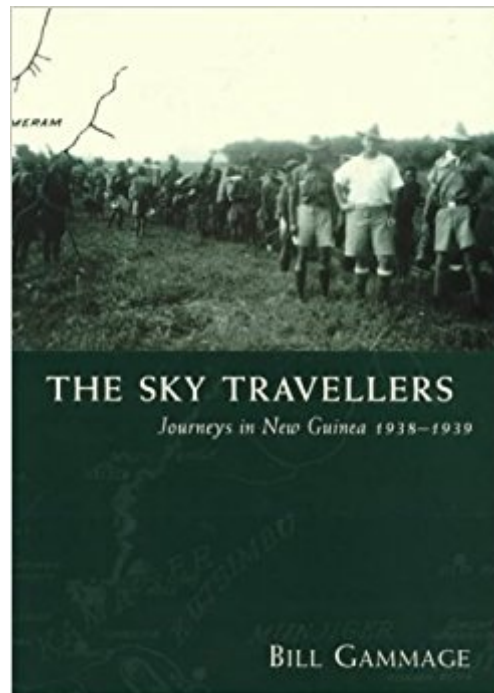




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The Sky Travellers: Journeys In New Guinea 1938-1939 (Miegunyah Press)



Synopsis

The extraordinary story of the world's last major exploration and experience of first-contact-a 1938-39 Australian expedition of three thousand kilometres by foot, through the mountainous western highlands of Papua New Guinea. The pale skin of the strangers suggested that they were spirits-sky people. How should they be treated? Local people repeatedly asked 'Why have you come?' Jim Taylor, with John Black and Pat Walsh, led a patrol of over 350 people. Most were carriers from Highlands areas already familiar with Europeans; about 40 were new Guinea police from the coast. With war looming, records of their remarkable experience were officially suppressed. Bill Gammage has talked to many of the people who were there-both the visitors and those visited. With the rigour of a committed historian and a rare skill as a storyteller he traces a complex journey of minds as well as bodies. Every participant in this adventure was changed irrevocably. Readers, too, can expect an exhilarating mind shift.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'deserves to become a classic of post-colonial literature . . . Gammage has taken a genre - the adventure story of exploration - and transformed it by revealing subtly, step by step, the intricacies of encounter. He takes the reader deeper than any writer I know . . . into the relationships between intruders and locals.' -- Emeritus Professor Ken Inglis, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University

After many years teaching history at the universities of Papua New Guinea and Adelaide, Bill Gammage is now a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian National University. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and Deputy Chair of the National Museum of Australia. He has edited *Australians: A Bicentennial History, 1938* and written an acclaimed history of Australian soldiers in the Great War, *The Broken Years*, to which this book is a fine successor.

It is an interesting anthropological record and historical record of something unique for the pre-WWII period. The author did not really render a critique of his subjects; he entered their world perceptions and essentially shares them (which I do not quite). I briefly saw the main character, Jim Taylor, in 1986 and it allowed me to re-live some of my PNG experiences across decades.

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