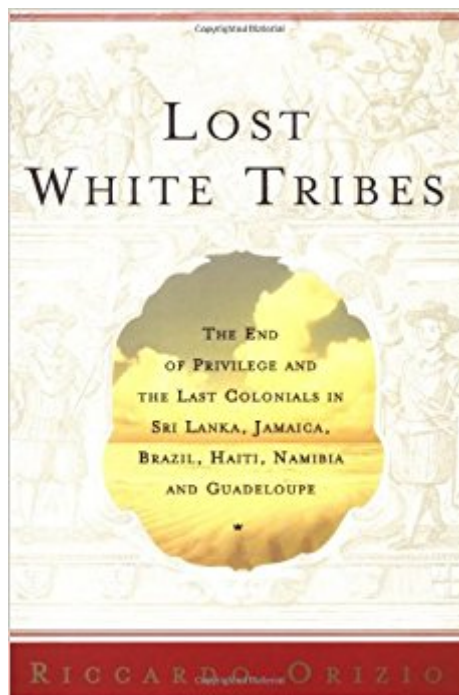




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Lost White Tribes: The End Of Privilege And The Last Colonials In Sri Lanka, Jamaica, Brazil, Haiti, Namibia, And Guadeloupe



Synopsis

Over 300 hundred years ago, the first European colonists landed in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean to found permanent outposts of the great empires. This epic migration continued until after World War II, when some of these tropical colonies became independent black nations and the white colonials were forced -- or chose -- to return to the mother country. Among the descendants of the colonizing powers, however, were some who had become outcasts in the poorest strata of society and, unable to afford the long journey home, were left behind, ignored by both the former oppressed indigenous population and the modern privileged white immigrants. At the dawn of the twenty-first century these lost white tribes still hold out, tucked away in remote valleys and hills or in the midst of burgeoning metropolises, living in poverty while tending the myths of their colonial ancestors. Forced to marry within their own group if they hope to retain their fair-skinned "purity," they are torn between the memory of past privilege and the extraordinary pressure to integrate. All are decreasing in number; some are on the verge of extinction and fighting to survive in countries that ostracize them because of the color of their skin and the traditions they represent. Though resident for generations, these people are permanently out of place, an awkward and embarrassing reminder of things past in newly redefined countries that are eager to forget both them and their historical homelands. In the remote interior and in bustling Sao Paulo, the "Confederados" of Brazil linger on, the descendants of Confederate families that fled the American South to rebuild their society here rather than face victorious Yankees. Wrenchingly poor then and now, these would-be genteel planters cling to their romanticized memory of a proud antebellum past. In Sri Lanka, once Ceylon, the children of Dutch Burghers haunt their crumbling mansions, putting on airs and keeping up appearances. In the steaming jungle of Guadeloupe, the inbred and deformed Matignons Blancs scrape out an existence while claiming the blood of French kings in their veins. On the beaches of Jamaica, a young man with incongruously blond dreadlocks -- the destitute descendant of a shoemaker from the Duchy of Saxony who became an indentured servant to earn passage from Germany to the new world -- still gazes out at the Caribbean over a century and half later. The Poles of Haiti are descended from troops lured over by Napoleon to quell slave rebellions. His promise of independence for their homeland went unfulfilled; they persist in hidden valleys in the island's interior. In the desert expanses of Southwest Africa, the famously devout Basters, the green-eyed, mixed-race Afrikaners, still doggedly pursue vast territorial claims as the continent's new power brokers sweep them aside. These are the lost white tribes. More than an entree into a world we are unfamiliar with, this amazing chronicle opens up a world that we did not even know existed. In his masterful report, Riccardo Orizio has written the final chapter in the history of the

postcolonial world, and in him these forgotten peoples have found their unique historian.

Book Information

Hardcover: 270 pages

Publisher: The Free Press /Simon & Schuster (July 10, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0743211979

ISBN-13: 978-0743211970

Product Dimensions: 5.7 x 1 x 8.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 21 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,856,085 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #43 in Books > Travel >

Caribbean > Haiti #90 in Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Jamaica

#173 in Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Haiti

Customer Reviews

Ever wonder what became of that unfortunate Belgian clerk in Conrad's Heart of Darkness, who insisted upon wearing a starched collar despite the stifling Congo heat? Italian journalist Orizio shows that he may well have stayed on. Like Ryszard Kapuscinski, who provides a brief foreword, Orizio has a wonderful eye for cultural anachronisms and uncovers colonial remains in the form of white enclaves in Third World settings. His six subcultural portraits follow a similar pattern (which by no means detracts from their appeal), personalized by his subjects' discussions of their peculiar insider/outsider position. The opening chapter takes Orizio to Sri Lanka, where he contacts the remnants of the Dutch community, a group that originally arrived some 400 years ago with the Dutch East India Company and, for whatever reason, chose to stay on after the collapse of Dutch rule. Now they are doubly isolated not only have they lost their mother tongue, but they never acquired the national language, Sinhalese. Instead they speak English, the language of an intervening empire. And with whom do they identify? Orizio ably addresses that complicated question, conveying the ambiguities of identity that attend these historical holdovers by amplifying their voices with background information. All of the countries Orizio visits house small communities of whites who have been bypassed by history. Although Orizio (now editor of CNN Italia) refrains from drawing any overarching conclusions from these disparate narratives, he successfully conveys the dilemmas posed by being a member of a vanishing postcolonial tribe. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

