"In fourteen hundred ninety two Columbus sailed the ocean blue" So goes the history of the discovery of America, and of Native Americans, whose footprints were on this soil centuries before his. There existed a people subsiding off of the earth, taking from it what they needed and no more, respecting and nurturing their environment, inflicting virtually no irreversible damage upon it. With the European invasion came an unstoppable trend of raping the land, pillaging its resources, and unfurling a dictionary of diseases upon its each and every living creature. Within six hundred years, the Native American population has been decimated to a mere 0.8%. As the race for worldwide domination and economic globalization continues, more and more indigenous people are becoming "discovered". Using examples from three separate corners of the universe, the Maasai of Africa, The Wanniyala-Aetto of Sri Lanka, and the Yanomami of South America, we will explore how these small scale societies are being systematically westernized, thus virtually erasing their culture, depleting their populations, and integrating them into the modern world; a world they typically have no desire to be a part of. Nevertheless, the positive effects, such as innovative healthcare, standardized education, and economic advancement, are incontrovertible. Still, the question remains: In the grand scheme of things, is westernization a shining beacon of hope to primitive people, or an alternate term for genocide in the name of the almighty dollar?

The Maasai were once a highly self sufficient people. They were successful pastoralists, whose strategic cattle raids and fierce warriors made them the most prolific force in all of Eastern Africa. Cattle are the preferred form of currency, and every aspect of the Maasai way of life is contingent upon them, from marriage rites to their semi-nomadic migration patterns. The herds of cattle each family possesses requires ample land for grazing, and the Maasai lands were once over 200,000 square kilometers. They have occupied these lands since before the 15th century, but in all of this time the Maasai have done little to detrimentally impact their environment, the way of life was simple but very effective, depending on the land to provide just what they need and no more, and were it not for their "discovery" by the British in the seventeenth century, they would, by all accounts, be able to survive with ease for centuries.

With the British thirst for global conquest in the 1600's, the colonization of Africa began. The Maasai have been resistant, consistently evading subjugation, and prima facie seem to have retained much of their traditional culture. A closer look, however, reveals the inevitable truth: the invincible Maasai are facing annihilation. The incessant procession of European nations trying to claim African territory, primarily the British, but also the German, has reduced Maasai lands to under a quarter of what they were before the invasion, leaving them with under 50,000 square kilometers. Ironically enough, this land is most often used for commercial cattle ranches and privately owned farms. Although industry is not solely to blame- two national parks have been designated on Maasai territory,
one of which is sardonically named after the very culture from which the land was stolen from to make it.\textsuperscript{v} The restricted amount of available grazing land leaves the Maasai with a double edged sword decision: deny their traditions by settling down and becoming farmers, or defying the law, and trespassing on property that is no longer theirs.

Unfortunately, now that the Maasai have been thrust into this legal land dispute, they have little choice but to accept the ever advancing modern ways. Even though they maintain most traditional ways, and observe centuries old customs, western society has slowly wormed its way into everyday life, and a walk around a typical village would illustrate how futile it is to fight against that which can not be stopped. Many families have resorted to farming, and keeping in mind that cattle are a sign of wealth; this is as close to impoverishment as a Maasai family can be. Though generally most Maasai still live in the same huts their ancestors have been making for centuries, made of sticks, dried grass, mud, and dung, many of the doors often feature metal hinges, sometimes even locks. The warriors’ weapons, once made of animal bones, are now sometimes made from discarded scrap metal, and they often acquire metal spearheads at markets, while their wives, once revered for their beadwork, browse through beads from India, taking advantage of the time they have while the children learn Swahili and English at school.\textsuperscript{vi} Many of these children will never know the traditional stories in their native tongue of Maa.\textsuperscript{vii} Many will want to learn how to use a computer rather than how to hunt and survive on rapidly depleting land that may not be available to them when they come of age. Where there is a ‘primitive’ or ‘easily molded’ mind- there is a Christian missionary, and in fact missionaries were one of the first on the scene trying in vain to convert these proud native people. At first, the native resistance was impregnable, and it was reported that until recently, the mission’s efforts had been largely unfruitful. However, according to the Maasai Environmental Resource Coalition, the number of Christian Maasai has risen to a frightening 25\%, and with continued westernization, that number will only grow.\textsuperscript{viii}

