

# ECHOES OF A VANISHED WORLD

A Travellers Lifetime In Pictures



ROBIN HANBURY-TENISON





Indonesia 1973



The head man of the Penan group did not come with us. His headband is made of clouded leopard skin. In his ears are teeth which he insisted were from a tiger. Although tigers, as opposed to leopards, feature largely in Dyak and Penan folklore, there is no confirmed record of a tiger ever being seen in Borneo. Borneo 1958-1976





The Mentuktire, also called Txukarramai, living at Posto Leonardo inside the Xingu National Park are part of the Ge speaking northern Kayapo. A hunting and gathering people living along the Xingu River, they were first contacted by Karl von Steinen's expedition in the 1880s, but have continued to be fiercely independent until the present. About half the men had wooden discs in their lower lips. These were about four inches across and often stretched as thin as an elastic band. I could never understand how, in the rough and often hostile world they lived in, they could manage to go through life without splitting this narrow strip. The generally accepted reason for it was that it makes them look frightening and fierce to their enemies. Brazil 1971



Ot Danum little girl in the Borneo forest, as at home as any western child in a playground. Indonesia 1973



Hats, which are made of nipah palm leaves are often highly decorated with sea shells and beads, but their main function is protection against the sun and rain. Indonesia 1973





The Unviversal childhood gaze. Indonesia 1974



The Borneo Rain Forest Aren, Itang, Tagam and Nyapun



Xingu woman feeding parrot the proper way – just like its mother would. We saw many animals and birds kept by Indian communities and always cared for. They told us it was unthinkable to kill or eat any such pets, which were regarded as part of the family. Brazil 1971



Maya temple at Copan. The Maya were the greatest of all Mesoamerican civilizations, reaching their highest state of development between 250 and 900 AD. The Maya believed that the universe was constantly being created and destroyed in a never ending cycle, an idea being echoed today at the cutting edge of research into space. Some of the calculations now being deciphered from the stelea indicate a distinction between contemporary time and 'deep time'. There are calendars which seem to be dealing with cycles of millions, even billions, of years. Their incredibly complex Long Count calendar is still not fully understood. Its year dot, like the Christian 1<sup>st</sup> of January, year zero, is 11th August 3114 B.C. This was what the Maya thought of as the date when the current world began, the founding of the current universe. It is only about a thousand years later than the rather arbitrary date of 4004 BC calculated by Archbishop Ussher in 1650 as the moment when God created the Garden of Eden. The long Count calendar has a cycle of 1,872,000 days, which is just over 5000 years. The cycle ends on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2012, which some believe will be the end of the world. Or perhaps Armageddon in the form of a great flood, earthquake or other cataclysm will annihilate our corrupt society, which will then start a new and more perfect world. Some might say not before time. Guatemala 1972