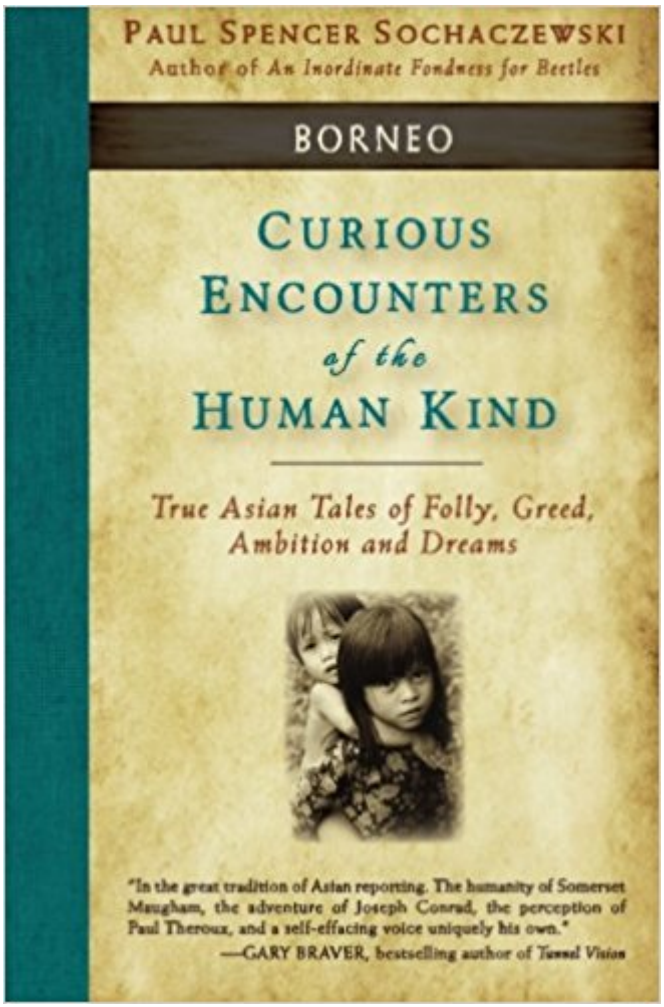
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Curious Encounters Of The Human Kind - Borneo: True Asian Tales Of Folly, Greed, Ambition And Dreams (Volume 4)



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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's 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 Has White-Brown colonialism been replaced by Brown-Brown arrogance?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 memorable people, startling happenings, and unexpected moments of humanity and introspection, giddiness and solemnity, avarice and ambition.This book is one of five volumes in the Curious Encounters of the Human Kind series, featuring Myanmar (Burma), Indonesia, Southeast Asia, Himalaya, and Borneo.One reviewer said these books embody "The humanity of Somerset Maugham, the adventure of Joseph Conrad, the perception of Paul Theroux, and a self-effacing voice uniquely his own." Another reviewer said the books reflect "The spirit of Kipling in contemporary Asian journalism." Yet another reviewer notes that the "Curious Encounters start out as intelligent travel writing, exploring hidden corners of Asia and characters very much out of the ordinary. But this series works on a more complex level: Sochaczewski frequently zooms in and out of left field with a curious tangent, a sensitive reminiscence, a provocative opinion, a new way of looking at events that are already beyond most 'normal' travelers' tales."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Most of Paul Sochaczewski's curious encounters start out as intelligent travel writing, exploring hidden corners of Asia and characters very much out of the ordinary. But this series works on a more complex level: he frequently zooms in and out of left field with a curious tangent, a sensitive reminiscence, a provocative opinion, a new way of looking at events that already are beyond most 'normal' travelers' tales. I read each story feeling refreshed, enlightened, and curious to see what the next stage of Sochaczewski's journey would bring."--Judith M. Heimann, author of Ã Â The Airmen and the Headhunters: A True Story of Lost Soldiers, Heroic Tribesmen and the Unlikeliest Rescue of World War II"What a discovery! Paul Sochaczewski is that rarest of writers who knows that the real 'Asian miracle' isn't malls or computer geeks. In his years traveling the continent, he has discovered an eternal assemblage of arcane explorers, putative emperors, frivolous mystics, sacrosanct elephants and, yes, miracle workers. When Sochaczewski finds them, in Javanese palaces or sacred forests protected by spirits, they are caviar (or sweetened bird's nest) for his fascinating portraits. This series is for everyone who knows that the Mysterious East is alive and well, and more how-about-that-wonderful than you perhaps imagined."--Harry Rolnick, author of The Chinese Gourmet,Ã Â The Complete Book of Coffee, and Spice Chronicles:Ã Â Exotic Tales of a Hungry Traveler"Paul Sochaczewski skips about Asia like a Monkey God hopping from mountain to mountain, bringing back life-prolonging peaches while annoying the gatekeepers. Whatever you do, follow him on this journey!"--Lee Chor Lin, director of the National Museum of Singapore;Ã Â author of Batik: Creating an IdentityÃ Â "Sochaczewski is a world-class searcher, reporter, and observer who has criss-crossed Asia for forty years, pausing in the most unlikely places and finding extraordinary people. The essays in these insightful and witty chronicles present a rich tapestry of eccentric nobles, self-serving naturalists, scoundrels who will make your teeth ache, celebrity monks, and memorable folks whose stories are too good to be true. But they are."--Christopher G. Moore,Ã Â author of the Vincent Calvino novels and Heart TalkÃ Â "In this series Sochaczewski explores the hidden corners, the forgotten people, and their surprising tales. All the personal traveler's tales in these volumes are captivating, all filled with humor, drama, and insight, with

an edgy take-no-prisoners voice. You won't find anything else like this on the bookshelf."Ã Â --Jeff McNeely, chief scientist,Ã Â International Union for Conservation of NatureÃ Â "Constructed on a base of strange but true personal travel adventures, Curious Encounters adds elements of history, an edgy sense of humour, mysticism, political incorrectness, current affairs, and memorable characters you'll wish you had the pleasure to meet on your travels."Ã Â --Jason Brooke, director of The Brooke Trust"The Curious Encounters series is proof positive that a writer/traveler can immerse himself in Asian cultures and yet remain objective enough to write extremely entertaining and often irreverent articles and colorful stories about what he has experienced. From Indonesian mystics to Burmese white elephant hunters, the descriptions are spot-on. There is something in these articles and stories that reminds me of the writing of Paul Theroux - not as cynical, perhaps, but the author is just as able to look at events with a clear, unsentimental and yet sympathetic eye. You won't regret a moment spent reading these tales, which perfectly capture the allure and spice of the places visited."--Dean Barrett, author of Memoirs of a Bangkok Warrior

Paul Spencer Sochaczewski has written Share Your Journey, An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles, The Sultan and the Mermaid Queen, Redheads, Soul of the Tiger (co-authored with Jeff McNeely), and other acclaimed books, along with some six hundred bylined articles in leading international publications. He has lived and worked in more than eighty countries, including long stints in Southeast Asia.

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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