Another way for Maasai to make a living is off of the very people who threaten their way of life. While it would be erroneous to say they like the tourists, the Maasai certainly like the tourists’ money, and easily get it by selling ‘tribal’ wares, photo opportunities, and the right for tourists to spend time in their village. Taken to even more extremes, Maasai warriors are known to prostitute themselves to wealthy female tourists, which, besides being potentially hazardous, is also demeaning to their people.\textsuperscript{ix} The number of men who actually resort to this is relatively low. More often, Maasai people accept jobs in the cities and towns in order to make a living. However, the work is almost invariably physical labor, as the majority of Maasai are unable to read, write, speak or understand much Swahili or English. Government and cooperate agencies have been known to hire Maasai to sway his fellow kinsmen to express the desired view point in an attempt to get the Maasai to agree to give up their land, rights, and traditional values to suit their own capitalist agendas.\textsuperscript{x}

Those who choose not to assimilate into westernized society find themselves on the wrong side of the law and to carry out what were once routine
activities is now to commit any number of offenses. For the Maasai who continue to lead a pastoral life, and herd cattle, resources are scarce. Too many cattle in a very limited amount of space leads to land exhaustion, running the risk of having the cattle starve to death. This would be the equivalent to putting wads of cash through a paper shredder. To remedy this problem, the Maasai herdsmen allow their cattle to graze illegally on private or national property. The fines for violating grazing restrictions are steep, and often are paid in pain. It has been reported all too often that men found disobeying these laws are being brutally beaten and then taken into custody for great lengths of time. The Maasai tradition also depends upon hunting- not typically for food, but for rites of passage, and ornamentation on which they pride themselves heavily. However, due to commercial development in Kenya and Tanzania, many of the animals have been over-hunted by tourists and run off their natural habitat by construction. In addition, due to the fact that much of Maasai land has been designated as a national park, there are many hunting restrictions on the few animals which do remain. Because of these and other life changes, the Maasai culture may be heaving its final breath. Unfortunately, traditions and practices are not the only things that are dying.

Since the colonial period, the western world’s contact with the Maasai has proven deadly for the latter of the two. Previous to the European invasion, the Maasai were known to have excellent skills in healing many maladies using their extensive knowledge of the natural world around them, and in addition to their centuries old herbal remedy recipes, they also practice spiritual healing. These traditional cures were handed down from each generation to the next, until they encountered foreign diseases to which their systems had no immunity, and their medicine men had no cure for. While their prized cattle were being killed off by an infectious viral cattle plague called rinderpest, the Maasai themselves were being stricken with smallpox. Though the loss of life, both human and animal was horrific, it does not compare to the loss of the ancient knowledge that many modern Maasai face- now that they are provided with western medical treatment. For all of the adversity they have been faced with, the Massai have managed to continue some traditions, but how long they will last clinging to the very edges of the global melting pot remains to be seen.

Half way across the world, the indigenous people of Sri Lanka are facing much the same circumstances. With less than 2,500 remaining, the Wanniyala-Aetto are a much smaller group, who enjoy much less publicity than the Maasai. Traditionally a hunter gatherer and horticulturist group, this small scale society has existed on their native lands for thousands of years. Dwelling in forest caves, and hunting no more than what was necessary for subsistence, the Wanniyala-Aetto would have continuously thrived were they not overrun by the globalization bandwagon.

Like the Maasai, the Wanniyala-Aetto also found themselves endlessly bombarded by wave after wave of colonialism, from as far away as Britain and Portugal, but mostly from the two main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka; the Sinhalese and the Tamil, who began invading Wanniyala-Aetto territory after Sri Lanka became independent in 1948. Suffering from theft of their land, western
diseases, and absorption into society, the Wanniyala- Aetto population has been degraded to less than half its original number. They have been systematically run off their homelands, first by the building of a dam which deluged most of their hunting grounds, and later by deforestation for timber. Then, much like the Maasai, the 1983 creation of a national park took from the Wanniyala- Aetto what little land that remained for themselves.\textsuperscript{xvi} This thrust the Wanniyala- Aetto into a life of poverty, begging, and newly illegal practices.