By 1970, the great European empires of Britain, France, Spain, and the Netherlands had essentially been dismantled. Most of the colonials, including government officials and settlers, returned to the "mother country." Yet, the forces of history are seldom tidy, and the end of European imperialism often left behind messy and sometimes curious remnants. Orizio, senior editor of CNN Italia and a former foreign correspondent for an Italian daily, here describes the interesting and often touching status of several "tribes" of whites, descended from European settlers, who stayed on after independence. Amongst the groups examined are Germans living in Jamaica, Dutch in Sri Lanka, and even descendants of Confederate refugees from the U.S Civil War in Brazil. Many of these people lead an economically marginal existence while holding on to a degree of racial or ethnic exclusivity. They seem trapped between their dreams of the past and the harsh realities of their present circumstances. This is a revealing glimpse at a variety of obscure peoples who seem to have maintained touching but somehow absurd solidarity. Jay Freeman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Excellent read - fascinating look into aspects of the postcolonial world I'd never heard about - unsentimental but without judgment, and even descriptively poetic in some passages.

What an exceptionally well researched and written book

an interesting gathering of little known history. educational and informative.

The book gives a fair account of the descendants of European colonists in remote corners of the world. I found it interesting that it did not include those nations where colonists' descendants still live in large numbers and are a major success in their new home! It is interesting to note that in almost all of the countries discussed the economy and lifestyle have plummeted for everyone since independence.

In this fascinating book, author and journalist Riccardo Irizio looks at the "tribes" of white natives living in far off corners of the globe. In the six chapters of this book, he looks at the Dutch burghers who never left Ceylon, the German inhabitants whose ancestors had been tricked into emigrating to Jamaica, the colony of Confederate exiles who fled the United States after the Civil War, the descendants of the Polish soldiers who stayed in Haiti after that country's defeat of

Napoleon Bonaparte, the Dutch Basters of Namibia whose ancestors had trod a different path than the Boers, and the Guadeloupe descendents of the Frenchmen who went native. Overall, I found this to be a wonderfully interesting book to read. The author does an excellent job of weaving together the tales of his search for these "lost white tribes" with the story of how they came to be there. Some of the stories are quite sad, with Haitians that consider themselves exiles and are waiting for someone to come take them home after 200 years, people who look down on the countrymen around them because they are not white, people who look down on these people for being white, and so much more. I found their stories to be quite enthralling, sometimes sad, but never boring. If you want to see the tales of white people who went native during the colonial era, then this book is for you. I highly enjoyed it, and think that you will as well!

This very post-colonial book is not badly written and I would feel bad giving it less than three stars. The author is sympathetic towards everyone he meets and usually lets people speak for themselves. However, the choice of six different subjects is a regrettable one. It doesn't give the author enough time to really dig into the life of each white minority successfully, although he gives it the old college try. The book contains some surprising images, such as the die-hard Confederates in Brazil, but in other chapters like the portrait of Namibia, you get the idea that he is only scratching the surface of a very complex and deep political situation. We learn a lot from the instincts of the many interview subjects who shut the door in the author's face, because we come to understand by the end of the book that there is really a lot going on in each country and ethnicity and genealogy can only explain some of it.

The author provides an overview of six little known groups, all either partially or entirely descended from Europeans but now marginalised minorities far from Europe and in danger of dying off or being assimilated up by the surrounding societies. An approximately equal weight is given to each:- Dutch Burghers of Ceylon- Germans in Jamaica- Confederates (from the US South) in Brazil- Poles in Haiti (descendants of Polish soldiers and African wives)- Basters in Namibia- Blancs Matignon in Guadeloupe. The book is part travel log, part history, part anthropology. It's pleasant enough and easy to read but I found it disorganised, meandering and at times a bit vacuous.

History is written by - and about - the winners. As European nations lost their overseas colonies, scholars focused on local populations that had freed themselves from European rule. In *Lost White Tribes*, Italian journalist Riccardo Orizio looks at the other side of the coin - what happened to the

white colonialists who stayed in the former colonies after independence. During the 1990s, Orizio traveled to six nations (Sri Lanka, Jamaica, Brazil, Haiti, Namibia, and Guadeloupe) to look for these "lost white tribes." The book is both a travelogue and a discussion of the changing meaning of race. "...All of us... belong to a lost tribe. We can all become minorities. We are all potentially irrelevant" (p. 4). The material is uneven. The Namibia and Guadeloupe chapters are fascinating, as they tell little-known stories. The Jamaica chapter is disappointing; I did not learn much. Moreover, the accounts of contemporary life in each nation are fascinating, but the book loses momentum when Orizio goes into digressions on history. For the most part, Orizio avoids telling the reader what to think. But in the final chapter, his tone shifts and he editorializes. For instance, he calls Guadeloupe's whites "...four hundred pigheaded peasants" (p. 241). In the end, Orizio asks "How does one distinguish between a slight story that never made any headlines and a great adventure that deserves the status of history?" (p. 228). While *Lost White Tribes*' story is slight, it is still interesting. Despite of the book's dead spots, readers interested in colonialism's legacy will want to read *Lost White Tribes*.

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