining the bank. Or along one of the lonely trails at night, leaving the body to hyenas in the starlight. Vengeance lay one bullet away. Why, God, have you brought this upon me? Dunga thought. It is a test. It must be a test.

He considered dropping out of school but decided against it. He was in college now, and after years of education, most based on Western thought and influenced by Christianity, Dunga had grown. In his Western clothes and sneakers, he appeared more like a highlander now, a member of one of the ethnic groups that control the government. His ideas had changed as well. He spoke the highlanders' language and several others, assimilating the ideas embedded within them. He'd begun learning about Western notions of law and justice. He'd been raised in a culture where killing was accepted, but now he lived in one that considered it immoral. When he thought of becoming a man according to Kara custom—enduring a long set of rituals—it was in the gauzy way one daydreams of the future. He thought less and less of revenge. Dunga knew he would always be a Kara, but he no longer felt bound by the authority of the tribe.

The Man They Call King Sits just inside the door of the large, mud-walled hut on a white, plastic grain sack that bears the fading seal of the U.S. Agency for International Development. It is an unlikely throne, donated by a people who do not

know his highness exists and who certainly have not heard of his power to control the elements, the animals, even the reach of death. He taps snuff from a plastic bottle. His hair, slick with butter and brilliant with crushed minerals, is perfect.

"If there is a problem, with cattle, people, the land—I resolve it," the king says. He inhales the snuff. In his face is a rare and complete confidence. "If there is a problem in my kingdom," he says, "the solution is me."

From his hut high in the Buska Mountains, Wangala Bankimaro rules some 30,000 members of the Hamar tribe. The Hamar are mostly pastoralists, herding cattle and goats across a broad bushland east of the Omo River. They also work small fields of sorghum and corn. They are neighbors and allies of the Kara. In an environment that is not forgiving, the Hamar have managed to thrive, growing into one of the region's largest tribes. For this the Hamar thank the rain, which feeds their cattle and crops. For rain they thank Wangala Bankimaro.

Hamar women, their hair rolled into gleaming red-dyed braids, tell me Wangala commands the respect of even the Ethiopian government, which rules from a distant capital. Hamar men, rifles looped over their shoulders, say Wangala's curse is feared more than bullets. Bullets can miss. The curse guarantees death.

When I meet Wangala in his hut, he is just back from a rain ceremony. It has been a success. Rain will come, he says, shifting his

If children are born deformed, or if their top teeth erupt before their bottom teeth, tradition dictates they must be killed.

weight on the grain sack. Brass coils wind around his wrists. He wears a T-shirt, white shorts, and sandals made from old tires.

I've never met a king before; I am not sure how to behave. In the dim, smoky hut, one of the king's wives boils coffee over a hearth. I ask the king why, if he can summon rain, he has not done it earlier to avoid the looming drought. He looks at me with the expression of a man humoring his guest.

"The people did not come to me," he says. "They did not make sacrifices to ask for rain."

Rules. An error of protocol. Like straying into crocodile territory.

Slowly, as the Ethiopian government has extended its influence and its legal code into tribal life, federal officials have worked to win Wangala's support. When they need him, they send a truck to pick him up—no small feat in this distant, asphalt-free region. One government plan aims to abolish what have been termed "harmful traditional practices." These include, ironically, the very things most tourists come to see: the ritual whipping of women or the stick fights or the cattle-jumping ceremony.

The list of targeted practices includes female circumcision (which is not practiced by the Hamar but is common throughout Ethiopia) and something called *mingi* killing. *Mingi* is a kind of very bad luck. In southern Ethiopia many tribes believe it is a bad omen if children are born deformed, if their top teeth erupt before their bottom teeth, or if they are born out of wedlock. Tradition dictates such children must be killed before *mingi* spreads. I met a Kara woman who gave birth to 12 children before she was able to be married; she said she killed all of them. Parents do (Continued on page 84)



Water and its distribution are crucial to agriculture, as is illustrated here by Kara channeling water into their plots. The Gilgel Gibe III's controlling of the Omo river's flooding will undoubtedly have many consequences for those whose livelihoods depend on farming along the river.



(Continued from page 81) not necessarily want to obey, but communal pressure is strong. Sometimes the child is abandoned in the bush, its mouth filled with earth; sometimes it is hurled into the river.

The Kara are discussing the practice with the government and with an NGO that works to save mingi babies. But Wangala has already made up his mind. Not long ago, after heavy government lobbying, he decided to support a ban. "Now there will be no more mingi killing among the Hamar," the king tells me. "I have made it so."

He says it without arrogance. Tradition, magic, and fear wiped away. Discarded like old clothes that no longer fit. *The solution is me.*

L ate one afternoon last March, in a shaded clearing high on a bank above the Omo River, some 200 Nyangatom gathered to celebrate peace with the Kara. Clay paint the color of flour streaked their bodies, rendering them ghostly, pale, skeletal. Beyond the clearing, enormous slabs of beef roasted on spits, dripping and popping. Beyond the fire, men from both tribes had stacked their automatic rifles in a gesture of goodwill and as a simple, practical matter. Given their history, it was better to keep the guns out of reach.

An old man paced before the crowd, waving his hands and shouting, the paint on his legs turning gray with dust.

"You, Nyangatom people! You must want peace!"

A small false beard, like that of an Egyptian pharaoh, pierced his lower lip and fluttered in his excitement. He turned to another section of the audience.

"You, Kara people! You must want peace! Let no one destroy your peace!" the elder shouted.

"So let it be!" the crowd chanted, the men's voices a low roll of thunder, the women

It was the answer Dunga had hoped for: his old world acknowledging the power of his new one.

heaving under pounds of necklaces coiled around their bone-thin shoulders.

"So let it be!"

