

Last of the Maya. By HERBERT RITTLINGER. New York, 1962. Taplinger Publishing Company. Maps. Illustrations. Index. Pp. 254. \$4.95.

Published first in Germany as *Ins Land der Lacandonen*, then in Great Britain as the *Jungle Quest*, this is an interesting, well-written chronicle by a celebrated world traveler and sportsman. The small expedition meets ten members of the Lacandonos. Reduced to 167 people in all, these descendants of the ancient Maya Indians are the purest racially and culturally known to Rittlinger. Pagans still, they practice their colorful ways, but they are in the process of decline through disease, incest, and even murder.

In seeking Mayan ruins made taboo by a massacre over two centuries ago, the four men and a woman journey 48 days, often nude, through a green hell suffering terror, exhaustion, and starvation. The account is a sweat-stained, water-logged, insect-infested, almost yard-by-yard description. They spend thirty-two days traveling 75 miles up the river Azul in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, only to become lost in a poorly mapped region. Once the Mayan ruins are located on an island in the Lake of the Lacandonos, they are scarcely noted. Consequently, many more pages are devoted to adventure than to the "Last of the Maya."

While geographers stand corrected through Rittlinger's discoveries and through his observations an addition is made to knowledge about a little known tribe, there is relatively little of scholarly value in the work. Far greater is its usefulness as a popular, true adventure story. Recommended with these qualifications to all interested.

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Comerciantes cubanos del siglo XIX. 3rd ed. By ROLAND T. ELY. Bogotá, Colombia, 1961. Aedita Editores Ltda. Index. Bibliography. Notes. Pp. xx, 166. Paper.

This volume can best be understood in connection with another by the same author entitled *La economía cubana*

entre las dos Isabeles, 1492-1832 (3rd ed. Bogotá, 1962. Aedita Editores Ltda. Index. Bibliography. Pp. 143. Paper.), of which it is in reality a continuation. Both are based on careful examination of the principal printed works that relate to Cuban colonial economy, as well as on much hitherto unused manuscript material. In the study of the Cuban economy down to 1832 the author outlines in three chapters the story of Cuba's commercial and agricultural development from the discovery to the time when sugar production made the island the prosperous "Queen of the Antilles." Chapter I covers the years to 1776 during which the island was little more than a stopping place on the route between the mother country and its continental colonies. In this period Cuba was maintained largely by heavy subsidies from the treasury of New Spain. Chapters II and III survey the factors that reversed this condition, beginning with the English capture of Havana in 1762, which was followed by relaxed Spanish commercial regulations after the city had been recovered. The author surveys the impact of the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the elimination of Santo Domingo as a producer of sugar and coffee, which removed a serious competitor with Cuba. The volume ends with a picture of Cuban prosperity at the time of the death of Fernando VII, with Cuban planters and businessmen enjoying success but destined soon to be forced to choose between accepting Spanish maladministration and a continued economic prosperity and the possibility that it would continue under an independent government.

Comerciantes cubanos del siglo XIX is a case study of business operations in Cuba during the remainder of the XIX century, with the emphasis on methods of financing business and plantations operations. Chapter I gives a general survey of the methods whereby the merchants, in the absence of formal banking institutions, functioned as such for themselves and for plantation owners, and as suppliers of the latter. Chapter II pictures the pa-