

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books, their texts limited to the *oh-ah!* school of criticism or to a superficial statement phrased frequently in the outdated Archaic-Toltec-Aztec or Old Empire-New Empire concepts of the twenties.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 anthropologie 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