Spears of meat were thrust into the ground before us. Soon the dancing would begin, and the clearing would shake with

the rhythms of feet thudding into the tired earth.

At the celebration I met a young man named Ekal, who had recently become an elected leader of the Nyangatom. He was under 30 and college educated, like Dunga. He wore an oversize polo shirt, baggy slacks, and a baseball cap slightly askew. While his people danced, all of them nearly naked, Ekal filmed it with his cell phone. He looked like a hip-hop star on safari.

Ekal said that the days of war were over and that the government was firmly establishing itself here. Even those who talked of upsetting the new balance could be arrested, Ekal said, and he told of a Nyangatom man who had recently bragged that he would cross the river for a Kara killing spree. Ekal sent the police. The man landed in jail.

The Omo region was transforming. The peace deal was part of it, and the proof was visible where we sat. This clearing on the west side of the river had once belonged to the Kara. Now, under the terms of the truce, the Nyangatom would remain on the land. The river had drawn them in and, like the Kara before them, they had decided *dus*, we will stay here.

When I met Dunga several days after the celebration, he told me his mind was finally clear. He wanted no part of revenge. "To me it must be the same as if a snake bit my brother in the bush. As if my father was hit by a car. Revenge is not my path."

The tribal elders supported his decision. They saw the changes sweeping the region.



Arbore women building high-ceilinged huts. Married Kara women share relatively equal status with men, but often perform more physical labor.

They had heard of the dam being built upriver and of the programs the government had begun to control certain customs. They saw the trap of tradition that awaited Dunga, the one that had claimed Kornan. The elders understood Dunga was now more than a man caught in a blood feud—he was an educated representative of his people, a future leader and role model. Cool yourself, they told him. You have many responsibilities, to your family, to the tribe. Do not think of vengeance.

It was the answer Dunga had always hoped for: his old world acknowledging the power of his new one. In addition to courting established leaders like Wangala Bankimaro, the government recently implemented a program to promote law and order by putting young, freshly trained professionals in positions of

local power. When he graduates, Dunga will be the first lawyer in his tribe; he is likely to be sent back to the Omo Valley as a judge or a government prosecutor. He is aware that he will be a kind of missionary, and it has become his personal mission to modernize the Kara people and prepare them for the future as part of the Ethiopian state. He even invokes one of U.S. President Barack Obama's election slogans.

"Change must come," he said. "I have a big responsibility to change my tribe in a big way. My revenge is to make the killing stop."

Several months later I return to Dus and find the peace holding, at least among the Ethiopian tribes. The Nyangatom, former

aggressors, are now suffering at the hands of the Turkana, a Kenyan tribe that has crossed the border and is said to have rustled more than 13,000 cattle. Few of the Kara gloat. A drought is settling over the land, and one day I watch as several Nyangatom pole across the river and ask Kara friends for help. Immediately the Kara provide their former enemies with sacks of grain.

But all is not forgiven. In Kornan's village, his young widow, Bacha, is still haunted. After his murder, Bacha entered traditional mourning; she removed her jewelry, let her hair grow untamed, wrapped herself in rough leather skin. Bacha mourned for two years—longer than custom requires—refusing to emerge until elders and friends practically dragged her out. Eventually she cut her hair and slipped on her bracelets and necklaces again, but she was not healed. A suitor approached; she rejected him. She has kept many of Kornan's possessions—clothing, beads. She keeps his AK-47.

One day I ask her about the rifle. Bacha's face is striking, unlined, her eyes like almonds. A roofing nail protrudes through her bottom lip. She doesn't want to talk about the rifle. Her face remains dark and smooth as the river.

"I keep it so my sons will see it," she says finally, twisting her callused hands in her lap. "So they will grow up familiar with it."

She seems unimpressed with Dunga. He is technically the head of the family, but it is she

who is in charge of day-to-day affairs, with the help of her two young sons, both under ten.

"My sons will know their father was killed by a Nyangatom," she says.

Before I leave Ethiopia, I reach Dunga in Jinka, a bustling frontier town where he had attended boarding school. He is giving his nephew, Bacha's younger son, a tour of the place. He plans to send the boy to school there, to follow in his footsteps. I mention what Bacha said.

"She's not free of this idea," he says. "Sometimes when I explain it to her, she says 'OK.' But she's not saying it from her heart. It seems sometimes that only revenge will make her happy."

Dunga thinks of it simply as an argument he must win. If he cannot persuade Bacha, he will persuade her sons, using his lawyer's skills, his missionary's zeal. Dunga has not officially become a man according to Kara tradition, but in the eyes of the Ethiopian nation he is more than that. He is the future.

Before we hang up, Dunga says that it has been decided that Bacha's older son will remain at home, like Kornan had, tending to herds and fields and family matters. He will live with Bacha and grow up among his father's old friends. Certainly he will dwell for a time in Kornan's shadow. I think of Bacha's face, the set of her jaw, the stillness of her gaze. When her son is old enough, she will tell the boy his father's story. Then, probably, she will give him his father's rifle.

Discussion Questions

- Why are nomadic or pastoral lifeways seen as impediments to a “modern” nation? What are the different perspectives about “harmful traditional practices?”
- What things are important for Kara masculinity? How is masculinity related to other aspects of life, such as kinship obligations and subsistence practices?
- What role did schools and formal education play in Dunga’s life, and in the larger picture of the Ethiopian government’s modernizing project? What is the basis of the curriculum, and how does this signify the foundations, priorities, and goals of the Ethiopian government and global political-economic system?

