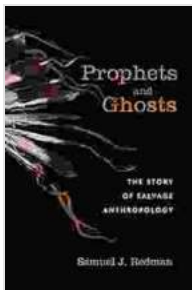


Prophets and Ghosts: The Story of Salvage Anthropology

Salvage anthropology is a subfield of anthropology that emerged in the early 20th century in response to the rapid disappearance of indigenous cultures. Salvage anthropologists sought to document and preserve the languages, customs, and beliefs of these cultures before they vanished forever.

The term "salvage anthropology" was coined by Franz Boas, considered the father of American anthropology. Boas believed that the study of indigenous cultures was essential for understanding human history and diversity. He also believed that these cultures were rapidly disappearing and needed to be documented before they were lost.



Prophets and Ghosts: The Story of Salvage Anthropology by Samuel J. Redman

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
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Print length : 317 pages

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Edward Sapir, another prominent anthropologist of the early 20th century, shared Boas's concerns about the disappearance of indigenous cultures.

Sapir argued that salvage anthropology was necessary to preserve the intellectual and cultural heritage of these cultures.

Methods of Salvage Anthropology

Salvage anthropologists used a variety of methods to document and preserve indigenous cultures. These methods included:

- Participant observation: Salvage anthropologists lived among indigenous communities and participated in their daily lives. This allowed them to observe and record the culture firsthand.
- Interviews: Salvage anthropologists conducted interviews with indigenous elders and other members of the community. These interviews provided valuable information about the culture's history, customs, and beliefs.
- Collecting artifacts: Salvage anthropologists collected artifacts from indigenous communities. These artifacts could include anything from clothing and tools to religious objects and artwork.
- Photography and sound recordings: Salvage anthropologists used photography and sound recordings to document indigenous cultures. These recordings could capture the culture's visual and auditory aspects.

Prophet Movements and the Ghost Dance

One of the most important topics of study for salvage anthropologists was prophet movements. Prophet movements were religious movements that emerged among indigenous communities in response to the challenges of

colonialism. These movements typically centered around a charismatic leader who claimed to have received a vision from God or spirits.

One of the most famous prophet movements was the Ghost Dance, which spread among Native American tribes in the late 19th century. The Ghost Dance was a messianic movement that promised a return of the dead and a restoration of the old way of life. The movement was brutally suppressed by the U.S. government, and many of its leaders were killed.

Salvage anthropologists played a key role in documenting the Ghost Dance and other prophet movements. They interviewed participants, collected artifacts, and took photographs. Their work helped to preserve the memory of these important religious movements.

Controversies Surrounding Salvage Anthropology

Salvage anthropology has been a controversial subfield of anthropology since its inception. Some critics have argued that salvage anthropologists were more interested in collecting artifacts and specimens than in understanding the cultures they studied. Others have argued that salvage anthropology was a form of colonialism, as it sought to preserve indigenous cultures in a way that was defined by Westerners.

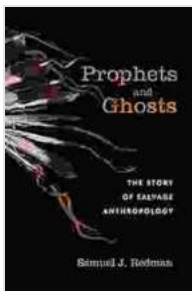
In recent years, salvage anthropology has been criticized for its focus on the disappearance of indigenous cultures. Critics argue that this focus has led salvage anthropologists to ignore the resilience and adaptability of these cultures.

Despite these criticisms, salvage anthropology has made a significant contribution to the field of anthropology. Salvage anthropologists have

documented and preserved the languages, customs, and beliefs of many indigenous cultures that would otherwise have been lost. Their work has helped us to understand the diversity of human cultures and the challenges that they face.

Salvage anthropology is a complex and controversial subfield of anthropology. It has been criticized for its focus on the disappearance of indigenous cultures and for its colonialist tendencies. However, salvage anthropology has also made a significant contribution to the field of anthropology by documenting and preserving the languages, customs, and beliefs of many indigenous cultures.

As the world continues to change, salvage anthropology will continue to play an important role in documenting and preserving the cultural diversity of the human species.



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