For two years, British photographer Jimmy Nelson lugged his 4x5 plate field camera to 44 countries around the globe -- from the canopied rain forests of Papua New Guinea to the snowdrifts of northern Mongolia to the searing Namibian desert -- documenting a world fast disappearing. The goal of this visual anthropology, published in Nelson's new book, *Before They Pass Away*, was to capture the lives of remote and endangered tribes. "I wanted to witness their time-honored traditions, join in their rituals, and discover how the rest of the world is threatening to change their way of life forever," Nelson says. For politically correct Westerners, there could be something uncomfortably colonial about this sort
of voyeuristic globe-trotting ethnography, yet Nelson's sensitivity for his subjects is immediately apparent. The tribes he captures might seem wild and somehow alien, but they show clear dominion over their remote and unforgiving environments, offering a remarkable glimpse back in time to how we urban dwellers once lived.

Goroka, Papua New Guinea

Ladakh, India
Vanuatu, Vanuatu islands
Masai, Tanzania
Kazakh, Mongolia

Himba, Namibia
Conversation on FP.com

itaia
The best known MAYA is also the greatest still living composer of romantic music of Latin America - with over 500 compositions - sung also by opera singers like Placido Domingo and converted in to "hits" in English - sung by Sinatra and Presley. ARMANDO MANZANERO - see his video on youtube with Placido Domingo at the Maya temple of Chichen Itza and a philharmonic orchestra DOMINGO MANZANERO ADORO (he sings part of it in the Maya language: Ikkatixch tuxkkabi... "I adore you...") The best Native American in modern medicine is DR. YVETTE ROUBIDEAUX, a Rosebud-Sioux, Harvard grad, Professor of Internal Medicine, now Director General of U.S. Indian Health Services. $ 4 billion annual budget, 2000+ Native American Physicians, 600 medical centers. A 5 year young Nahua (AZTEC) as trumpet soloist of a philharmonic youth orchestra, with Carpentier's 17th century, France "Te Deum" see youtube ORQUESTA ESPERANZA AZTECA TE DEUM. ---The point: Stop the whining about traditional ethnic hocus pocus: With the right education and environment all those people can also function on the the highest levels of any civilization.

DanAdams
I what sense are the Masai passing away? Their numbers have doubled in 25 years.

VincentAlexander
There's a big difference between cultures evolving, even if that evolution is done in a marginalizing environment, and 'passing away'. The Chukchi comprise 15% of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug. Kazakhs are the second largest ethnic group in Mongolia. The Goroka hold the most well known spiritual festival in all of Papua New Guinea. The reason this book might reek of colonialism to some people is because it is inherently colonialist to wander around shooting a wanna-be National Geographic spread while ignoring the demographic changes that affect the majority of the people in these tribes who, for better or worse, no longer see this 'way of life' as their own.

DanAdams
great comment@VincentAlexander

Silverpas
VincentAlexander
To me, the comments that hold up the anti-colonialism banner try to have it both ways: either they tell us that we are viewing traditional cultures with quaint interest and misplaced sadness at their passing ("colonial" mindset a la National Geographic) or else they decry Western land-grabbing commercial interests that either deliberately destroy, or simply have no interest in, the cultures they eliminate. Moreover, regarding "evolving" cultures, let's not kid ourselves: their descendents might survive, but within just several generations of intense contact and/or integration, the depth of culture that remains is generally only a faint shadow of what it had been for countless generations. This is not "evolution." You can't have your cake and eat it, too. Count me among the mourners.