



Head Hunters of the Amazon

F. W. Up De Graaf

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A Personal Account of a Head-Hunting Raid. F.W. Up De Graff. Head hunters of the Amazon: Seven Years of Exploration and Adventure.

Fritz W. Up de Graff (1873-1927) was an American mining engineer, explorer and adventurer. His work *Head Hunters of the Amazon* recounts his adventures in Ecuador where he arrived in 1894, crossing the Andes to the Valley of the Napo, and years-long wanderings along the Amazon and its tributaries in harsh conditions.

Headhunting is the practice of taking and preserving a person's head after killing the person. Headhunting was practised in historic times in parts of Oceania, South and Southeast Asia, West and Central Africa, and Mesoamerica, as well as among certain tribes of the Celts, the West Germanic tribes, the Vikings and Scythians of ancient Europe. It occurred in Europe until the 19th century in Montenegro, Croatia, and western parts of Herzegovina and to the end of the Middle Ages in Ireland and the Anglo-Scottish border regions.

Several tribes of the Jivaroan group including the Shuar in Eastern Ecuador and Northern Peru, along the rivers Chinchipe, Bobonaza, Morona, Upano, and Pastaza, main tributaries of the Amazon, practised headhunting for trophies that were then shrunk, known locally as Tzan-Tzas which they believed housed the soul of the person killed. The Shuar today still produce replicas using the original process from the skinheads of monkeys and sloths in order to sell them to tourists. It is believed that there are still splinter groups in the local tribes that continue with these practices of their forefathers whenever there is a tribal feud over territory or as revenge for a crime of passion.

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