Questions for Further Reflection

- Browse the web for information about the current state of the Gilgel Gibe III dam and of the ethnic groups discussed in the article. Have any of the issues in the article been resolved? How has the dam affected peoples’ lives in the Omo Valley? Has the dam fulfilled the promises of developers and politicians?
- How do the desires and expectations of foreign tourists shape people’s livelihoods and cultural practices? When travelling or interacting with other people, what does it mean when our own thoughts of what we expect to see are different from what we actually encounter?
- How useful can an in-depth story about the trajectory of a single person’s life be for understanding broader social, cultural, and political-economic processes like those discussed in the article?
- In what ways have the social and economic changes discussed in the article enabled people to change their lives in meaningful ways? At the same time, in what ways are people’s options and ways of life becoming narrowed by “modernization”?
- What things are expected of women, men, and people of other genders in your society? What are important life events or rites of passage you know of or have experienced? How do these things change people’s relationships to their friends, family, and society in general? What happens when people do or do not fulfill these roles, rites of passages, and obligations?



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CELT APPEAL

This article traces the linkages between language, music, and history in the expression of Celtic identities along Europe's Atlantic coast. As the article demonstrates, the reckoning of a connection to the past can give rise to senses of social and cultural belonging that serve to keep alive traditions, but also to reinvent them to fit the needs of the present.

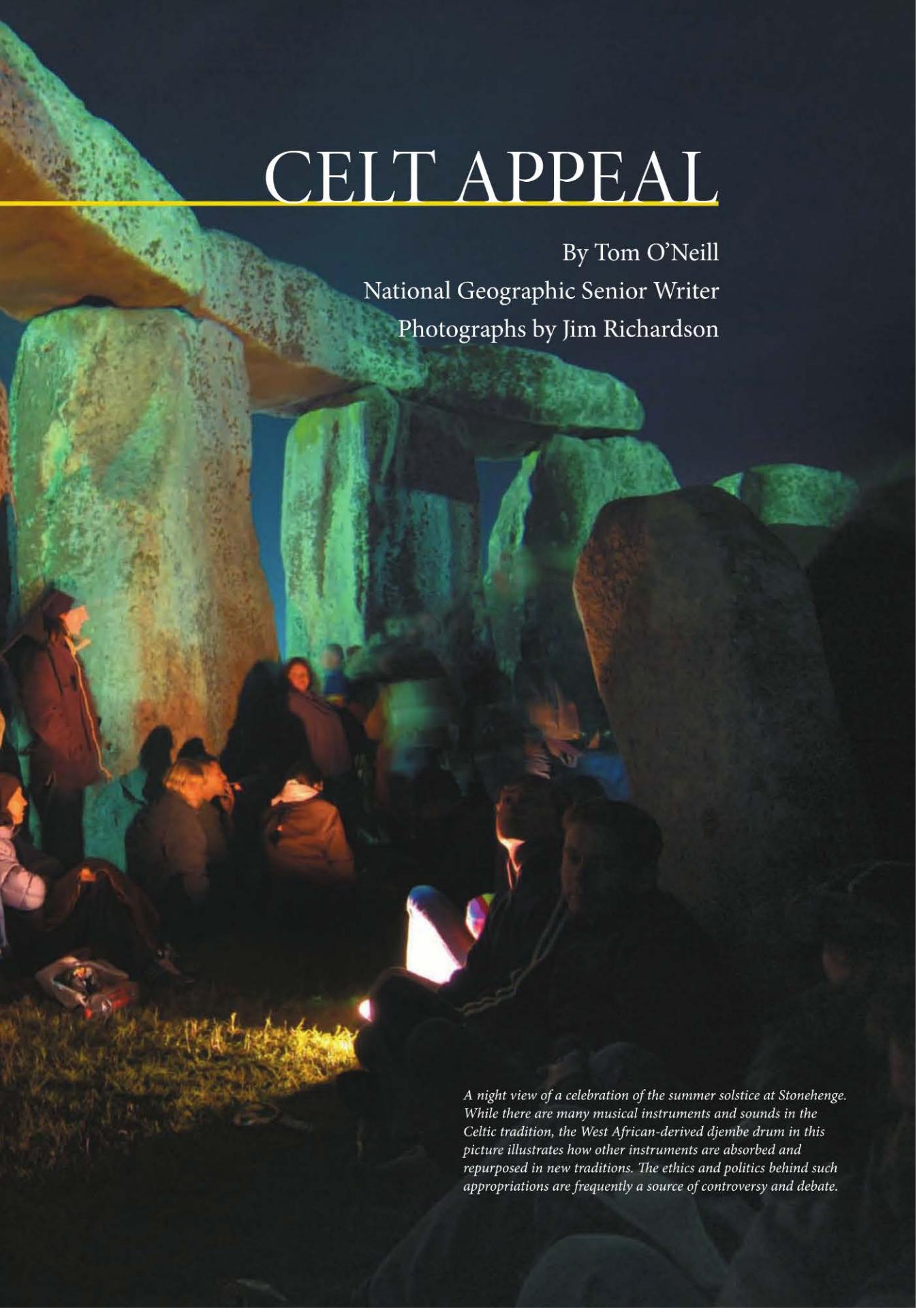
When reading this article, you should focus on:

- How do traditions come to be? In what ways are traditions important to people and sociocultural groups? Why do traditions and the groups associated with them change over time? What does it mean for people to reinvent cultural traditions and identities?
- What are the ways that people deploy history, music, language, dress, spirituality, or religion in refashioning traditions and cultivating senses of identity and belonging?
- How do languages and cultural practices become forms of resistance? What are the histories and politics that make such cultural differences fiercely meaningful to people today?
- What roles do marketing and consumption have in both the construction of and people's participation in things like "tradition" and "culture"?



CELT APPEAL

By Tom O'Neill
National Geographic Senior Writer
Photographs by Jim Richardson



A night view of a celebration of the summer solstice at Stonehenge. While there are many musical instruments and sounds in the Celtic tradition, the West African-derived djembe drum in this picture illustrates how other instruments are absorbed and repurposed in new traditions. The ethics and politics behind such appropriations are frequently a source of controversy and debate.