The Wanniyala- Aetto food supply is based largely on the method of swidden horticulture- which is a method of moving and rotating the small gardens they use once every few years for the purpose of preventing soil exhaustion. In order to maintain fertile soil, there must be enough land to have at least one plot lay fallow while one is being cultivated. However, because of the shortage of land, most Wanniyala- Aetto no longer have the space needed to practice this type of subsistence strategy. Moreover, because of the designation of traditional hunting grounds as government property, the Wanniyala- Aetto now face legal ramifications for surviving the only way they know how, which invariably leads to conflict with the law. Wanniyala- Aetto who continue to hunt and gather on park property face prosecution by a legal system they are unfamiliar with, or in the worst case, death.\textsuperscript{xvii} Still, due to widespread corruption, it is not difficult to persuade a park ranger to look the other way, at the price of a share of the families food supply.\textsuperscript{xviii}

Of course, the Sri Lankan government has made some attempt to assist the people whose roots they disintegrated, and with the financial backing of the World Bank, have given back an infinitesimal fraction of their native lands. Quizzically, it seems these minuscule patches of earth are often the least arable parts of Sri Lanka. The land has been given back in the form of properties that bear the natives name, but are fashioned and run with distinctly modern ordinance. Under the guise of a rescue mission of sorts, these organizations have inhumanely graciously forced relocated the Wanniyala- Aetto into government compounds villages with the intent of brainwashing aiding them to become part of modern society. These villages are complete with Buddhist temples, (which the Wanniyala- Aetto do not believe in), schools, (which teach them government sanctioned subjects, none of which include their native culture, traditions, or language), and health care facilities (which diminishes the need for the Wanniyala- Aetto extensive holistic, organic remedies) The government even provides acres of land for cash crops, thus essentially creating a work camp of indentured servants. Those few Wanniyala- Aetto who choose not to enter the government camps must find alternate sources of income. One way is to find work in the towns, which is typically physical labor, and menial work (similar to what day laborers are all but forced to do in the United States), for which they are overworked and underpaid. They often cut down tropical hardwood trees for the timber companies, but this is for a small sum, which is then divided amongst each worker Another huge source of income is tourism. As today's travelers seek the exotic, and undiscovered, they are drawn to the Wanniyala- Aetto like sharks to chum, and gladly spend upwards of $100 to spend the day witnessing these aboriginal people.\textsuperscript{xix} One of the tremendous drawbacks of contact with the
tourists is that like most native groups, the Wanniyala- Aetto have been ravaged by disease brought on by these outsiders, but in many cases it is not a communicable virus that kills them- but rather the alcohol made available to them. Alcohol consumption is not traditional in Wanniyala- Aetto culture, and in fact it is all but shunned. However, alcoholism is now laying waste to many Wanniyala- Aetto people, including women. xx If the tourism avenue of income is still not enough, the Wanniyala- Aetto resort to selling their young women, to agencies who ship them to be housemaids in several Arabic countries, under 2-5 year contracts who contain agreements such as the following:

I hereby agreed to pay Rs 35,000- for my visa charges, ticket, and other relevant expenses, also I have agreed not to refuse for working under any circumstances and will bear total expenses if I do

The Wanniyala- Aetto women sign these contracts without being able to read them, and once they are discarded by their employer, often resort to prostitution. xxii Rarer still is the occurrence of child trafficking, in which Wanniyala- Aetto families sell their children to wealthy Sinhalese households- thus ensuring a life of slavery, working for little more than meager room and board. xxii

As the Wanniyala- Aetto start to blend into westernized society, they are losing the very nature of their identity, and are gradually fading away from existence altogether. They have faced almost every human injustice imaginable, with little or no help from the outside world, and it seems through all of this adversity, the Wanniyala- Aetto, like so many before them will go the way of the dodo.

However, not all foraging horticulturalist groups are as close to the brink of extinction as the Wanniyala- Aetto. The Yanomami are one of the largest and most secluded small scale societies known in South America. With an estimated population of over 26,000, the Yanomami are said to have occupied this region across Brazil and Venezuela, for over one thousand years xxiii They have a reputation for fearsome tactics that seems to be cemented to their very name, but in all reality, the everyday life of the Yanomami is one of hunting, fishing, and cultivating small gardens, and the ferocity everyone hears about usually occurs during raids of other villages, in which the men club one another, and often steal women and goods. Managing to preserve most of their traditional ways of life, it would seem to many that the Yanomami are all but unscathed by the globalization movement, but many things from the diseases they contract from outsiders, to the depletion of the rainforest ecosystem on which they depend, to the number of attacks on these native people, suggest otherwise.

