



Culture of Stone: Sacred and Profane Uses of Stone Among the Dani

O. W. Bud Hampton

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When O. W. "Bud" Hampton made his first visit to the peoples in remote parts of the Highlands of Irian Jaya in 1982 and 1983, he found that their ancient stone-based technologies and culture remained virtually intact. During repeated and extended visits over twelve years, Hampton had unparalleled and irreproducible opportunity to observe the development, use, and cultural meaning of stone tool assemblages in their traditional contexts.

In this unique study, Hampton describes the complete cultural inventory of both secular and sacred stones, ranging from utilitarian stone tools and profane symbolic stones through symbolic spirit stones, power stones with multiple functions, and medicinal power stone tools, as they were being used in the culture of this long-isolated people. Hampton portrays the complete cycle of quarrying, manufacture, trade, and uses of the stones. Specific archaeological questions are addressed in the context of a culture that provides the answers: What stimulates production? How are tool and symbolic stones manufactured? What is the role of women in quarrying and production? What kinds of trade mechanisms are at work? Are the distributions of stone tool types reliable language and cultural boundary markers? How are sacred stones created and what are their uses? The answers contain rosetta stones of information for worldwide application.

Hampton examines the complexities of the Highlanders' unseen spirit world and its symbiotic relationship with the world of the seen. The dual worship of ancestor spirits and the sun within the same belief system is described, with all of the attendant material props.

This extensively illustrated, carefully documented, holistic ethnography presents a detailed study of rarely observed behavior associated with traditional stone tools and sacred objects practiced by living people within their integrated society. Archaeologists, anthropologists, other scholars, as well as inquisitive general readers will find *Culture of Stone: Sacred and Profane Uses of Stone among the Dani* a valuable contribution not only to the ethnography of the New Guinea highlands but to archaeology and anthropology in general.

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