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Human Impact on Ancient Environments

By Charles L. Redman

University of Arizona Press. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 288 pages. Dimensions: 8.8in. x 6.0in. x 0.6in. Threats to biodiversity, food shortages, urban sprawl . . . lessons for environmental problems that confront us today may well be found in the past. The archaeological record contains hundreds of situations in which societies developed long-term sustainable relationships with their environments and thousands in which the relationships were destructive. Charles Redman demonstrates that much can be learned from an improved understanding of peoples who, through seemingly rational decisions, degraded their environments and threatened their own survival. By discussing archaeological case studies from around the world from the deforestation of the Mayan lowlands to soil erosion in ancient Greece to the almost total depletion of resources on Easter Island Redman reveals the long-range coevolution of culture and environment and clearly shows the impact that ancient peoples had on their world. These case studies focus on four themes: habitat transformation and animal extinctions, agricultural practices, urban growth, and the forces that accompany complex society. They show that humankind's commitment to agriculture has had cultural consequences that have conditioned our perception of the environment and reveal that societies before European contact did not necessarily live the utopian existences that...



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