

**Health and the Rise of Civilization.** Mark Nathan Cohen. New Haven, Connecticut and London, United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 1989. \$35.00 (cloth-bound), \$13.00 (paperbound). Pp. x; 285. ISBN 0-300-04006-7 (clothbound), 0-300-05023-2 (paperbound).

Readers of Mark Nathan Cohen's *Health and the Rise of Civilization* risk getting lost, as I did, foraging in the notes. Those who do will be rewarded by detail rich enough to fill several additional volumes; in the present one they comprise nearly half of the 270 pages. I found myself reading the chapters twice, once for the notes, and once for the text, in which Cohen delivers what he has promised in the Preface: "a broad overview of the impact of cultural evolution on human health."

The book begins by examining how our perceptions of "primitive" and "civilized" societies conflict with ideas about progress and development. Cohen then examines the relationship between health and the evolution of human societies by examining changes in human behavior and their effects on health (Chapter 1), the changing patterns of human behavior in increasingly large-scale societies (Chapter 2), and the epidemiological and nutritional consequences of the shift in human social structure from nomadic foraging groups to large sedentary populations (Chapters 4, 5, and 6). He draws largely on examples from contemporary hunter-gatherer societies. Finally, Cohen presents evidence from archaeological excavations of human skeletons that, on the one hand, supports the belief that prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies were burdened by disease and hunger, and that they often adopted violent social measures to maintain small populations. On the other hand, Cohen's analysis suggests that "civilization," "progress," and "development" have produced far fewer benefits to all but the most privileged members of human society in health, nutrition, and life expectancy than we suppose.

Professor Cohen deftly combines models and examples from many fields of inquiry—notably medicine and epidemiology, anthropology and archaeology, and demography and ethnography—in an engaging analysis that challenges common assumptions about health and social development. This book will be of interest not only to researchers in these fields, but also to those involved in health and development policy and programs.

In addition to the extensive notes, the book is indexed and has a comprehensive bibliography.

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