

is sound. My only criticism is a minor one: I wish that the titles of the pictures appeared with the plates—the listing is many pages back. But it is a grand picture-book, bound to excite those who know South America, and calculated to entice others on a journey to the south.

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BACKGROUND

Ideas fundamentales del arte prehispánico en México. By PAUL WESTHEIM. Translation by MARIANA FRENK. Mexico City & Buenos Aires, 1957. Fondo de Cultura Económica. Illustrations. Indexes. Pp. 285. \$4.30.

Most books on native Middle American art flooding the market of late have been frankly mere picture books, their texts limited to the *oh-ah!* school of criticism or to a superficial statement phrased frequently in the outdated Archaic-Toltec-Aztec or Old Empire-New Empire concepts of the twenties. Westheim's book emerges as one of the few truly first-rank works from the point of view of art history and anthropology. Unlike any other book of its subject that I know, it would also serve as a fine supplementary textbook in Mesoamerican archaeology; its interpretations of the mythology symbolized in the murals and codices alone would make it worth owning. Its scope is wide, its conceptual structure sound, and its approaches varied, from the ideological (chapters on the conception of reality and the conception of life) to art media (pictorial expression, sculptural expression), to sub-culture area or ethnic province (Olmec-La-Venta, Totonac, Huastec). The four color plates are superb, the 115 line drawings and halftones well-chosen for subject, although the last are not up to the fine reproductions found in most art books today.

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The Mexican Kickapoo Indians. By ROBERT E. RITZENTHALER and FREDERICK A. PETERSON. Milwaukee, 1956. Milwaukee Public Museum. Publications in Anthropology, Number 2. Illustrations. Bibliography. Pp. 91. Paper. \$2.00.

This publication is based on a two-week visit to a Mexican Kickapoo village terminated by the expulsion of the authors. It is impossible to consider the hodgepodge of antiquarian tidbits collected by Ritzenthaler and Peterson as a serious scientific study of even a preliminary nature.

The authors are alarmingly frank in revealing their handicaps. Neither of them could speak Algonkian so they had no way of communicating with the village women who spoke only Algonkian. The Kickapoo men refused to talk about their religion so the authors obtained their information on this important aspect of Kickapoo culture from non-Kickapoo informants. Undaunted by these obstacles the authors claim to have accomplished "a tremendous amount under the circumstances." They repeatedly boast about the "excellent command of Spanish of one of the authors" although he was told by his chief informant to "come back after you improve your Spanish and we will talk." The latter incident was cited as evidence of Kickapoo lack of inhibition. The best part of this publication is its fine set of photographs.

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Op zoek naar de indianen. By W. AHLBRINCK. Foreword by JOHANNA FELHOEN DRAAL. Amsterdam, 1956. Koninklijk Instituut voor de tropen, Amsterdam. Mededeling No. CXVIII. Afdeling culturele en fysieke antropologie No. 52. Map. Pp. 184. Paper.

Father Ahlbrinck, known to most as the author of the *Encyclopaedie der Karaiben*, led an expedition to the upper reaches of the Oelemari in the interior of Suriname in 1938. Through the good offices of Prince Bernhard he

has now been encouraged to publish his report in the form of a diary of the expedition: "On a search for the Indians."

His object was to establish the identity of two tribes of Carib Indians which historians and ethnographers had been confusing for decades: the Wama and the Wajarikoeli. He was particularly concerned with rescuing the reputation of the latter tribe, which he demonstrates to be extinct, from the denigration of the Bonni-negroes who conquered the area and exterminated the Warajikoeli, all the while spreading tales of the fierceness of their victims. The expedition included Malawni, the Warajikoeli woman whom Ahlbrinck considers to have been the last surviving member of her relatively peaceful, backward tribe, and who died on the trek.

The book is valuable for its lively description of the Wajana tribal life, especially the detailed account of the maturity-confirmation rites in which adults as well as pre-adults participate. The rites are characterized by a sunset to sunrise ritual dance over a dancing board by the "confirmandes" and culminate in the ordeal of stinging by wasps or ants which have been ingeniously embedded in a woven mat and which are pressed against all parts of the victim's body by an aged woman of the tribe. No whimper must pass the lips of the sufferer or he would be rejected and ridiculed as unfit for adulthood.

Exactly half the book is devoted to the Wajanas. A quarter is given to the encounter with a small family of Wamas, perhaps the sole survivors of the tribe. Finally, the remainder of the book goes to the thorough combing of the tributaries of the Oelemari for the vanished Warajikoeli and to reducing scholars' accounts of them to secondhand hearsay.

The book is well illustrated, especially the ordeal by wasp sting which Father Ahlbrinck interprets as a religious purification ritual, particularly in view of the hunt and roundup of Kwatta monkeys which are driven into the

quarters of the pain-racked convalescents of the stinging ordeal and there killed.

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Die Sozialökonomischen Verhältnisse bei den Azteken im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert. By FRIEDRICH KATZ. Edited by H. KOTHE and K. ORTO. Berlin, 1956. Veb Deutscher Verlag Der Wissenschaften. Ethnographisch-Archäologische Forschungen, No. 3, Part 2. Bibliography. Pp. 166. Paper.

Several obstacles render a precise assessment of Aztec social structure difficult:

1. The Spanish chroniclers could only compare Aztec society with 15th and 16th century European societies. Hence words like "hidalgo," "noble," "barrio," "parroquia," found their way into descriptions of Aztec society.
2. Lewis H. Morgan and Adolph F. Bandelier wrote extensively about the Aztecs in support of their theories as to the nature of society. As a result, many of the subsequent writings have been the reviewing and sifting of Spanish sources presented by Morgan and Bandelier.
3. The Aztec period was one of rapid expansion, absorption and transition which led to conflicting statements regarding use of lands and kinship structure.

Dr. Katz in his study of the socio-economic nature of Aztec society has been faced with these same difficulties. While he has carefully and critically reviewed the existing literature to give us a clear assessment of our knowledge and appraisal of Aztec society as of 1957, still he relies heavily on Spanish colonial writers and remains continually concerned with the views of Bandelier.

Chapters eight, nine and ten, which study social stratification, fail to stress sufficiently an important dual division of the Aztec populace into PILLI and MACEHUALLI. Also Dr. Katz seems not to have read Alfonso Caso's *Instituciones indígenas precortesianas* (Mex-