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Vanishing Africa



Synopsis

This book represents months of work of planning and in the field, but above all it is a tribute to the eternal beauty of Africa; the photographs and text 'steal' from the peoples of the Omo a fragment of their mystery and truth. But with delicacy and respect. By examining a small region in the heart of the continent, the book attempts to trace the roots of remotest Africa; the cradle of man, where ancestral bonds with nature still exist. It is a place where the link with the dark side of existence is not hidden, as happens in the West, but exhibited. By means of his camera and his pen, in this book the author has encapsulated long years of study of the most interesting peoples and ethnic groups in Africa. Centered around a series of extraordinary photographs, the book is a sort of reportage from the edge of the world, in search of vanishing Africa.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gianni Giansanti began his professional career in 1978. Approached by the Sygma agency in 1981, he documented the coup d'état in Turkey and performed assignments in Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Libya, Lebanon, Senegal, Poland, Greece, and Yugoslavia. In 1988, a photographic essay on the private life of Pope John Paul II in the Vatican won first prize from the World Press. Paolo Novaresio graduated in contemporary history and for more than twenty years has been a full-time traveler. After a series of trips around the world, he has devoted his time entirely to Africa. Recently he has concentrated his research in Kenya, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa. He lives and works in Turin, Nairobi, and Johannesburg.

Although I feel the spectacular new work of Hans Silvester, as well as "African Ark" (Beckwith/Fisher), can't be beat for beautiful pictures of tribal Ethiopia, I wouldn't want to be without this book, either. Having twice visited 9 of the 10 tribes covered in "Vanishing Africa," this book mentions places and peoples I've seen. The book is basically a travelog of notes and photos by Giansanti, who, having never been there before, was asked by the publisher to do a photo essay on the people of the area. The difference between this book and the vacation stories and slides of a neighbor is that Giansanti is a professional photographer who had the resources to get around (he hired a small private plane, for example) and to take the time required for creating such a beautiful work. And the pictures are excellent. The book covers a finite geographical area and a map shows the layout of the ten tribal territories. The promotional hype tends to give the impression this book is the result of many long years of study of these locations. Giansanti, being new to the area, is supported by the historical and cultural notes of historian and traveler Paolo Novaresio. But Novaresio has spent most of his time in other parts of Africa; indeed, Ethiopia is not even mentioned in his detailed bio. Still, the information seems credible and adequate. The tribes that are covered still exist today much as they did centuries ago. There aren't many places left like this in the world. Still, we have to realize that if a Land Cruiser or airplane can get there, obviously modernity has significantly encroached. Books like this understandably do not tend to highlight that encroachment. The map, for example, fails to include marks of modernity (scarce as they are) such as roads, highways or towns, making it difficult to use the map to orient yourself in the real world. Truth is, many of the activities and peoples pictured here co-exist--in the buffer areas where old converges with new--with people who wear Western clothes, go to school, have some access to healthcare and have had a taste of technology, more or less. Some larger villages even have generated electricity, for example. One seems to get a sense of this confluence of old with new in Giansanti's description of one young man's rite of passage in the "jumping of the bulls" ritual. In this particular case, there almost seemed to be some ambivalence about the event. Maybe this kid is one of many who usually dress in Western clothes and long for full Western enculturation. But get farther off the beaten path, and you will definitely realize tribal Africa does still exist, and people do appear, in their every-day lives, exactly as pictured--the body paint, the greased or clay-packed hair treatments, the shaving of body hair, the wearing of animal skins.... The Mursi and Surma women do still wear the lip plates. Those nearly untouched areas are increasingly hard to find, but they are still there and it is an amazing land. If you cannot go in person, by all means buy this book (along with the Fisher/Beckwith book, African Ark). Can't complain about the price. Subtract half a star because the DVD that comes with the book would not work on my Macintosh. Could this be one of those cases

where developers simply throw something together for Windows and ignore the finer platforms?
;-)LATER NOTE: As mentioned in the revised first line of this review, now there's yet another spectacular work on the peoples of the Omo Valley that must not be ignored. Check out Hans Silvester's amazing work too.

This book takes one to Africa direct from the couch. The photos are wonderful, in terms of quality and subject matter. I love taking a trip without leaving home--this book does that for me.

a book with very nice photos, hope to read more books like this of a world that almost is lost
,perfect

I had the opportunity to be there, to know the people in the book and later on I could buy it. There's a great job and worth a try.

I am a photographer myself, and writing a book on Africa, I found this book excellent, extremely interesting and accurate.

This is a beautifully written book for any anthropologist. Gianni travelled to some of the most remote destinations in Africa where people are so removed from modernisation they are the closest we can see to truly archaic people. The cultural images expressed in this book is an eye opening experience. And the photography IS ABSOLUTELY AMAZING. Mine came with a DVD which was physical footage of the tribesmen. Truly a FORGOTTEN Africa.....Vanishing Africa. Thanks you Gianni

The pictures in this book are absolutely great. They are mainly portraits, however I find it amazing how the faces really tell stories. As you may have noticed the book is big, and you will have much material to look at. There are also many text explanations which complete the whole. I must say that viewing this book really felt like a journey to Africa.

THE PHOTOGRAPHY HERE IS BEAUTIFUL...THE FACES OF EACH PERSON ARE PHOTOGRAPHED UP CLOSE AND THE EMOTION OF THE PEOPLE COMES ALIVE IN THE EYES, THE TRIBAL COLORS ON THE FACES, AND THE WRITTEN EXPLANATION OF EACH PHOTO. THE BOOK WITH THE PEOPLE IN IT ARE LOOKING BACK AT YOU AS IF YOU ARE

BEING OBSERVED AND NOT THEM.....EXCELLENT IN ALL WAYS.

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