VISIONS OF STONEHENGE Irresistible to tourists with camera phones, pre-Celtic Stonehenge in England has also drawn Celtic revivalists for over a century. For their rituals many model themselves on ancient Druids.



LANGUAGE, MUSIC, AND IDENTITY ALONG EUROPE'S ATLANTIC SHORES.

Finding a Celt in 21st-century Europe isn't that difficult, though you may need a few ferry tickets, a good pair of boots, and a sharp set of ears

before your search is done. Go as far west as you can, right up to the cliffs and coves of the Atlantic—it doesn't matter if it's France or England or Ireland or the outer islands of Scotland—and turn around. Odds are you'll see rocks, plenty of them, piled up in fences, shaped into houses, or lying like bare knuckles in scruffy fields. Probably it's raining. Your search is getting warm. To get warmer still, find a place like the Cross Inn on the windy, moor-covered Isle of Lewis in Scotland's Outer Hebrides. If you're lucky, you might hear a bagpipe or fiddle playing, and if you're luckier still, you might tune in to an unfamiliar sound: Celts talking.

The conversation might go:

"Hullo, Norman, how's your mother?"

"Great, she's visiting her grandchildren and planting flowers in the garden."

Except the speech is rhythmic and guttural, a back-of-the-throat performance, nothing like the rounded slip and slide of English. If there were sound balloons above their heads, they'd

I felt as if I had stumbled upon a **secret society.**

look like this: "*Hallo, a Thormoid. Ciamar a tha do mhàthair?*"

"Gu dòigheil. Tha i a' coimhead air a h-ogh-aichean agus a' cur fluraichean anns a' ghàrradh."

The Sunday mates in the Cross Inn are speaking Scottish Gaelic. To them it's no big deal; it's the first language they learned at home. But to me, an American long intoxicated by Irish roots and curious whether an even wider and deeper kinship might exist, that of a Celtic identity, I felt as if I had stumbled upon a secret society. There was something thrilling, even subversive, about hearing an ancient Celtic language in the land of Shakespeare, where neither the Queen nor the Prime Minister would have the foggiest clue what these locals on Lewis were talking about.

When the men caught me listening, they switched to English. "It's rude, that's what we were taught, to speak our language in front of strangers," said Norman Campbell, a novelist and poet who publishes in Scottish Gaelic. I bought a round, and the men opened up, telling me how in their parents' time teachers would

Adapted from "Celt Appeal" by Tom O'Neill: National Geographic Magazine, March 2006.

take a belt to students overheard speaking the native tongue. Now it's different, they said, and the government is promoting the language. More drinks, and Norman's brother Alasdair drops by and starts singing. The tune is "Gealach Aba-chaidh an Eòrna," or "The Moon that Ripens the Barley." It sounds sad, I remarked. "Well," Alasdair said, "that moon is huge, very yellow, and it breaks your heart."

Ah, the clues are adding up for identifying a Celt: the ancient language, an easily retrieved sense of historical grievance, a resort to song, and this bittersweet sentimentality. Less clear is how a fringe culture like the Celts managed to survive, even flourish, in a rapidly assimilating world. A brief detour into history begins to tell the tale.

Most of us are unaware that Celts once dominated the breadth of Europe from the Black Sea to the Atlantic—and for a long time. An early form of Welsh was spoken in Britain 1,500 years before Old English took root. The Celtic languages still spoken in Europe hark back to the Late Bronze Age (1200-800 B.C.) and a civilization of aristocratic warrior tribes. The word "Celtic" comes from the Greek *Keltoi*, first appearing in the sixth century B.C. to describe "barbarians" living inland from the Mediterranean Sea. Little suggests these people united or called themselves Celts. Yet there is no denying that these far-flung peoples spoke closely related languages and shared beliefs, styles of art and weaponry, and tribal societies. Trade, principally by water, connected them. Calling them Celts makes sense, if only to separate them from what they weren't: Roman or Greek.

All this categorizing might easily have become an arid academic debate about a lost people. Beginning in the second century Roman legions vanquished Celtic armies across Europe. Only the peoples of northern Britain and Ireland remained unconquered.

No one else wanted to live where the Celts did. Those places were poor and remote, and no one spoke their languages.

In the fifth century the Anglo-Saxons invaded Celtic lands, followed by the Vikings, storming the coasts in their long warships, the Normans, who attacked from France, and finally the colonizing armies of the English and

French crowns. From these wars of resistance came many Celtic heroes and martyrs such as the legendary King Arthur, the Irish High King Brian Boru, and Scotland's William Wallace, known as Braveheart.

By the end of the Middle Ages, Celtic culture was headed toward extinction, its remnants pushed to the very western edge of Europe. "No one else wanted to live where the Celts did," a Breton man said. "Those places were poor and remote, and no one spoke their languages."

Being ostracized to no-man's-land did not spare the Celts from further depredations. The English and French banned or restricted their languages, their instruments and music, their names, their right to own property, and in the case of the kilt-wearing Scottish Highland clans, even their clothing. It's a bit miraculous Celtic civilization survived in any form. By clinging to the fringes, geographically and culturally, Celts refused to vanish.

Now, in one of those delectable backward flips of history, Celts and all things Celtic suddenly seem omnipresent. "Europe's beautiful losers," as one British writer called them, are commanding attention as one of the new century's seductive identities: free-spirited, rebellious, poetic, nature-worshipping, magical, self-sufficient.

I first saw Fred Morrison onstage at the Festival Interceltique in Brittany, wearing a plaid kilt and a polka-dot tie, all sweaty and solemn as he played Breton and Irish tunes on his bagpipes. Morrison ("the Jimi Hendrix of pipers!" a fan raved) is from the island of South



A shepherd and his dog herding sheep in Beddgelert, Snowdonia National Park, Wales.