Because the Yanomami traditionally live deep in what most would term uninhabitable parts of the rainforest, they were only ‘discovered’ in the late 19th century, and once again, the missionaries were on the scene even before most anthropologists. Despite the salacious rumors that the smallpox vaccines anthropologists administered resulted in the outbreak of the epidemic, it was in fact the very people set to save their mortal souls, who caused their mortality. A group of Brazilian missionaries who were staying with the Yanomami in August of 1967 had brought along their two year old daughter, who managed to contract the disease which proceeded to rage among the previously unexposed tribe, and
it was only after the administration of vaccines by anthropologists that it was able to be contained. The risk of malaria has also increased exponentially, affecting over 20% of this indigenous population. The rise of malaria, as several other health problems among the Yanomami, can be directly attributed to the exploitation of the Amazonian rainforest, implemented and fueled by modern societies eternal quest to live the exorbitant capitalist dream.

With the discovery of gold in the 1970's, an endless influx of miners made its way into Yanomami territory, bringing with them the usual companions of large groups of men: disease, destruction, and violence. Blasting through mountains and raping the land, the miners created stagnant pools of water wherever they worked, attracting mosquitoes, and thus giving the gift of malaria to the Yanomami, and because mercury is a byproduct of gold mining, it was released haphazardly into the ecosystem, leading not only to the poisoning of the plants the Yanomami collected, but the fish and animals upon whose protein they are so dependent. Because of the delicate ecosystem of the rainforest, this destruction also led to the near extinction of many of the flora and fauna the Yanomami have been using for centuries. The Yanomami themselves were being driven off of their native lands, and they had made attempts to tell the miners to leave, the consequences were fatal. According to Amnesty International, there have been over 32 reported cases of deadly violence against the Yanomami. One attack, in which 16 men, women, and children, including one infant who was slashed ruthlessly with a machete, were murdered by Brazilian miners in 1993, was ruled a genocide, still, of the 22 men who committed this assault, only four received significant jail time.xxiv

In the face of these many atrocities against the Maasai, the Wanniyala-Aetto, and the Yanomami, it is increasingly difficult to see the positive impact of globalization, and westernization on small scale societies. Nonetheless, benefits include access to better healthcare, and assimilation into the fast paced modern world, through education, and government programs. In a world where superviruses are passed around like baseball cards, and technological advancements are curing once deadly illnesses, healthcare is of utmost importance, and government agencies, non-profit organizations, and missionaries, have made the vast field of medical treatment available to indigenous people, which incontrovertibly saves lives. Still, were it not for the invasion and exposure to many of these illnesses by outsiders, the traditional herbal remedies, and shamanistic practices would be all that would be necessary to ensure the continued health of the indigenous group. In the same way, assimilation into our societies has proven to be more beneficial to the invading population than the natives. Of course, education, and government assistance help these people make that transition, which could potentially further the advancement of their people, but history has shown time and time again that the employment, literacy, and income rates of acculturated native groups are substantially lower than those of their non-native counterparts, and less than abysmal living conditions are the exception rather than the rule. In many ways it is difficult to agree that the western world is in fact the more advanced society, given the fact that we consume so much we can scarcely sustain life as we know
it. Ours is a dogma of consumerism, which worships pieces of green paper and whose commandants boldly proclaim *Thou shall keep up with the Jones’* and considers it sacred to compete with everyone over everything from little league to retirement options. The small, self sustaining indigenous population who knows, respects, and cares for the environment in which they live, and takes from it only what is necessary to survive, are being crushed under the Italian leather loafers of the globalized business world. If history does in fact repeat itself- there is no question as to where these small scale societies are headed, and soon, just as we see in the case of the Native Americans, they will be ghosts of their former selves, and thousands of years of civilization will be reduced to a few pages in a high school history book.

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iv Ibid


vi www.laleyio.com/language.html


viii Ibid

ix Ibid


xi Ibid

xii Poole, 2006


xvi Ibid


xviii Stegeberm, 2002

xix Ibid


xxi Stegeberm, 2002

xxii Ibid

Beir, 2005