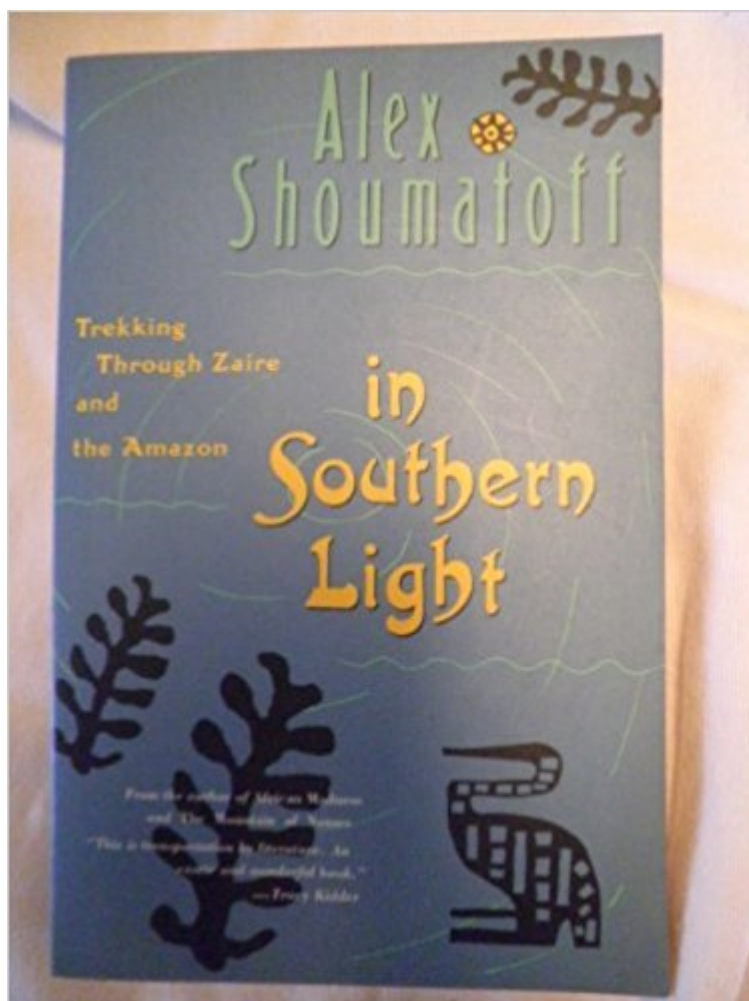


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In Southern Light



Synopsis

The author investigates the legends of the s on the river that bears their name and takes in the mingled warmth, squalor and frenzied entrepreneurialism of Zaire

Book Information

Paperback: 239 pages

Publisher: Vintage; Reprint edition (August 11, 1990)

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Customer Reviews

Vicarious travel with Shoumatoff is always rewardingnot only is he well informed, he is interested in everything. An earlier journey produced *The Rivers* ; here he treks to the remote and sparsely populated Rio Nhamunda in northwest Brazil. Legend has designated the area as home of the s, "women without husbands," and Shoumatoff traces this universal myth among fragmented Indian tribes. In the jungles of Zaire, he walks with pygmies through the Ituri Forest, visits missionaries and hitchhikes to a nature reserve at the Ugandan border. It is an extraordinarily colorful voyage; Shoumatoff captures the essence of people on the move as well as the sights of exotic places. First serial to the *New Yorker*. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Although few people could consider trekking in Zaire and the to be an ideal vacation, this book is undeniably enthralling. Shoumatoff seems equally at home in the Brazilian jungle searching for a legendary tribe of women or marching through an African forest with BaMbuti pygmies. On every page the reader is sure to find intriguing details about local flora and fauna, exotic natives, or the latest calamity to befall the intrepid author. Shoumatoff's grasp of jungle lore, his appreciation for natural wonders, and his taste for high adventure make this one travel account about which readers

won't exclaim, "Not another book on" Ian Wallace, Agriculture Canada Lib., Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Anyone who likes travel literature will certainly not be disappointed in Alex Shoumatoff's IN SOUTHERN LIGHT. It is a book in two parts. In the first, he travels with a friend up a large, but seldom-visited tributary of the , the Nhamunda, in search of any clues about the eponymous s themselves. He finds mostly caboclos, mixed race people who live off fishing, hunting, and a little farming when possible, and the last remnants of the Indian peoples who lived in the region for centuries. The second, less-focussed journey is in the former Zaire, now Congo (again). Though the current wars and massacres had not begun, the reader gets a strong impression of the crumbling, decaying society that existed under Mobutu. The author travels by truck, by riverboat, and through the jungle on foot with some BaMbuti (pygmies). I liked two things about this book. First, I liked Shoumatoff's attitude towards the people he met: neither condescending and critical, nor full of gushing admiration. He took each person as they came, just as he would have in his own society. If you are tired of the snide, superior writing style of a Theroux or Naipaul, this could be a welcome change. Secondly, I liked his descriptions of the natural world of the forests, rivers, and interactions between people. My criticism is that both sections lack focus and sometimes the book and the diary are a little too close together. The section starts off with a very fascinating description of the Greek legend and how the early Europeans were influenced by it, how the Indians may have fed it back to successive explorers once they realized what the intruders were looking for. But, since Shoumatoff found no vestige of the legend in his travels, there really was no point to setting up this "straw woman". He was basically "messing around

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