



MISSION TO THE
HEADHUNTERS
HOW GOD'S FORGIVENESS TRANSFORMED TRIBAL ENEMIES
FRANK + MARIE DROWN



CHRISTIAN FOCUS



Front cover photo by Cornell Capa
After returning from burying 5 missionary companions, Frank Drown remains determined to continue in his work evangelizing the jungle Shuar.

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PREFACE

ELISABETH ELLIOT



As a newly arrived missionary in the eastern jungle of Ecuador, I soon heard the names of Frank and Marie Drown. They were working with a tribe of Indians known as Shuara, at a great distance from the Quichuas with whom I was to work. Now and then I would hear their voices on the jungle radio network, but it was not until January of 1956 that our lives became personally intertwined. I heard on the radio that Frank Drown was suddenly desperately needed. Five missionaries, one of whom was my husband Jim, were reported missing in what was called Auca territory. The very name *Auca* struck terror to other tribal peoples. Who might be willing to investigate what had happened?

It was Frank, a man greatly respected by all who knew him, who consented to form a search party consisting of missionary men, Ecuadorian soldiers, and Quichua guides. Upon arrival on the beach where the five had camped, it was clear that not one had escaped the Auca spears.



MISSION TO THE HEADHUNTERS

Now, more than forty years later, I have read – for the first time, I confess – *Mission to the Headhunters*. My work with the Quichuas enabled me to identify with some of the Drowns' experiences – the agonies of learning unwritten languages, watching a child die in its mother's arms, waiting with baited breath as a jungle pilot made the first landing on a newly prepared airstrip, slogging on many a squishy trail. As I read, I held my breath with Marie as she and her children waited for days for her husband's return from treks to people who had never heard the Good News. Would the people receive him or would they get rid of him?

I have thrilled to read the story of an Indian chief gazing fixedly at a little wordless book, listening to Frank's simple explanation, and then asking if he might have it. He took the book tenderly in his big, dirty hands. Page by page, he told the meaning of the colors – 'accurately and in much better Atshuara than I could have done,' said Frank. An old woman told him of a magic stone that could make gardens grow. 'We thought it would help; we knew no better. If I had known the true God before, I would have prayed to Him. But how were we to find out about Him if you hadn't come?'

A girl named Mamatu had become *Tikishmamtaicawaru* (one who has bowed the knee). 'She kneels and prays by herself every day,' they told Frank. 'The rest of us would like to do it but we don't know how.'

The book is straightforward and beautifully written. It's a page-turner. I was staggered and rebuked, helped and cheered by the steadfast faithfulness of this humble (I'm sure they would say merely *ordinary*) couple.

Read it – it's full of cliffhangers. Read the grisly account of the practice of *tsantsa*, the shrinking of the head of an enemy that becomes a talisman of power and strength to the possessor.

Ponder, then, conditions of discipleship which Jesus laid down:

1. If anyone would come after me, he must *deny himself*, and,
2. *take up his cross*, and,
3. *follow*.