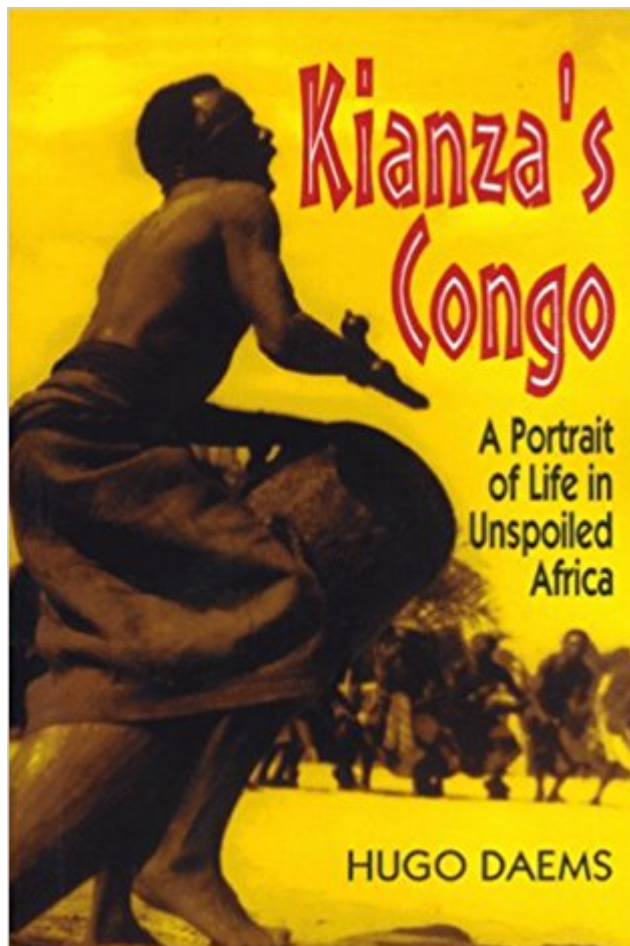


The book was found

Kianza's Congo



Synopsis

Book by Daems, Hugo

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

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Customer Reviews

Scattershot anthropological vignettes of a Congolese ethnic group during the 1950s from former Belgian colonial administrator Daems. From 1953 to 1961, Daems lived with the Sonde people in the southwest Congo. As the region had little geopolitical and no economic importance to the Belgians, both the landscape and the local customs remained intact. But Daems appreciated that colonialism would open up the area and big changes were imminent, so he set about interviewing the Sonde chief and taking notes so as to preserve a glimpse of Sonde life and the elements that gave it distinction and strength. Gathered here are a handful of stories framed as oral histories, as told by the chief (the kianza) and his father, with occasional essays by Daems explaining the social hierarchy of the tribe, their laws and enforcement, worship and witchcraft, slavery and the role of ghosts, initiation processes into adulthood and various secret societies, and most wonderfully exactly what it was like to encounter their first European, all this in an effort to get at the glue that secured the Sondes' cultural convictions. But Daems is not an artful storyteller: the words he puts in the chief's mouth have a cooked quality, yet remain uninflected and too windy by half. No sense of overarching context emerges, so that while these peeks into Sonde life are unquestionably fascinating and Daems's respect and admiration evident they lie about unassembled into a whole, even at times taking on a sideshow character that the author clearly doesn't intend. To his credit, Daems never tries to whitewash Belgian arrogance or misguidance in the Congo, but he does bring

a fusty, overly literal eye to his subject: ``Black heritage is much richer than soul food, a chicken walk, sagging pants, and a `cold piece' to command respect." Without puzzling these truly remarkable elements of Sonde life into a complete picture, they remain as frustratingly opaque as a cabinet of curiosities. (2 maps; 28 illustrations, not seen) -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

This book saves you the discomfort of a trip deep into the African Jungle: I have never read such a detailed description of the real 'Circle of Life' in Africa. Mr. Daems tells us the story of Kianza's life, starting with the first encounter of Kianza's father with white people, up to the independence of Congo. Tales of slavery, initiation rites, secret societies, local politics and economics, all these subjects are demystified in this book by Kianza himself. Kianza is not just a first row spectator but a participant himself. The arrival of white man however disrupted the existing fragile social structures which had evolved out of several thousands of years of trying to live in harmony with nature. "Kianza however did not oppose progress blindly, but it was blind progress that he opposed."

Kianza's Congo is the inside story of black life in the Congo. Written by a man who lived 10 years with the tribes. He spoke their language, witnessed their customs, and learned of secret rituals. The life of Chief Kianza is told in Kianza's own words and translated by his confidant Mr. Daems. The book includes suspense, sex, politics, power, and even an experience of slavery. To be accepted in the male elite clan you must pass tough rituals, or die trying. These and more are described in this excellent book. This is REAL AFRICAN LIFE.

I own over a thousands books on a wide range of subjects regarding Africa. This is THE BEST book in plain english about what life is like in a central african tribe from the perspective on an African. I have also traveled to the congo and other countries for research. This book gets it right, helping to create a cohesive picture of life there without a bunch on anthropological, higher instition speak. A must, must read. Note the this book would have a 5 star overall rating except someone who wrote a positive review forgot to vote.

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