Uist in Scotland's Outer Hebrides. When we met in a café late one morning, he had traded his kilt for blue jeans and looked like an off-hours traveling salesman with two attaché-size cases in hand. Inside were bagpipes. He said he'd learned the pipes from his father and in 1972, at 18, had headed to Amsterdam to play in the streets. Soon he hooked up with some Irish musicians and freed his style. "I learned to become a rebel musically," Morrison said. He went on to play for pathbreaking Scottish bands like Capercaillie and Clan Alba, and worked on the soundtrack for the movie *Rob Roy*.

For Morrison, like most modern-day Celts, the past became liberating; it was not some sacred, hands-off heirloom but a scuffed-up plaything, the more loved the more it's used. "I would never turn my back on tradition,"

Morrison said. "But I came to see that tradition can come with this straight face, allowing almost no freedom for improvisation. I decided it was cooler to break the rules." At that he set off to rehearse with a "killer bouzouki player," that being someone extremely handy with a mandolin-like instrument from the Balkans—sure to sound Celtic when Morrison is done accompanying it.

A similar sleight of hand is happening throughout the Celtic realm, from Scotland to Galicia in northern Spain, where anything goes and the definition of a Celt is as elusive and shifting as the coastal weather. There are "blood Celts," the several million people who were raised and still live in the surviving Celtic language territories. Then there is the growing tribe of "Celts of the spirit," who feel touched by the history, myths, (Continued on page 95)



A band in Lorient, France, playing traditional tunes on instruments of Celtic origin. Lorient and the larger Brittany region of France have a deep Celtic history. "The Irish and Bretons have a lot in common," said one resident in Lorient, "Music brings out our Celtic roots."

(Continued from page 93) and artistic expressions of beautiful losers. “Celtic of any sort,” observed J. R. R. Tolkien, is “a magic bag, into which anything may be put, and out of which almost anything may come.”

Out of that magic bag drips water, the element that linked the Celtic lands in the past and now most often serves to separate them, for better or worse. Chugging across the Little Minch, the ferry remains the most practical way to reach Lewis and Harris, the northernmost of the Outer Hebrides. One Saturday night I caught the weekend’s last sailing from the Island of Skye, the waves seemingly in sync with the churning vowels and consonants of the Gaelic onboard announcements. Ferries don’t run on Sundays, a stone-quiet day when an austere form of Presbyterianism keeps shops shuttered and people inside their homes.

Driving down Lewis’s empty roads, past stretches of gloomy bogland, through villages lined with houses the color of wet sand, I discovered a forgiven bustle of activity in the parking lot of the Free Church of Scotland in Barvas. A service in Scottish Gaelic was about to begin.

Lewis attracted me because of its isolation and because of its sounds. Many of its 18,500 inhabitants still speak Gaelic as an everyday language, a rare pocket considering that less than one percent of Scotland’s population, or only about 30,000 people, are believed to be fluent in the language. An even rarer phenomenon awaited inside the bare-walled church: the singing of psalms in the local language, a musical form as unique and starkly sensual as the chanting of Tibetan monks.

Several dozen parishioners, mostly older folks, took their places on the hard pews, the gents in dark suits, the ladies a bit more daring in summer hats sprouting ribbons and bows. A well-freckled woman on my right

Celtic of any sort is a magic bag, into which anything may be put, and out of which almost anything may come.

shyly passed me a sweet. In a tradition going back to preliterate days, a precentor stood up and began singing solo, to imprint melody and words with the congregation. Soon everyone joined in. The voices didn’t lift in ecstatic joy but keened and moaned. The singing conjured up worlds of lament and forbearance, a requiem for an island drifting away from its roots.

Services in English are outdrawing the Gaelic sessions, the minister said afterward. Other islanders told me they were worried that the toll of emigration—everyone had tales of relatives past and present leaving—and the decline of crofting, the family practice of raising crops and livestock on small plots, would finally bury the language. But the most pressing problem, it seems, is that for the younger generation, a whiff of country bumpkin rises off the ancient words. While I was interviewing Christina Morrison, 83, in her home, her middle-aged daughter interrupted from the kitchen. “It’s not cool to speak Gaelic. The fancy people in town look down on us.” The old woman nodded and admitted that even her grandchildren are a tough sell. “I give them ten pence if they answer in Gaelic.”

Learning Gaelic does have economic benefits. In a cafeteria in Stornoway, the only town on the island, I met a dozen college-age islanders who through Comunn na Gàidhlig, a government-funded agency promoting Gaelic, worked at summer jobs using their bilingual skills. They were interning at places like the BBC radio station, which broadcasts 65 hours of Gaelic programming a week, and the local arts council. Most hoped to make a career out of teaching Gaelic, and all vowed to raise Gaelic-speaking children. “But amongst ourselves, we mostly speak English,” confessed one young woman, Jayne Macleod. “Anymore, Gaelic is the language of schools and old people.”



In the Iona Monastery from the Inner Hebrides in Scotland, a kilted man lights candles around a Celtic cross in the abbey church.

When I rode the ferry back to Skye, I noticed that the shipboard announcements were only in English. Christina should have been aboard with her change purse.

During the Celtic glory days of old, water routes converged on Ireland. From its shores came merchants, missionaries, soldiers of fortune, musicians, and in 1607, the last of

the Gaelic aristocracy, including my ancestors, the Uí (Gaelic for “descendant of”) Néill, who were fleeing English troops. Befitting this busy, water-coursed past, the ferry I took to Ireland was no slow boat to a rustic past but a high-speed catamaran rushing to a cosmopolitan future. For most of the passengers, crossing the North Channel from Stranraer, Scotland, to Belfast, capital of Northern Ireland, Celtic no doubt meant Celtic Tiger, a brand name of success given to the booming economy of the Republic of Ireland. Irish in both the north and south are gloating that—finally—they’ve caught up with England and the rest of Western Europe, embracing the one-size-fits-all notion of modern prosperity.

