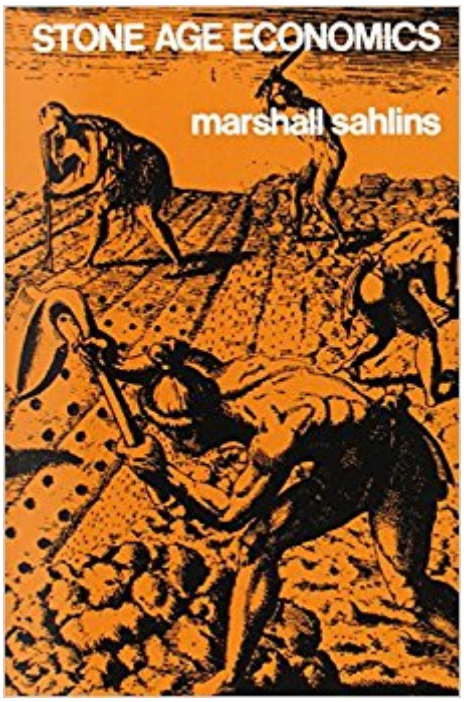
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Stone Age Economics



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Synopsis

Stone Age Economics is a classic study of anthropological economics, first published in 1974. As Marshall Sahlinsstated in the first edition, "It has been inspired by the possibility of 'anthropological economics,' a perspective indebted rather to the nature of the primitive economies than to the categories of a bourgeois science." Ambitiously tackling the nature of economic life and how to study it comparatively, the book includes six studies which reflect the author's ideas on revising traditional views of the hunter-gatherer and so-called primitive societies, revealing them to be the original affluent society. The book examines notions of production, distribution and exchange in early communities and examines the link between economics and cultural and social factors. It consists of a set of detailed and closely related studies of tribal economies, of domestic production for livelihood, and of the submission of domestic production to the material and political demands of society at large.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“Any anthropologist who has postponed reading this book should do so at onceÃ¢â ¬Â| This book is outstanding and enjoyableÃ¢â ¬Â|. Though detailed and technical in places, it is always clear, succinct, and it flowers with memorable sentences.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Paul Stirling, Man Ã¢â ¬Å“Stone Age Economics is the most important book in the field of economic anthropology produced by an American cultural anthropologist since M. J. Herskovits published The Economic Life of Primitive Peoples in 1940.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Scott Cook, Comparative Studies in

Society and History Ã¢â ¬Å“SahlinsÃ¢â ¬â„¢ forays into economic anthropology are full of interest.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Cyril S. Belshaw, American Anthropologist Ã¢â ¬Å“Stone Age Economics, while not a survey of the economic anthropology, is as of now the most sophisticated, extensive presentation, and argument in and about, the field.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Walter C. Neale, Science "This book is subversive to so many of the fundamental assumptions of Western technological society that it is a wonder it was permitted to be published. Calling on extensive research among the planet's remaining stone-age societiesÃ¢â ¬â •in Africa, Australia and South-East Asia as well as anecdotal reports from early explorers, Professor Sahlins directly challenges the idea that Western civilization has provided greater 'leisure' or 'affluence,' or even greater reliability, than 'primitive' hunter-gatherers." Ã¢â ¬â •Whole Earth Review "His book is rich in factual evidence and in ideas, so rich that a brief review cannot do it justice; only another book could do that." Ã¢â ¬â •E. Evans-Pritchard, Times Literary Supplement "Sahlin's concept of the 'domestic mode of production' starts to give economic anthropology its necessary comparative basis." Ã¢â ¬â •Mary Douglas

Marshall Sahlins is one of the most prominent American anthropologists of our time. He holds the title of Charles F. Grey Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago. His most recent book is How Natives Think: About Captain Cook, for Example.

A must read for any student, regardless of the field.

He takes a subject that could be dry and dull, and makes it interesting.The logical conclusion from this book is that we should figure out what we really need materially, calculate how many hours we have to work to supply these needs, and not work a minute more.

Probably not of interest to many people but a classic in the field.

This is a well-known and rather old (1972) classic work on the economics of exchange as a cultural phenomenon. I remember this book was quoted several times during my studies of economics (and that was in the early 80s). I always kept the idea that as an economist I actually should read it myself, and so now i finally did.The book is written from an anthropological angle and claims that stone age economies were the original affluent society. The claim is startling as it is original, as it runs counterintuitive; weren’t people in early primitive (as defined by level of societal complexity)

communities not always on the border of starvation and their needs much unfulfilled? Here the author points out that in the central concept of economics, scarcity, or the tension between wants and means, can be reduced either from the supply side (which is what modern production and exchange economies do) or on the demand side, the Zen way to happiness so to speak, by not having much of any demand. Within their own context such hunter-gatherer societies were therefore quite well-off and not on the brink of disaster. To have high wealth in the form of goods was simply not practical in this way of life as you had to carry all of it around hence slowing you down. Similarly, there was often an under-use of resources rather than a constant bumping against existence limits. Of course, there were very real Malthusian limits also as a result of the societal organization. Nevertheless, the point on scarcity is well made and can be seen as a (mild) critique of consumer society. It also bring the social and cultural context in which economics plays to the fore. At the same time, the author discusses the role of gift exchange in return for other goods as a social phenomenon next to the purely economic terms of exchange. Gifts and trade rather than war has a very real meaning in societies and is especially tangible in less complex groups, somethinh he shows in true antropologist fashion by referring to some interesting studies of several small societies in Africa and Polynesia.The same idea also of course holds for more developed nations, but here the direct social relationships among and between much larger groups is much more anonymous and diffused.I am an economist, not an anthroplogist, and found it very interesting to read this well-written and sometimes humorous book in order to realise once again how economics is a social science in the true sense of the word. Nothing to be ashamed about, and it is always good as a refresher to read from different angles on the fundamentals of your own profession.recommended.

I heard Sahlins speak, live, and it was fascinating. This book is fascinating, every bit the classic the main review says it is. It is still rather left brain. I will balance that by mentioningÃ Â Journey to the Ancestral Self: The Native Lifeway Guide to Living in Harmony with the Earth Mother (Bk.1), which gives one quite a look at the indigenous mindset, by an author who dealt with native american, siberian nomad, australian aborigine, and wild wolf culture. He lived with wild wolves, even going out with the pack.Ã Â Inside the Neolithic Mind: Consciousness, Cosmos and the Realm of the GodsÃ Â gives you an idea of the mindset, also.Ã Â In Search of Ancient Ireland: The Origins of the Irish from Neolithic Times to the Coming of the EnglishÃ Â covers some of the same material, in passing.

This superb work discusses the types of economic organization which currently exist and which

have existed throughout human history (and into pre-history). It then shows the effect of such economic organizations on social structure.This book should be required reading for all students of economics, as it has major implications for our own societies today.Stone Age Economics is also a very interesting and readable text, not at all dry or boring. It is filled with information about various cultures and interesting details such as the fact that the hunter-gatherer Bushmen in the Kalihari desert spend only about 1 1/2 hours per day on staying alive, and spend the rest of the time singing, drinking and telling stories.This is a truly important work.

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