



Race to the Snow: Photography and the Exploration of Dutch New Guinea, 1907 to 1936

Chris Ballard, Steven Vink, Anton Ploeg

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This is the first collection of photographs -- many never previously published -- depicting the Dutch and British expeditions to South New Guinea between 1907 and 1936.

When a seventeenth century report of snow-covered mountains in the interior of the tropical island of New Guinea was confirmed, the Dutch and British mounted expeditions in a race to reach them first. The authors chronicle the successes, heartbreaks and tragedies of the expeditions. The photographs depict the mountains, expedition members, and the Papuan people they encountered. It took until 1936 for a team led by Anton Colijn to finally make a successful ascent of Mt Carstensz, the highest peak in New Guinea.

The encounters between the expeditions and the Papuan people living in the mountains were the first of their kind. The photographs were taken by the expeditions as a form of evidence of these first contacts. More recently, as the photographs have become available to these same Papuan communities, the range of interpretations of their meaning has expanded. For communities such as the Amungme, these photographs provide an important window into their past, and a new means of rethinking current issues. The photographs, together with Papuan and European narratives about the events of the expeditions, represent a history that is very much alive and working in the service of the present.

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