Poet Gearóid Mac Lochlainn, like a true Celt, resists the homogenizing forces of the time. He speaks and writes in the Irish language, which in parts of his native Belfast still comes across as fighting words. “Here the language itself is viewed as a taunt just by the fact that it’s still spoken, that it’s survived,” said Mac Lochlainn, a thin, jeans-and-T-shirt guy with close-cropped hair.

Mac Lochlainn talked to me on safe ground, inside the Cultúrlann, a steepled red-brick church converted to an Irish-language center in the working-class Catholic neighborhood of Falls Road. He did not learn Irish from the cradle. He picked up threads of it from a Christian Brothers school and from family friends and visitors from the Gaeltacht, the areas in the republic, mostly on the western fringe, where Irish hangs on as a community language. His poems often marvel at the dissonance of sounds between the majority and minority languages, as when he flirts with an Irish-speaking woman whose “puckety-pocking words” show up his “sluppty- slip-slapping” drunken talk in English.

As Mac Lochlainn spun his past, people kept stopping by our table to say hello. He had caused a sensation with his book *Stream of Tongues* (*Sruth Teangacha*)—Irish poems side-by-side with their English translations. One

called “Poet’s Choice” laid out his fever dream: “I want to speak, rant, rave/untie tongue till it blooms and bleeds/in seven shades of street rhythms.” But it wasn’t the printed page that caused the stir; tucked into the back of the book was a CD of Mac Lochlainn rapping his poetry to music. It was a mesmerizing performance. Admirers who turn out for his appearances probably think he shares turf with Eminem, but Mac Lochlainn points to a deeper influence, that of the Celtic bards. He likens his poems to *sean nós*, the traditional style of unaccompanied singing. “When I read my work, it’s like a séance,” he said. “I feel like I’m a vessel for past voices.”

Soon he was off, a busy man, writing and recording a new book and preparing for performances in Liverpool, Slovenia, the Czech Republic. “It seems like everyone wants to be a Celt,” he said. I dropped the bard off near his flat, somewhere in a tough-looking neighborhood of brick apartment blocks, a Celtic tiger on the loose. Voyagers long knew the Celtic lands by their native names: Scotland was Alba; the Isle of Man, Ellan Vannin; Ireland, Éireann; Cornwall, Kernow; and Wales, Cymru. “-ree, -ree,” I softly chanted aboard the *Jonathan Swift*, a ferry across the Irish Sea to the island of Anglesey in northern Wales.

As a nod toward their native languages, most modern Celtic lands put up bilingual town names. And as a nod toward independence, Celtic vandals just as regularly scratch out the English and French names, creating the sight of tourists standing befuddled beside their cars in places like northwestern Ireland and the western tip of Cornwall, a useless English-language map hanging from their hands. Memorizing a few pronunciation rules is almost mandatory in Wales. Try asking for directions to Machyn-lleth and Llanfairfechan. Except for a few regions in Ireland, the Welsh stand apart in retaining their old unaccompanied, un-anglicized place-names, particularly in the north and west. Here is the best defended outpost of Celtic speech: Nearly 600,000 people, roughly a fifth of the

population, can speak Welsh, the beneficiaries of a nationalist movement that has used language as a rallying cry since the 1960s. The old language bubbles up in schools, pubs, grocery stores, and

on television. The English name for Wales comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *wealas*, meaning foreigners, a description many Welsh today would turn on its head and apply to the English themselves.

Besides language, what gives the Celtic Welsh a chest-pounding feel of home is heroic history—and Wales is thick with it: walled towns, roofless churches, spiral-engraved standing stones, holy wells, crumbling hill forts, all proclaiming a past age of Celtic dominance.

The history that stirs the hottest passions among Welsh Celts belongs to medieval times, when Welsh leaders resisted the ultimately successful invasions of the English kings. Those heroic days seemed as fresh as an open wound to David Petersen as he drove me through the Towy River Valley in southwestern Wales. I had met the ponytailed Petersen before at the Festival Interceltique, the pan-Celtic music event in Lorient, Brittany, where he headed the Welsh delegation. When I heard him call the Union Jack a “butcher’s apron,” I knew I’d found a Celtic troublemaker.

Petersen, a Celtic commentator and sculptor, wanted to show me one of the latest patriotic monuments to the Welsh cause. He was in a pugnacious mood, befitting the son of a former heavyweight champ. Jabbing his finger right and left as we sped through the mellow valley, Petersen bloodied the English face on the landscape. He angrily corrected a few anglicized names of towns; pointed out the ruins of Welsh castles while ignoring the bulkier, fixed-up English ones; and, slowing down beside a modest piece of pastureland, complained that no marker identified this ground as the site of the glorious Battle of Coed Llathen. Here, in 1257, Welsh troops crushed the

The effing nerve of the authorities to tell us that this has no historical value.

