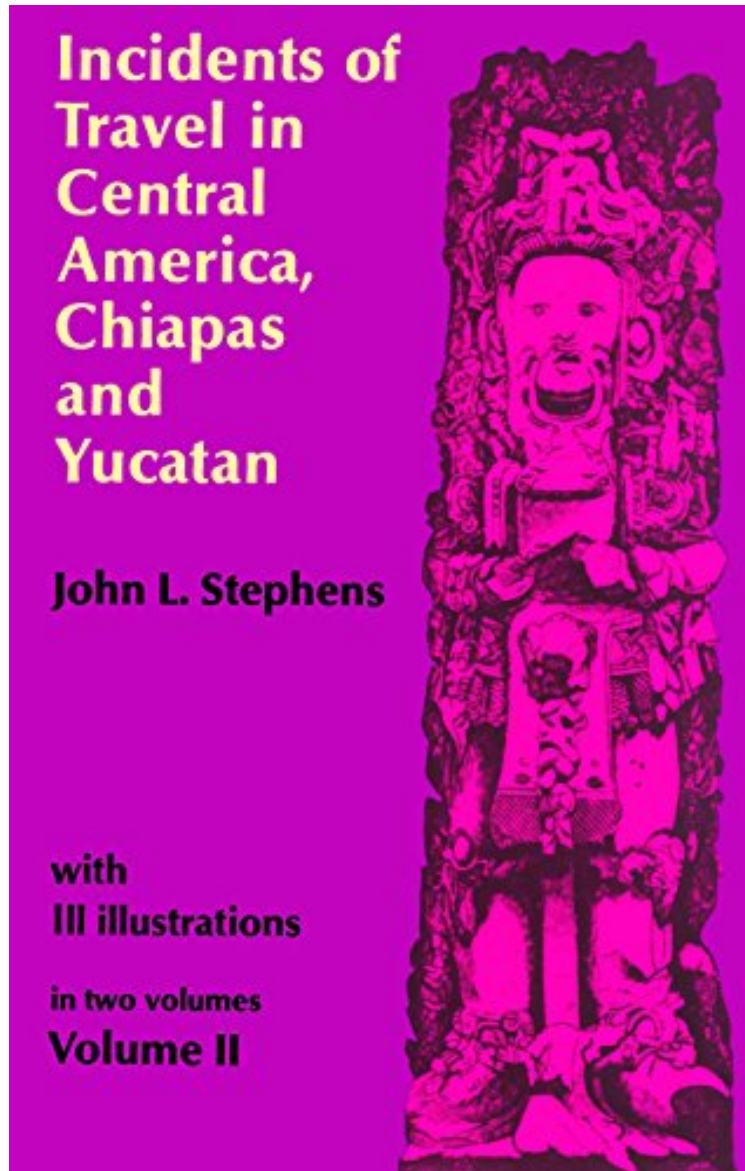


[Library ebook] Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan (Volume 2)

Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan (Volume 2)

