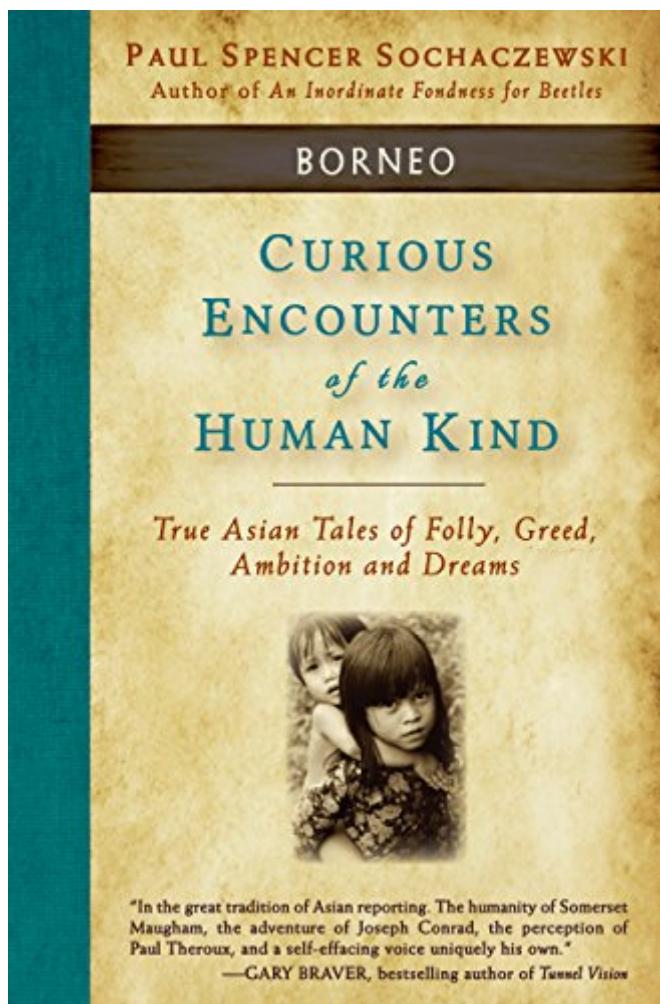


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Curious Encounters Of The Human Kind - Borneo: True Asian Tales Of Folly, Greed, Ambition And Dreams



Synopsis

How has a town named after a female vampire ghost spawned an entire genre of kitschy horror films? Why did a quiet Swiss man choose to live rough in the rainforest with the semi-nomadic Penans and what inner spirit drove him to fight a David vs. Goliath rebellion against timber tycoons and corrupt officials who were destroying the Penans' forest home? Has White-Brown colonialism been replaced by Brown-Brown arrogance? What's the story of the grandmother who spits at meddling ghosts (but only because they spit first)? Why did the first White Rajah of Borneo amass a vast harem of concubines? What happened when I tried to ride the tidal bore that almost killed Somerset Maugham? In what way was an illiterate Borneo teenager instrumental in helping Alfred Russel Wallace develop the theory of natural selection? How close are we to orangutans, "our poor cousins who look like they haven't done so well in life." This is Borneo as you've probably never imagined, full of curious people, startling happenings, and unexpected moments of humanity and introspection, giddiness and solemnity, avarice and ambition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was privileged to spend a year in Sarawak teaching upriver at Marudi Government Secondary School - a year before Paul started his Peace Corps- so we never met. I feel like I know him though. Shared experiences will do this to you. "Curious Encounters of the Human Kind" is precisely that. Paul Sochaczewski writes with passion and enthusiasm about obscure and not so obscure characters that live in or lived in the vast Indonesian /Malaysian archipelago. He adroitly intertwines history with the present day to sustain a fascinating narrative. His journalistic skills are unquestioned and neither is his search for truth - whether it be "reality" or his own interpretations of it. I soaked this up in a day - nodding in agreement when he met a band of Penans and thinking back to a night I spent with these nomads of the forest. I was less happy to read about the rain forest devastation - all in the name of progress. As a biologist I loved his account of Alfred Russel Wallace's travel companion, cook, boatman and collector - one Ali - like many sidekicks consigned to the back roads of history. And if Paul's riding of the "bore" did not result in being eaten by a crocodile - so much the better. I want Paul Sochaczewski around to write many more gritty, interesting and sometimes whimsical yarns like these. A damn fine read.

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