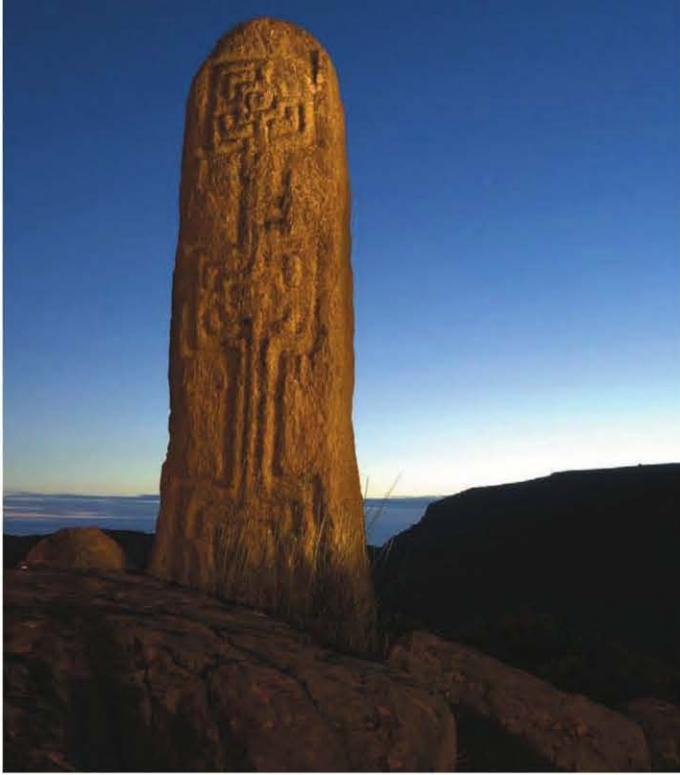
invading English army of King Henry III. “A new map of this area has left the battlefield out,” Petersen said in disbelief. “The effing nerve of the authorities to tell us that this has no historical value.”

Wheeling into a car park in the center of Llandovery, an old market town, Petersen reached the point of his harangue: On a rise, sharing space with the broken walls of a castle, stood a warrior’s statue. Helmet, spear, flowing cloak, shield, and broadsword—the costume of war gleamed in stainless steel. But where there should have been a face and a body inside the medieval uniform, empty space stared out.

The 16-foot-high statue represents Llywelyn ap Gruffydd Fychan, a “brave nobody,” Petersen said. When English troops stormed the area in 1401, looking for the army of Welsh rebel Owain Glyndŵr, the local Lord Llywelyn led the enemy in the wrong direction, buying time for Glyndŵr to escape. As punishment for his subterfuge, Llywelyn was executed in the town square. “The English took his stomach out and cooked it in front of him,” Petersen said. The empty cloak symbolizes the horrific form of death.

Petersen knows the full story behind the raising of the statue on the 600th anniversary of Llywelyn’s execution. His sons Toby and Gideon designed and built the locally commissioned monument. Back at the car we found a £30 (\$50) parking ticket on the windshield. Petersen snatched it up, cursed the authorities, and vowed to fight the ticket. He had no choice: A Ghost of Wales Past was looking over his shoulder.

When I reached Cornwall at the southernmost tip of England by car—alas, no ferry—I drove from St. Just to St. Ives to St. Agnes to St. Austell. People joke that there aren’t enough seats in heaven for all the Celtic saints. Wherever you are in Celtic lands, every day is a holy day. (*Continued on page 102*)



A Celtic standing stone, Gleann Cholm Cille, County Donegal, Ireland.



The St. Boniface Holy Well from Munlochy, Black Isle, Scotland. Such places, where pieces of cloth or paper are dipped in the well's water, can be sites of prayer for pagans as well as Christians.

Long banished from Cornwall for inciting rowdiness, the fertility horse figure Penglaz swirls once again through Penzance at the revival of Golowan, the feast of St. John.





(Continued from page 98) For the first week or so of September alone, I counted feast days for saints named Macanisius, Ultan, Rhudlad, Disibod, Kieran, and Finian. The saints' names date to the time between the fifth and eighth centuries when Celtic Christian missionaries, most from Ireland, scattered along the Atlantic coast and beyond to establish monastic centers. The monks often located their sanctuaries at pre-Christian ceremonial sites, acknowledging their sacred significance.

This entwining of pagan and early Christian traditions today exerts a magnetic pull at the religious sites, luring pilgrims, tourists, spiritual groupies, and mystic seekers. Something about Cornwall, its woolly wet weather, its abundance of prehistoric sites, and its ties to the legend of King Arthur (local Arthurians locate his castle at Tintagel), draws the more mystical and pagan of the pilgrims.

One day while looking around the Iron Age village site of Carn Euny, I met Cheryl Straffon, a Cornish goddess worshipper. I first noticed her at the head of a group of American women coming out of an underground chamber. The early Celts may have used such subterranean rooms, called *fogous* in Cornwall, as ritual sites. "That room has great acoustics," I overheard Straffon saying. "Chanting sounds good in there."

Straffon is editor of a newsletter called *Meyn Mamvro* about sacred sites in Cornwall. Middle-aged with a mop of graying blond hair, she has been intensely drawn to the Cornish landscape since she was a schoolgirl here. "It's as if I had been born with memories of these places," she said. "It is not a cold remote past here. It's a warm immediate past."

To commune with that past, Straffon observes the pre-Christian Celtic calendar, conducting rituals on the season-turning feast days of Imbolc (February 1, to mark the lactation of ewes), Beltane (May 1, when flocks and herds were moved to summer pastures), Lughnasa (August 1, for the first harvest), and Samhain (October 31-November 1, when the

world of the dead was believed to briefly open, inspiring the modern Halloween).

On each of these days Straffon and her fellow celebrants invite a Celtic goddess into their midst. Brigid, an Irish deity associated with healing, later absorbed by the church as a saint, is invoked on Imbolc when Straffon visits holy wells like Madron. We tramped one day through woods to the well, a pool of dark water seeping out of the ground. A fungus called stinkhorn gave off a piercing sour smell, and on the surrounding moss-furred trees, shreds of cloth and paper hung like ornaments off every branch. These were offerings, or "clouties," representing body parts that petitioners, Christians as well as pagans, wished to have healed.

