

Jared diamond essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Jared Diamond was a professor at UCLA in Los Angeles. He was a biologist by training, and a specialist in human physiology. But his real passion has always been the study of birds. He began watching the birds when he was about seven years old in the United States. He arrived in New Guinea at the age of 26 and he felt that it was love at first sight. Diamond started to make regular trips to New Guinea and ever since, he decides to be the leading expert on the bird life of the island.

But in the course of his field work he becomes just as curious about the people in Guinea. Jared Diamond's quest to uncover the roots of inequality began in the rainforest of Papua New Guinea. In 1974, a local man named Yali asked Diamond a deceptively simple question. " Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo, but we black people had little cargo of our own? " Diamond realized that Yali's question had penetrated the heart of a great mystery of human history, the root of global inequality.

Diamond knew that the answer had little to do with ingenuity or individual skill. From his own experience in the jungles of New Guinea, he had observed that native hunter gatherers were just as intelligent as people of European descent and far more resourceful. Diamond sets out to explore the division of the world into haves and have not's. It was a massive challenge the few scholars would have dared to take. He was a scientist, not a historian. How could he possibly solve the great puzzles of human history? Quote the narrator of the movie Gun, Germs and Steel.

To understand where inequality came from, Diamond needed to identify a time before inequality, when people across the world were living more or

less the same way. He had to turn back the clock thousands of years, back before the first civilization. About 13, 000 years ago, the ravage of the last Ice Age were over. The world was becoming warmer and wetter. One area where humans were thriving was the Middle East. The Middle East was far less arid than today, with more forest, trees and plants. One of the few places on earth where it's still possible to find people hunting and gathering is the rainforest of Papua New Guinea.

Diamond mentions that instead of studying about this lifestyle in the archaeological books, he had been lucky enough to witness it first hand; to catch an animal requires skill, stealth and encyclopedic knowledge about hundreds of animal species. You have to be pretty smart to be a hunter quoted Diamond in video Guns, Germs and Steel. Middle Eastern hunted the same way, tracking down whatever they could find. But the problem with hunting is that it's never been a productive way to find enough food. It takes time to track an animal and with a bow and arrow, there is no certainty of how the hunt will end.

In Papua New Guinea the gathering was done by women. An important source of food there was wild sago. By stripping a Sago tree they can get to the pulp at the center, which can be turned into dough and then cooked. Although, it physically is hard work, gathering is a more productive way of finding food than hunting. But it still provided enough calories to support a large population. In the Middle East there were very different plants to gather. Growing wild between the trees were two cereal grasses, barely and wheat far more nutritious than sago.

Of all the plant species in the world, only a limited number are possible, or useful, to domesticate. Most of these species are native to Europe and Asia. The species like wheat, barley and rice which grew in great number only grew in these parts of the world. Two more species are native to Tropical Africa people farmed sorghum, millet and yams while only one is native to America corn. But there was exception to the rule, an area where farming didn't bring the same benefits was the highland of New Guinea. Unfortunately not a single domestic plant grew in the wild of Australia.

Diamond not only made this discovery with plants, he also discovered it with animals. Animals increased in productivity of farming through their meat, milk, leather, dung and as beast of burden. Without them farmers are trapped in a cycle of manual labor. Of all the animals in the world only 14 have ever been domesticated and 12 of these are native to Eurasia. Goats being milked and combed, as well as meat animals could be used for their milk, providing an ongoing source of protein. Their hair and skin could be used to make clothes for extra warmth.

Overtime domestic animals became an integral part of the new agricultural way of life. Also animal dung can be used to provide sort of fertilization for the cereal crops. The only big domestic animal in New Guinea was the pig, and it wasn't even native. Unfortunately, pigs don't give you milk or wool, or leather and most importantly pigs can't be used for muscle power. The way of life in New Guinea was perfectly viable. It survived intact for thousands of years. But according to Diamond, people didn't advance technologically because they spent so much time and energy feeding themselves.

Africans never domesticated their animals. South Asia had elephants and was used to work. But they're not farmed for the purpose. Instead, each elephant is caught in the wild and then tamed and trained. Diamond counted up to 148 different species of wild, plant eating terrestrial mammals that weighted over 100 pounds, but of those 148, the number that has never successfully farmed for any length of time is just 14. Goats, sheep, pigs, cows, horses, donkeys, Bactrian camels, Arabian camels, water buffalo, llamas, reindeer, yaks, mittens and Bali cattle.

Just 14 large domestic animals in 10, 000 years were domesticated. South America had the lama. The Middle East had all the goods. The better food package the more trial and error. People weaponize these trail and error and advances than go to war. Eurasia food package leads to trail and error and this lead to weapons and this led to wars. The people of the Fertile Crescent were geographically blessed, and had a huge head start. New Guinea tried to play catch up but there was still a gap. Diamond states " Geography was the advantage that whites had over New Guineans. "