John L. Stephens

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John L. Stephens : Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan (Volume 2) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan (Volume 2):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating but Anachronistic
By John Walzer
For some reason, was selling only volume 2 when I bought it for Kindle. I was enthralled at the account of the author's extraordinary 1839 journey from Costa Rica to the Yucatan while civil war raged throughout Central America in search of Mayan sites. The author's brilliance and erudition, his dry wit, his affectionate portrayals of locals met en route, his awe and respect for the advanced but ruined civilization he encountered, were enhanced by the meticulous illustrations of Frederick Catherwood. Volume 1 relates the first half of the journey; and, I must say, the lesser half. In its 400+ pages, Stephens and Catherwood explore exactly one Mayan site, Copan. The rest of the pages relate the journey by boat from the U.S. to Belize, onward to Guatemala, overland to the capital, various excursions and diversions, ending with Stephens crossing from Nicaragua to Honduras. A great deal of time is spent on a blow-by-blow account of the civil war which tore Central America, until then a unitary state, into warring fragments. While this would no doubt have fascinated Stephens's contemporary audience, the exhaustive detail may try the patience of all but scholars. Further, plans were underfoot to build a transoceanic canal through Nicaragua; and Stephens spends a great deal of time exploring the region and discussing the plan's feasibility. Up to Teddy Roosevelt's administration, Nicaragua and the Colombian isthmus (now Panama) were both in play as potential sites for such a canal, but we now know how it turned out, and the detail lavished on the losing proposition, again, might strain the lay reader's interest. I would recommend starting with Volume II of this book, and then reading *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*. Both are fascinating accounts, chock full of one fascinating Mayan site after another, and offer the thrill of original discovery that Stephens and Catherwood shared during their groundbreaking expeditions.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A classical travel log written by one of the most educated, well travelled Americans of his time
By JC Marco Polo
I have read this book several times and own both the paperback version and the Kindle one. I have recommended it to many friends and have given it as a gift on several occasions as it is a historical must read on Central America. A masterful depiction of Central America in the early 1800's. Easy to read, a travel log that reflects the curiosity of a scholar, but written in a straightforward, easy to read language. Almost naive in some passages, Stephens admires the people and its natural surroundings, describes them vividly from his very American point of view. His relentless commitment to explain and understand better "The Lost Civilization" in Meso-America is a timeless inspiration. Lawyer, Diplomat, Explorer and Entrepreneur, he played a role as a precursor of the Panama Canal, the Panama Isthmus Railroad, which served as a shorter, safer route to California. This books tell us of the times just before big things were about to happen in Central America and at worldwide scale. The contributions of this book to Maya archaeology are huge (the detailed descriptions and beautiful drawings by Frederick Catherwood of Maya sites), basically by putting many archaeological remains later looted in its original context. A must read for archaeology students around the world and for anyone interested in Central America in the 19th Century. Mr. Stephens, your place in history is guaranteed through this book, the others you wrote and your contributions to the cause of an inter-oceanic route through Central America and the advancement of Maya archaeology.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. ... is adequate but for me the Catherwood engravings were poor. They were either too light or too dark
By Brandon Qualls
The text is adequate but for me the Catherwood engravings were poor. They were either too light or too dark. I want the Catherwood engravings to be at least as good as the engraving in the Dover publications but they aren't. This true for other reprints that I have seen.

"The ground was entirely new; there were no guide-books or guides; the whole was a virgin soil. At one time we stopped to cut away branches and vines which concealed the face of a monument, and then to dig around and bring to light a fragment, a sculptured corner of which protruded from the earth. I leaned over with breathless anxiety while the Indians worked, and an eye, an ear, a foot, or a hand was disinterred." Few explorers have had the experience of uncovering a civilization almost entirely unknown to the world. But Stephen's two expeditions to Mexico and Central America in 1839 and 1841 yielded the first solid information on the culture of the Maya Indians. In this work, and in his other masterpiece *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, he tells the story of his travels to some 50 ruined Mayan cities. In this book, he describes the excitement of exploring the magnificent ruined cities of Copan and Palenque, and his briefer excursions to Quirigua, Patinamit, Utatlan, Gueguetenango, Ocosingo, and Uxmal. For all these cities, his details are so accurate that more recent explorers used the book as a Baedeker to locate ruins forgotten by even the Indians. In addition to being a great book on archaeological discovery, Stephen's work is also a great travel book. Telling of journeying by mule back on narrow paths over unimaginable deep ravines, through sloughs of mud and jungles of heavy vegetation, describing dangers of robbery, revolution, fever, mosquitoes and more exotic insects, Stephen's narrative remains penetrating and alive. His account of his attempt to buy Copan for \$50 is told with the adroitness of a Mark Twain, and his descriptions of Indian life primitive villages a few miles from the ruins, burials, treatment of the sick, customs, amusements, etc. never lose their interest. Frederick Catherwood's illustrations virtually double the appeal of the book. Highly exact, remarkably realistic drawings show overall views, ground plans of the cities, elevations of palaces and temples, free-standing sculpture, carved hieroglyphics, stucco bas-reliefs, small clay figures, and interior details.

From Library Journal Stephens's book, first published in two volumes in 1841, has been abridged by Karl Ackerman, a freelance writer. Stephens made his journey in 1839-40, accompanied by an artist, Frederick Catherwood, who made detailed drawings of the Mayan ruins. The book was extremely popular upon publication; it remains an exciting 19th-century travel work and one of the early descriptions--and an incisive one--of the Mayan ruins. Ackerman's abridgment makes a handsome volume, but the continuity is not smooth, and the work could do with more explanatory footnotes. There are no contemporary photographs, of course, but later ones by Edward Muybridge and others are used, including some of Tikal, which Stephens did not visit. The book is useful but will not replace the original work or subsequent reprints with Catherwood's drawings.- George M. Jenks, Bucknell Univ., Lewisburg, Pa. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.