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The Dugum Dani: A Papuan Culture In The Highlands Of West New Guinea



Synopsis

For many years anthropologists have speculated about primitive warfare, its place in a particular culture, its form, and its consequences on other tribes. This full-scale ethnography of the Dugum Dani centers on the issue of hostility between groups of human beings and the place and function of violence. Warfare, like rituals and kinship alliances, is part of a total culture, and for this reason Professor Heider has approached the Dani from a holistic point of view. Other aspects of Dani life and organization are shown in interrelationship with the institution of warfare, such as the social, ecological, and technological elements in the Dani way of life. Professor Heider examines particularly the role of warfare itself in terms of the particular needs, and lack of them. The first section of this book documents the Dani and their warfare and provides one of the most detailed accounts of tribal life available. The second section focuses on the material aspects of Dani culture, to explore the interrelationships of the material objects with the other aspects of Dani culture; this analysis is especially interesting since the Dani moved from a stone-age culture to steel tools during the period of study itself. Professor Heider also notes the distinctive aspects of Dani culture; the paucity of color, number, and other attribute terms, the near absence of art; their five-year post-partum sexual abstinence, and other traits that seem to suggest that the Dani have little interest in intellectual elaboration or sex, and that despite their warfare, they are not a particularly aggressive people. Including previously unpublished photographs and descriptions of tribal life and warfare, this book provides anthropologists with a full and vivid account of Dani culture and with new insights into the general problems of human aggression.

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Customer Reviews

Based on long field research in Dugum village in the early 1960es, this book deals with all aspects of the culture of the Grand Valley Dani. It is excellent and comprehensive, and will always remain the standard book written on this most famous of West Papuan ethnic groups. See also Grand Valley Dani: Peaceful Warriors by the same author, which also covers recent changes/developments that have taken place since this book was written!

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