



Sacred Summits

Peter Boardman, Chris Bonington

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Mountain tops have long been seen as sacred places, home to gods and dreams. In one climbing year Peter Boardman visited three very different sacred mountains. He began in the New Year, on the South Face of the Carstensz Pyramid in New Guinea. This shark's fin of steep limestone walls and sweeping glaciers is the highest point between the Andes and the Himalaya, and one of the most inaccessible, rising above thick jungle inhabited by warring Stone Age tribes. During the spring Boardman was on more familiar, if hardly more reassuring, ground, making a four-man, oxygen-free attempt on the world's third highest peak, Kangchenjunga. Hurricane-force winds beat back their first two bids on the unclimbed North Ridge, but they eventually stood within feet of the summit - leaving the final few yards untrodden in deference to the inhabiting deity. In October, he was back in the Himalaya and climbing the mountain most sacred to the Sherpas: the twin-summitted Gauri Sankar. Renowned for its technical difficulty and spectacular profile, it is aptly dubbed the Eiger of the Himalaya and Boardman's first ascent of the South Summit took a committing and gruelling twenty-three days. Three sacred mountains, three very different expeditions, all superbly captured by Boardman in *Sacred Summits*, his second book, first published shortly after his death in 1982. Combining the excitement of extreme climbing with acute observation of life in the mountains, this is an amusing, dramatic, poignant and thought-provoking book, amply fulfilling the promise of Boardman's first title, *The Shining Mountain*, for which he won the John Llewelyn Rhys Prize in 1979. Peter Boardman and Joe Tasker died on Everest in 1982, whilst attempting a new and unclimbed line. Both men were superb mountaineers and talented writers. Their literary legacy lives on through the Boardman Tasker Prize for Mountain Literature, established by family and friends in 1983 and presented annually to the author or co-authors of an original work which has made an outstanding contribution to mountain literature. For more information about the Boardman Tasker Prize, visit: www.boardmantasker.com

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