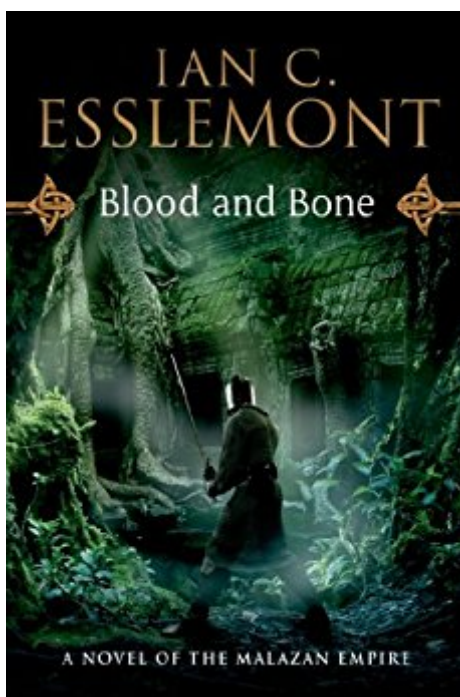


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Blood And Bone: A Novel Of The Malazan Empire



Synopsis

In the western sky the bright emerald banner of the Visitor descends like a portent of annihilation. On the continent of Jacuruku, the Thaumaturgs have mounted yet another expedition to tame the neighboring wild jungle. Yet this is no normal wilderness. It is called Himatan, and it is said to be half of the spirit realm and half of the earth. And it is said to be ruled by a powerful entity whom some name the Queen of Witches, and some a goddess: the ancient Ardata. Saeng grew up knowing only the rule of the magus Thaumaturgsâ "but it was the voices out of that land's forgotten past that she listened to. And when her rulers mount an invasion of the neighboring jungle, those voices send her and her brother on a desperate mission. To the south, the desert tribes are united by the arrival of a foreign warleader, a veteran commander in battered ashen mail whom his men call the Grey Ghost. This warleader takes the tribes on a raid like none other, deep into the heart of Thaumaturg lands. Meanwhile word comes to K'azz, and mercenary company the Crimson Guard, of a contract in Jacuruku. And their employer...none other than Ardata herself. Ian Esslemont thrills again with another gripping entry into the New York Times bestselling Malazan World in *Blood and Bone*. At the Publisher's request, this title is being sold without Digital Rights Management Software (DRM) applied.

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Customer Reviews

Jacuruku: an island-continent located south-west of Quon Tali and west of Stratem. Separated from the rest of the world by large ice floes, Jacuruku has long existed in isolation. The peoples of western Jacuruku lie under the dominion of the Thaumaturgs, mages of tremendous power, whilst the eastern half of the continent is dominated by the jungle of Himatan, domain of the goddess Ardata. Now the Thaumaturgs have launched an invasion of Himatan, determined to find the fabled city of Jakal Viharn. But even as their army drives deep into the jungle, so their homelands come under threat from the desert tribes of the far south, now united into a formidable army by an invading foreigner...who may not be as foreign as he first appears. Also newly arrived in Jacuruku are the Crimson Guard, summoned to bring to justice their renegade warrior Skinner and those sworn to his service. For K'azz D'Avore and his Avowed, this is an opportunity to heal a painful schism...but at a cost. *Blood and Bone* is Ian Cameron Esslemont's fifth novel, taking us to the hitherto unexplored (but oft-mentioned) continent of Jacuruku. The setting is the key to the novel, with the reader soon feeling the humidity and discomfort of the jungle terrain. It's actually rather unusual for geography to be so integral to a Malazan novel (normally it's incidental), and it's a new approach that Esslemont handles well. In terms of character, the book has a substantial cast taking in Jacuruku natives, Thaumaturgs, demigods, Malazan mercenaries and Crimon Guardsmen.

A fantastic entry in the world of Malaz, co-created by the author, Ian Cameron Esslemont, and Steven Erikson, who has completed his ten part "Malazan Book of the Fallen" series of 10 books. It is not accessible at all (I think) to someone who hasn't at least read all of Esslemont's prior books. Knowledge of Erikson's books would make the experience richer, but may not be entirely mandatory. This book sheds light on the ancient Ardata, who has been a mystery since the 2nd book in Erikson's series. Set on the hitherto unexplored continent of Jackuruku it also clears up a few things about the nature of the Shattered God. The storyline is riveting and now follows the classic structure of slow build-up and strong characterization all culminating in a shattering "convergence" of powers at the end which, in a very few pages indeed, resolves most plot-lines, or at least sets up clear in-world continuation. To every fanboy's delight (including this one) it also establishes its place in the shared timeline, through throwaway references to the beginning of the 8th book by Steven Erikson (*Toll the Hounds*), and by providing a new perspective on some events of an earlier Esselmont book (*Stonewielder*). I believe it is also the first Esselmont book to acknowledge the

events at the climax of the tenth book by Erikson - so clearly, the next book by Esslemont will be in new temporal territory! The limitation of this book is the same as the limitation of all of Esslemont's works - it is too coy for its own good. Things are hinted at, but are never made clear.

Blood and Bone is the penultimate book of Ian Cameron Esselmont's main Malazan Empire series (I say "main" because he has just begun a prequel trilogy) and while it has its issues, it easily ranks in my top three of the main series' six titles thanks to a few well-drawn characters and, especially, thanks to its relatively unique setting. That setting is the jungles of Jacuruku, one of the as-yet unexplored continents of the Malazan universe. The continent is mostly split in half, with one side under the dominion of a group of sorcerers known as Thaumaturgs and the other half, referred to as "Himatan," is ruled by the powerful and mysterious Ardata, worshipped by some as a goddess and by others as the Queen of Witches. As has periodically happened, seeking to expand their control of the continent, the Thaumaturgs have launched an invasion of Himatan. The "Army of Righteous Chastisement" is led by Commander Golan, and has in it as well a young mage named Pon-Lor and a deliciously wry scribe named, aptly, Thorn. The Thaumaturgs themselves, however, are under attack, for a foreigner known only as Warleader has united the southern tribes and now leads them in an invasion of the Thaumaturgs capital. Leading two of the largest and most important tribes are the poet-prince Jatal and the princess Andanii. Meanwhile, as armies tramp around the continent, several smaller groups pursue their own agendas in the area, most of them centered on a piece of the Crippled God buried in the Dolmens of Jacuruku.

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