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# **Beyond The Coral Sea: Travels In The Old Empires Of The South-West Pacific**



## Synopsis

This text presents a romantic and adventurous look at the remarkably diverse cultures of the hidden paradise islands surrounding Papua New Guinea. The islands of the Coral, Solomon and Bismarck Seas were the last inhabited places on earth to be explored by Europeans and remain largely unspoilt, despite the former presence of German, British and Australian colonial rulers. Michael Moran describes eccentric residents past and present such as "Queen Emma" of New Britain, born of an American father and a Samoan mother, who built up a large empire of copra plantations, traded in the fabled obsidian (black volcanic glass) and entertained on a lavish scale with imported food and French champagne. Superstition, magic rites and the occult are explored as well as the historic anthropological work of Malinowski in the Trobriand Islands; and the author encounters a host of adventurers, mercenaries, explorers, missionaries and prospectors on his wide-ranging travels.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

".....a fine travelogue....Everything you wanted to know about cannibalism but were afraid to ask...." -- Gavin Bell, Daily Telegraph (London), 5 April, 2003".....a painterly eye, a tape-recorder ear and a dry sense of humour that enliven all his encounters....." -- Patrick Skene Catling, Irish Times 15 March 2003"...a compelling and evocative book about that fabulously beautiful, repeatedly colonized and still traumatized part of the world... highly readable..." -- John Fitzgerald, Globe and Mail (Canada)June 21, 2003"...filled with tales of wonder, sadness and extraordinary behaviour..." -- Sunday Times (London) Anthony Sattin's Travel Book of the Week, 9 March 2003"A captivating

book...a glorious insight into the world's most unknown quarters...a master of the most magical prose." -- Tahir Shah, Travel Writer, author of

East of Java and west of Tahiti a bird of dazzling plumage stalks the Pacific over the Cape York Peninsula of Australia. In her wake, she spills clusters of emeralds on the surface of the deep. These are the unknown paradise islands of the Coral, Solomon and Bismarck Seas lying off the east coast of Papua New Guinea. Along the way Michael Moran explores the role of superstition, magic rites and the occult in the lives of the islanders, including the trading route of the Kula Ring which unites many tribal island groups in a mystical exchange of symbolically valuable objects, one set travelling clockwise around the ring, the other anti-clockwise. His narrative is interwoven with the stories of eccentric residents past and present; such as the self-styled 'Queen Emma' of New Britain, who was born of an American father and a Samoan mother and built up a large empire of copra plantations, as well as trading in the fabled obsidian (black volcanic glass) and entertaining on a lavish scale with imported food and French champagne. Moran describes the historic anthropological work of Malinowski in the Trobriand Islands and also catches up with some of the adventurers, mercenaries, explorers, missionaries and prospectors he has encountered on previous journeys. The islands were the last inhabited place on earth to be explored by Europeans and even today many remain largely unspoilt, despite the former presence of German, British and even Australian colonial rulers. In addition there has been a recent resurgence of cannibalism in the remoter areas. But rather than a tale of cannibals and blood, this is a journey in the romantic and adventurous spirit of Robert Louis Stevenson and an exploration of encroaching change in remarkably diverse cultures.

This book is a nice read that is easy to finish. Micheal Moran will travel for you to take you places where you'll most likely never go yourself.

**OBSERVATIONS:-** Covers the brief German colonialist period- Investigates issues of poverty, cultural dislocation and crime (the "raskols")- Not so much on cannibalism per se, but it is disconcerting to read how relatively frequently uppity missionaries were eaten!- The Manus Island dances give new meaning to the term "Members Only"**PROS-** Well-researched- Multiple sets of great photos- Stories of adventurous missionaries and misfits such as Count D'Albertis, the Cambridge Seven, Bronislaw Malinowski, Baron Miklouho-Maclay and of course Errol Flynn- Good exploration of cultural concepts and artifacts such as malagan masks, tubuans, dukduks etc.- Best

book chapter is the Essay on Kwato Island - very poignant, poetic and melancholy. The balance of memoir, travelogue, history and essay is good but not as good as other travel writers such as Robert D. Kaplan or Bruce Chatwin. Moran has all the right ingredients, but the proportions need tweaking. Great line: "once the tropics infects your blood, it enslaves you like a terminal illness"

This was a satisfying, informative, entertaining and thought provoking read. Having lived in New Zealand and Australia most of my adult life, I have never paddled up to the Coral Sea. I have been to other parts of Polynesia and Melanesia but what is described in this book is a series of cultures different from what I have encountered. Part history, biography and travel story it works on all those levels. It is clear on the legacy of European colonisation and the missionaries role in subverting existing beliefs and traditional tribal structures. Unsurprising many Europeans came to a bad end without quite realising why. The dangerous currents then are still in force today and Mr Moran encounters some of them in his travels. Yet what emerges is the richness of differences, even in short distances-these can often be baffling when on the surface there may be a sameness about the environment, the people and what they appear to do and believe in. It is a book I shall long treasure.

very fast, receive it next day, Very well. in my family it is necessary, good . Thin and sharp. Well excellence. Great product.

This is the first book on the Island Provinces of Papua New Guinea rather than the Highlands for a hundred years and what a brilliant book it is! Finely-written with beautiful photographs (particularly of children and island landscapes) as well as excellent maps. Clearly a product of extensive research, this book gives the reader a balanced insight into a vanishing world in a way that is both informative and hugely entertaining. The islands are still almost pristine and 'stone-age' in character but not for much longer I fear. The stories the author tells of characters both historical and modern are almost beyond belief - often hilarious - obviously the apex of European eccentrics visited New Guinea. This is travel writing of the highest quality about a place most readers are highly unlikely to visit. The account of the great Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in the Trobriand "Islands of Love" is both penetrating and enlightening. Moran is one of those rare travel writers who respects what he sees and communicates this to the reader with dry humour and deep understanding. As a missionary tells him, life in Papua New Guinea can be both "terrible and wonderful" by turns. Moran steers us through this difficult cultural labyrinth with brilliance. I am looking forward to the Polish

edition next year!"Beyond the Coral Sea" will become the standard work and required reading for anyone contemplating a trip to Papua New Guinea - even those who are not.

As a traveller who has spent a total of about 18 months in and around the island regions of Papua New Guinea, I found this book to be just what I look for before and during a trip to any area. Moran's trip illustrated exactly what a traveller will experience while in the country and also gives the historical background so that time is not wasted trying to discover how a culture or area has come to be what it is. While looking over the harbor of Rabaul and seeing the Duke of York Islands and the southern end of New Ireland, I felt as though I could feel the history taking place. Even Moran's encounters with modern day expatriots in airports and towns ring so true to my experiences that I felt he was writing about my trip without me knowing it. It is my goal to gain this insight for every country I visit but it is hardly realized. This book fulfilled that goal for Papua New Guinea and raised the bar for my travel reading in the future.

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