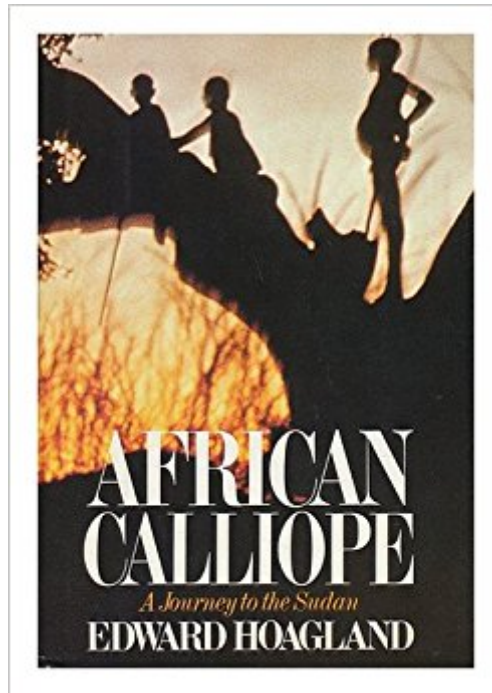




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African Calliope: A Journey To The Sudan



Synopsis

An unparalleled eye for detail presents electrifying images of life in the Sudan. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Open this book and enter into a richly detailed landscape and an exotic society. Follow Hoagland's travels, from equatorial mountain forests to the Sahara desert; from small Sudanese towns in the south and west to short stays in the capital, Khartoum. Hoagland's eye for detail presents the reader with electrifying images of life in the Sudan - rotten diets, disease, coups and civil war, the traders, poachers, tribal headmen, and those who come to help. (6 X 9, 256 pages, maps) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

....ever was and ever will be." So said General Gordon, who was killed, and beheaded by the Madhist army in Khartoum in 1885. Gordon went on to say: "Larger than Germany, France and Spain together, and mostly barren, it cannot be governed except by a dictator who may be good or bad." Yes, the Sudan is an immense country, which at one time played a vital part in Cecil Rhodes imperial dream of providing a corridor for a trans-Africa "Cape to Cairo" railroad (which was never actually constructed.) But the knowledge of the country, even among quite educated Americans, is scanty. Gordon's defeat in the 19th century might be updated with a few other events: the continued secessionist fighting, and associated genocide, in the western region of the country, Darfur; that it was once the home to Osama bin Laden; and that President Clinton once ordered a missile attack

on a pharmaceutical factory there. Edward Hoagland, who is a journalist and essayist, has produced an incisive portrait of the country which provides remedy to that knowledge deficiency. Allowances must be made for the fact that it was written over 30 years ago, but there has been little else produced since that gives the reader a feeling for the scope and complexity of this vast country. I just finished a review of *A Hot Country: (Love and Death In a Hot Country)* (Twentieth Century Classics), a portrait of Guyana, which covers roughly the same time period, the first 10-15 year period of the post-colonial era, when the initial high hopes for many of the newly independent countries were being attenuated. There were still hopes that the Sudan could become "Africa's Brazil," and that its "rain-fed and irrigable lands would create just the breadbasket of Arab fable..." The Sudan is one of those "cobbled together" countries, sort of like Belgium. Two quite different ethnic groups, with different cultures and languages. At least Belgium is not in open civil war; the Sudan usually is, with the principal axis of conflict being between the Arab and Muslim north against the Black and Christian south. Hoagland focuses on this conflict, and made several trips to Juba, the "capital" of the southern region. Overt violence seems endemic to the Sudan; the American ambassador was kidnapped and killed in 1973, and there was a coup attempt against President Nemeiri in 1976. Even back then, way before the so-called war on terror, Nemeiri was waging a war of the ideological descendents of the Mahdi. Hoagland presents a realistic assessment of the power relations, even in the post-colonial era, between whites and blacks; the former invading the country as so-called "experts." He calls the whites "Tarzans," and said: "Outside of the several civil-war zones, the laws of gravity didn't really apply to you." "...off you could swing with your wallet-full of money by jeep or Fokker Friendship." "...if you came down with guillain-barre syndrome, somehow an iron lung would be found for you, though the Minister of the Interior himself would have been allowed to die of it." In another section, Hoagland gives the reader a depiction of an "expert" he calls Hector, who gives a somewhat jaundiced view of his profession: (an expert is) "somebody who can tell from the wrinkles in the sheets whether it was done for love or for money." The author also presents a balanced picture of the Jews who lived in the Sudan, and the apparently genuine feeling of loss on the part of the Arab leadership that they many had departed. And as Hoagland says: "But it is worth recalling that nowhere in the Arab world during this period, when African and Oriental Jews were migrating to greater numbers to Israel, did a religious massacre occur of the Indo-Pakistani variety, or an abortive European-style holocaust. The tactic of Israeli leaders like Golda Meir and Menachem Begin of comparing their Arab counterparts with 'Hitler' and characterizing Arab aims as 'Nazi' has succeeded enough in the United States that a writer who ventures into the Middle East must make some reference to it." Overall, Hoagland has

written a fascinating portrait of this large, but relatively unknown country. Even 30 years on, it still deserves attention, and provides an informative read. Definitely 5-stars; alas the only review to date posted.

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