



Return from the Natives: How Margaret Mead Won the Second World War and Lost the Cold War

Peter Mandler

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Celebrated anthropologist Margaret Mead, who studied sex in Samoa and child-rearing in New Guinea in the 1920s and '30s, was determined to show that anthropology could tackle the psychology of the most complex, modern societies in ways useful for waging the Second World War. This fascinating book follows Mead and her closest collaborators—her lover and mentor Ruth Benedict, her third husband Gregory Bateson, and her prospective fourth husband Geoffrey Gorer—through their triumphant climax, when Mead became the cultural ambassador from America to Britain in 1943, to their downfall in the Cold War.

Part intellectual biography, part cultural history, and part history of the human sciences, Peter Mandler's book is a reminder that the Second World War and the Cold War were a clash of cultures, not just ideologies, and asks how far intellectuals should involve themselves in politics, at a time when Mead's example is cited for and against experts' involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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