When General Douglas MacArthur led Allied troops into the jungles of New Guinea in World War II, he was already looking ahead. By successfully leapfrogging Japanese forces on that island, he placed his armies in a position to fulfill his personal promise to liberate the Philippines. The New Guinea campaign has gone down in history as one of MacArthur's shining successes. Now Stephen Taaffe has written the definitive history of that assault, showing why it succeeded and what it contributed to the overall strategy against Japan. His book tells not only how victory was gained through a combination of technology, tactics, and army-navy cooperation but also how the New Guinea campaign exemplified the strategic differences that plagued the Pacific War, since many high-ranking officers considered it a diversionary tactic rather than a key offensive. MacArthurs Jungle War examines the campaigns strategic background and individual operations, describing the enormous challenges posed by jungle and amphibious warfare. Perhaps more important, it offers a balanced assessment of MacArthurs leadership and limitations, revealing his reliance on familiar battle plans and showing the vital role that subordinates played in his victory. Taaffe tells how MacArthur manipulated the complex New Guinea campaign in service of his ultimate goal— to return to the Philippines. He also discloses how MacArthur frequently deceived both his superiors and the public in order to promote his own agenda and examines errors the general would later repeat on a larger scale through the Korean War. MacArthurs Jungle War offers historians a more analytical treatment of the New Guinea campaign than is found in previous works, and is written with a dramatic flair that will appeal to military buffs. By revealing the interaction among American military planning, interservice politics, MacArthurs generalship, and the American way of war, Taaffes account provides a clearer understanding of Americas Pacific war strategy and shows that the New Guinea offensive was not a mere backwater affair.
but a critical part of the war against Japan. This book is part of the Modern War Studies series.

My Personal Review:
A seminal book about a WWII campaign that achieved nothing of strategic significance except to boost Gen. MacArthur’s personal standing as well as diverting US military forces from a direct thrust at Japan. Oddly enough, only military operations from after Operation Cartwheel, which included the bloody Buna campaign, is covered. Interested readers on the related Australian operations including the Kokoda trail, as well as follow-on operations in the Philippines will have to look elsewhere. A clear prerequisite for reading and enjoying this book is to have read "American Caesar" by William Manchester which gives the background to the complex relationships between all the personalities involved. The almost deadly duel between MacArthur and Admiral King over overall strategy and logistics is highlighted, with Admiral Nimitz being pushed into the background. The race between MacArthur’s and Nimitz’s rival thrusts towards the Japanese Empire being one of the main themes here. The book constantly harps on MacArthur’s obsession with getting back to the Philippines. Thus, in his race to beat the US Navy to the China-Luzon-Formosa area, MacArthur is criticised for moving too fast up the northern coast of PNG before securing his bases for staging the next amphibious landings. He doesn’t appear to have endeared himself to the men doing the fighting but achieved his objectives in record time and with remarkably low casualty rates for the whole campaign. As MacArthur did not know about the Manhattan Project, he cannot be faulted for his strategic planning based largely on the then known technology as well as current US military capability. As it was, the atomic bombs were the strategic weapons that decisively ended the Pacific War. This remarkable book goes somewhere towards setting the record straight and giving due credit to the many forgotten servicemen who performed gallantly or gave their lives in this little-known campaign. The maps are clear, concise and relate well to the text.

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