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| Nothing can halt the destruction of the Yanomama Indian culture in the heart of South American rain forests. But Kenneth Good doesn't have to like it. Good, a top anthropologist, is an expert on the Yanomama, a Stone Age tribe that makes its home in the Amazon River basin and surrounding areas of Venezuela and Brazil. But the Yanomama, who were untouched by the outside world for centuries, are being forced to confront modern civilization. "They're doomed," Good said, shrugging his shoulders. Good, whose family lives in Lancaster County, Pa., also has close familial ties to the Yanomama. His wife, Yarima, is the only member of the tribe to leave permanently for the "outside world." That's partly why Good is eager to discuss the survival of the Indian tribe, both in its harsh environment and in the face of encroaching Western civilization. "The first they survived very well, in a very beautiful, intricate way," he said. "The second, they won't survive. It's inevitable. ... What traditional culture has survived once contact occurs?" Good contacted the Yanomama first in 1975 while doing field work for his doctorate. He was supposed to stay with them for 15 months. He ended up living with them for more than six years, spread over a 15-year period. He visited about 20 Yanomama villages, 13 of which had never before seen an outsider. Eventually, the tribe offered Good a wife. Tribal marriages are arranged by elders, he explained, but they are not binding if a couple doesn't get along. He accepted the proposal. "I figured I'd eventually go home and that would be that," he said. "But it didn't happen that way. The relationship developed and we stayed together." Now with three children from the marriage, Yarima is adapting to U.S. culture. "She thought the whole world was an Amazon jungle. She had never even walked on a flat surface before," he said. "Now she's learned to use appliances." Like her, Yarima's tribe is assimilating new things. Through trade, even the most remote Yanomama villages have steel machetes and axes, fishhooks and lines, matches and other modern conveniences. Some tribes have shotguns. Already, Good said, traditions have been lost. For instance, the art of making clay pots was forgotten after aluminum pots were introduced. "Should they be brought into the 20th century?" Good asked. "They still believe all disease and death is caused by evil spirits. How are you going to explain TV? They don't understand." While some people argue the tribes should be left alone, Good said that, pragmatically, is impossible. "You can't keep these people isolated in a park," he said. Most outside contact with the Yanomama has been in Brazil, he said, where ranching and mining are big industries. Oil-rich Venezuela has left much of the rainforest alone. Rainforests are being destroyed by ranchers and natural water sources are being poisoned by gold miners, he said. But if the United States complains, South America points a finger right back. "We're about to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the beginning of a holocaust," Good said, referring to the Columbus expedition of 1492 and the North American Indian genocide that followed. Brazil alone is bigger than the continental United States, he said, and much of it is wild Amazonian rainforest. "They want to conquer their frontier." Rainforests comprise more species of plants and animals than the rest of the world combined, Good said. Many are rapidly becoming extinct. Noting that many rainforest plants are used in medicines, he said the cure for AIDS may be destroyed in today's forest burning. Even if South American governments moved to protect the rainforests and their inhabitants, individuals can still wreak destruction. "It's the law of the jungle, there's no one there to control anything," he said. "If you want to shoot an Indian out of a tree, you shoot an Indian out of a tree. And that's what they're doing." Good's experiences with the tribe are outlined in his book, **Into the Heart**. In it, he stresses the tribe's unfair reputation as "the fierce people" of South America. "They are a very warm, affectionate people," he said. While the Yanomama can be fierce fighters, and raids on neighboring tribes are not uncommon, Good said his wife in America "is astounded on a daily basis by what human beings are capable of doing to each other." (Kenneth Good, October 1991) |

**The cover of the book leads the reader to suspect the book is about a trip into the heart of the Amazon, which it is, but even more. Kenneth Good is the anthropologist that took the trip up the Orinoco River to study an isolated tribe of people never encountered by whites before, the Yanomama people of the Hasupuweteria village. His plans to study the little people took on an immediate comic aspect when they spent all their time studying him and his strange foreign ways. He built a work area and building outside the shapono or tribal communal hut to allow him to work undisturbed, but this kept him from getting exactly the kind of information he needed about their daily living habits. He began his protein studies by weighing everything the Yanomama ate, and they cooperated with willingly, although they thought him strange. "Nabuhs," they said, using their name for foreigners, "not smart. They don't even drink the ashes of their dead relatives."**

**He had difficulty learning the language because the Y.'s spoke quickly and would seldom repeat a word slowly enough for him to mimic it with any accuracy. It was like trying to learn English in New York City from a local taxi driver. Children were a big help because they would gladly repeat a word over and over for him. Finally he located an adult that would speak slowly and teach him the language. This was his first break-through, and the informant, he called him, "Red," became his first Yanomama friend.**

**With some language ability under his belt, he moved into the shapono to become an integral part of the community, which he decided would be a requirement for him to complete his close-up study of their family life. He hung his hammock in a vacant spot around Red's hearth and soon discovered that night-time in the shapono is a time for public speeches and other outward displays of emotions. After several weeks of acclimation, he found he could easily get eight hours sleep by staying in his hammock for twelve hours like the Yanomama did.**

**One of the Yanomama girls grew up over the eight years he studied the village life and he finds himself accepting a betrothal to her, a year or so from her onset of menses. He leaves for a trip to German to study and when he returns, she is a woman and soon moves her hammock next to his. In a move that initially shocked the shapono residents, she began sleeping in his large two person hammock with her husband.**

**By the middle of the book, the Yanomama had moved into Ken's heart and he was deeply in love with Yarima, his wife. The second half of the book deals with his trials as he attempted to remain in the Amazon with her and later as he tried to take her with him to the states. During their marriage ceremony before a judge in Pennsylvania, she asked him to tell the judge, "that even if you become sick, I will still be your wife. If you cannot leave your hammock, I will go down to the river and get you water. I will harvest plantain and roast them for you. I will care for you and do all these things for you even when you are old. Even then I will be your wife."**

**The judge said, "I take it that means, 'yes'."**

Youtube clip <http://hk.youtube.com/watch?v=FZNg217vBSg>