BOOK NOTICES

Initialed notices were written by members of the editorial staff.


Walter R. Aguiar’s Maya Land in Color, part of Hastings House Publishers Profiles of America series, is not a particularly noteworthy introduction to the prehistoric civilization of the Maya Indians of southern Mexico and Central America. Although the price is certainly reasonable, neither the text nor the full-page color photographs rise above the mundane.

Mr. Aguiar’s introduction is at best innocuous. The author avoids the analytical, flirts with the sensational, and barely mentions the fascinating research currently being carried out on Mayan subsistence patterns, social organization, and trade. Furthermore, Mr. Aguiar provides no bibliography for those who wish to pursue Maya studies in greater depth.

Pedestrian prose could be forgiven if the photographs were exciting. Unfortunately, they are poorly produced on thick, unglossy paper which tends to wash out the color and blur the contrasts. Mr. Aguiar appears to be a competent photographer, but his effectiveness in this medium is undercut by poor quality reproduction and a mediocre text. This book is not recommended as an initiation into one of the New World’s most advanced and intriguing civilizations.

University of Arizona  

THOMAS E. SHERIDAN


In this decade coastal settlement ecologic studies have emerged as a field in their own right in Middle American prehistory (cf. Stark and Voorhies, Prehistoric Coastal Adaptations, 1978), and this volume is another significant contribution. Eaton surveyed the western and northern coasts of the Yucatán peninsula in 1968, and these two reports contain the site descriptions of that survey as well as the artifact descriptions and comparisons and the general conclusions, all within a chronological framework from 300 B.C. to the conquest. Illustrations are consistently of high quality.

Although Eaton’s ecology is sketchy (a biological ecologist would be shocked at what often passes for ecology in anthropology), environmental variation is well used as a backdrop for functional interpretations of sites and occasionally of artifacts. Eaton describes marine species exploitation, salt production, and adds many important insights such as evidence of permanent habitation on Jaina Island.