

COLLAPSE REVISITED

In 1997 Jared Diamond published *Guns Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. The book was a best seller, won a Pulitzer Prize and garnered wide acclaim.

Guns, Germs and Steel was panned by some academics who's niche claims to fame and pet theories Diamond demolished. However, for most who read the book, it was an important milestone on the road to understanding how a few Spanish, English, French and Dutch 'explorers' wiped out millions of humans and dozens of advanced societies in "the new world" as well as in and Africa and parts of Asia.

Since 1997 new research including that in the Amazon Basin and in Southeastern US by The People of One Fire, History Revealed Media and others has filled in gaps in Diamond's sweeping rendition of why Mandarin is NOT the official language of the Americas.

In 2005 Diamond published a second major work, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. *Collapse* was a New York Times Best Seller but received a less enthusiastic response. Why? It stepped on the toes of Business-As-Usual. The book hit too close to home.

In August of 2005, SYNERGY published a supportive overview of *Collapse*.

See <http://www.baconsrebellion.com/Issues05/08-08/Risse.php>

Recently, Penguin has released a revised edition of *Collapse*. The cover suggests that – and without a page by page comparison it is not possible to tell for sure – the only 'new' part of the revised edition is a 22 page Afterword on the Collapse of Angkor.

Angkor is in present day Cambodia and was the capital of the Khmer Empire. The Khmer Empire was the largest empire in Southeast Asia during most of a five hundred year span from 800 AD to 1300 AD. The Khmer Empire rivaled the Tang and Song Dynasty Empires of China with which it maintained an arms length relationship.

What is special about Angkor is that over the five century span Angkor was the largest Urban agglomeration on the planet. At 250,000 acres Angkor was the largest Urban agglomeration that EVER existed on the planet until the end of the 19th century. Angkor was a 'lower density' Urban agglomeration but had a population comparable to Imperial Rome, Medieval Constantinople (Istanbul), Edo (Tokyo) and Peking (Beijing). Angkor had an Urbanized area ten times the area of any of these more familiar imperial capitals that approached or exceeded a million inhabitants.

Angkor's environmental context and low density is larger than, but similar to, Urban agglomerations such as those recently found in the Amazon and previously found in Central America (the Lowland Maya cities of Tikal and Copan) and in Sri Lanka as well as a few others in South East Asia. There were also smaller 'lower density' Urban agglomerations in Southeastern US. The difference between Angkor and the other Urban places was the Critical Mass of Angkor and the massive engineering projects that made an Urban agglomeration of this scale possible.

Diamond summarizes the enormous, complex water management infrastructure designed to irrigate rice, prevent floods and bridge the gap during droughts. The 'water works' – lakes, canals and hydraulic works rival the Great Pyramids of Egypt and the Great Wall of China in scale and surpass them in complexity.

The Collapse started in the 1300s. By the time the first Europeans arrived what was left of Angkor were, a few Village scale agglomerations and the not yet clearly understood structures that are called 'temples' such as Angkor Wat.

EMR will not spoil the ending for readers but will note that Diamond identifies five causes of the Collapse of Angkor. They fit neatly into the categories that he identified in the first edition:

- Inflicting damage on the environment.
- Climate change
- Unfriendly neighbors
- Friendly trading partners
- Commitment to and dependence upon "an increasingly huge, complex and hard to maintain infrastructure."

EMR suggests that it does not take a great leap of imagination to go from:

A. The Angkor water management infrastructure that became too Big, Too Dominate and Too Expensive to maintain on one hand, To

B. The Automobile-centric infrastructure necessary to support settlement patterns dependent upon Large Private Vehicles.

EMR