When conducting a ritual here, Straffon said she and her friends decorate the well with candles and call in Brigid using Gaelic chants, just the way she imagines people did for centuries. "This gives us a sense of connecting with our ancestors who lived here," she said. "It allows us to relate to the land and give it thanks."

Pagans don't delight everyone in Cornwall. Some members of a local church have stripped the clouties at well sites, Straffon said, and a fundamentalist Christian farmer knocked down a standing stone on his land. But as we sloshed through mud back to the road and rain began to fall, Straffon remarked that, judging by the number of visitors from afar seeking out the local sacred sites, Celts must be everywhere. "I believe if you feel Celtic," she said, "you become Celtic."

In many ways the so-called Celtic spirituality has become as popular and marketable as Celtic music. People are embracing it for its aura of seeking the divine in nature and for treating women as the spiritual equals of men. They come to meditate and conduct rituals at early Celtic Christian centers like Iona in Scotland, Glastonbury in England, and Glendalough in Ireland. On Inishmore in Ireland's Aran Islands, (Continued on page 104)



A headdress worn by a woman at a Celtic summer solstice celebration at Stonehenge, in England.

(Continued from page 102) I attended a “Celtic wedding.” Dara Molloy, who had quit the Catholic priesthood ten years earlier to protest the prohibition against female clergy, read the vows inside the ruins of a 12th-century church—but only after he had led the American couple to a fertility stone and holy well to pray.

The overnight ferry to Brittany across the English Channel probably follows a route similar to the one taken by Guénolé, a Celtic saint who sailed to “Little Britain” from England in the late fifth century to found a monastery. Driving through rolling farm country (finally, fertile, stone-free fields!), I stopped outside the village of Collorec, at a small fieldstone chapel named after the saint. A farmer was in the doorway, like Father Time himself, with a scythe on his shoulder, having just cut the grass around the building.

“When I was young, people would come to pray for the rains to stop,” said Marcel Quéré, laying down his scythe and unlocking the chapel door to give me a look. “When a person died, someone would come ring the bell.” Inside the dim interior I saw sculpted dragons swallowing the ends of the crossbeams and carved human heads where the walls met the ceiling. Tolerating these pagan symbols were sad-eyed wooden statues of the Virgin Mary and St. Guénolé.

One Sunday afternoon, a hundred or so people, almost all of them white-haired, gathered for Guénolé’s pardon, or feast day. They sat on benches outside the chapel in the shade

of pine trees. A mischievous breeze kept blowing the cross off the makeshift altar and onto the grass, until Father Pierre Mahé, smiling through his white beard, laid it flat on the table. Following custom, the priest, who serves 22 churches in four parishes, said the outdoor Mass in French, but the worshippers sang hymns in Breton, now spoken almost exclusively by the elderly. When Mass ended, two men carried the statue of St. Guénolé out of the chapel, hoisted him on their shoulders, and led everyone on a slow procession down the lane, past stone farmhouses, circling around to return the saint to the chapel.

For the rest of the afternoon, the congregants held a dance at a nearby crossroads. Mostly the women danced, twirling and stepping in the crisp syncopation of Breton dance, while a pair of accordion players and someone on the bodhran, an Irish drum, made music under a hot sun. The men bowled in a grassy patch beside the road, tossing unpainted wooden balls at rows of pins. The priest, having replaced his vestments with blue jeans, stayed and drank beer. No one appeared in any hurry to leave.

I suspected that the Scots, the Irish, the Welsh, and the Cornish, the blood Celts among them anyway, would all feel at home here with these Bretons. There were no costumes or causes on display, nothing done to impress an outsider. The past danced into the present, and everyone, with a nod toward St. Guénolé, could feel thankful that on this day the world did not feel strange or hostile. It felt Celtic.

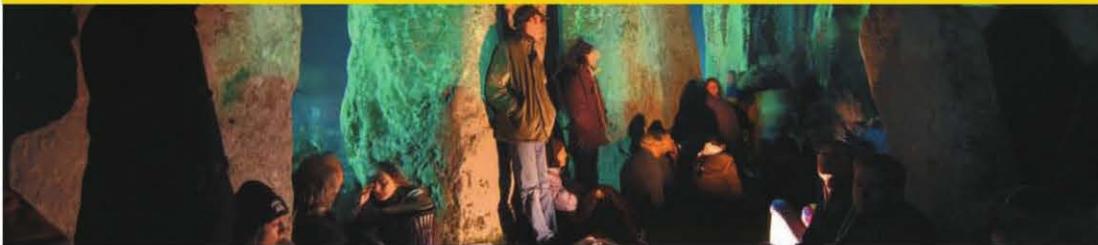
Discussion Questions

- What are the different ways that people view Celtic languages and cultural practices? How does this change along lines of age, gender, class, or locale? How have attitudes toward Celtic languages and cultures changed historically to lead to their present place in contemporary Europe?
- What are “blood Celts” and “Celts of the spirit”? What does this distinction mean in terms of how people construct their identities and practice “Celtic culture”?
- What explanations does the article offer for why so many people are attracted to Celtic culture and places? How people among the diverse crowd discussed in the article articulate their ties to Celtic culture and identity?
- What different religious or spiritual beliefs systems and practices does the article discuss in relation to Celtic culture? What is the history of these

religious and spiritual affiliations? How have people, in both past and present, fused beliefs and practices?

Questions for Further Reflection

- What does the author’s own quest to find a sense of identity also tell us about the importance of heritage and tradition for people? How does this come through in the writing of the text, such as in his choice of words or metaphors?
- How are the same processes of constructing identities and traditions discussed in the article at work in your own life and communities?
- Genealogy is a popular (and often important) undertaking in many societies. How do you figure out who you are related to? How have you or people known thought of themselves differently after learning their about genealogy? What are the ways that people reconnect with their “roots”?



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