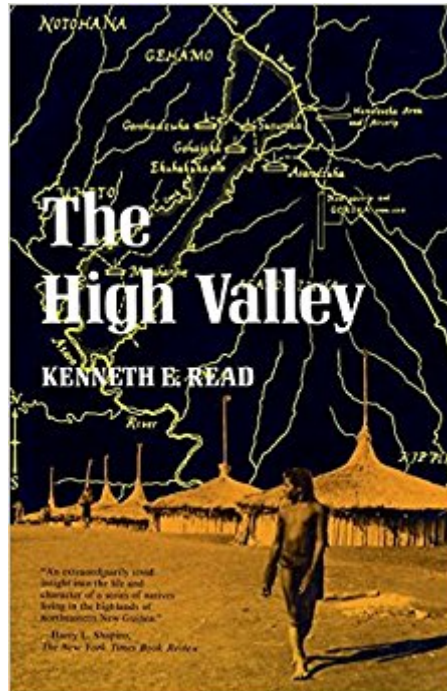


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The High Valley



Synopsis

-- Hobart M. Van Deusen, "Natural History"

Book Information

Paperback: 266 pages

Publisher: Columbia University Press (October 15, 1980)

Language: English

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Customer Reviews

New Guinea is a violent and exotic place, both in the dramatic contrasts of its landscape and in the primitive cultures of some of its peoples. Read describes both landscape and people... and also provides an introspective view of himself and his relationships with the Gahuku... (Philip Lewis Chicago Tribune)An extraordinarily vivid insight into the life and character of a series of natives living in the highlands of northeastern New Guinea (Harry L. Shapiro The New York Times Book review)An experiment in ethnography that gains a special lucidity by being fine literature. (William Davenport Science)Read happens to be an artist as well as a scientist... He has a touch of the poet-visionary-mystic, blended with passion and a gift for prose. (Edmund Fuller The Wall Street Journal)

Kenneth E. Read was Professor and Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Washington, Seattle.

In my opinion, this is a fair book, but a poor anthropological ethnography. Read gives very little cultural background and spends more than half of the book describing the flora, fauna and how beautiful the men are. I learned little of the culture.

This was the book that I wanted and the price as delivered was exceptionally good. I am very pleased with this supplier.

Book was in very poor and fragile condition. I bought this book for a class and ended up having to hold it together to read it. Pages were falling out and it could barely be opened beyond 90 degree without even more of the binding falling off. I feel very misled about what condition the book was in.

This book relates the adventures of Kenneth Read, a young anthropologist who set off to do field work in the highlands of Eastern New Guinea. During the Second World War, Read had spent ten months living in the highlands as a member of the Australian armed forces, observing the reactions of the local people to the Japanese occupation. He found this experience both rewarding and enjoyable, and in 1950 when he became a research fellow at the Australian National University, he was eager to take an advantage of an opportunity to return to the area for field research. This second expedition, however, turned out to be much more challenging for Read, both socially and physically. Read was invited to a village named Susuroka by a man named Makis, a member of a Gahuku tribe. Over the next two years, Makis would be Read's informant and friend in the village. During this time, Read observed the relations between people in the village, between the men and women, and between the adults and children. He was present at the ritual initiation of his houseboy, Asemo, and at the arranged marriage of a female friend named Tarova. He also became embroiled in a civil suit in the village centering on one of the town characters, Goluwaizo. The Gahuku were an aggressive people whose society was based on strength and power. As an outsider, Read felt continually vulnerable. Raised in the West, he had trouble coming to terms with this aggressive, unforgiving culture. He reacted by trying to make sense of the people and their motivations through psychological analysis. In the end, poor diet and stress led Read to develop bleeding ulcers, which necessitated his evacuation from the village. This is not a strictly formal ethnography, but a very personal record of the people who colored Read's stay. Nevertheless, the book is filled with ethnographical details that will inform students interested in the cultures of highland Papua New Guinea.

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