

churned up in Américo Castro's wake is the firm attribution of *converso* status to Don Diego as one explanation of his wayward thoughts. Joining the ranks of the new scholar's inquisition set upon ferreting out every last bit of Jewish heritage, Mrs. Spivakovsky is even a bit cross with the Order of Calatrava for being too easily hoodwinked about the purity of Don Diego's blood!

State University College
Fredonia, New York

MARTIN LUNENFELD

The Upper Amazon. By DONALD W. LATHRAP. New York, 1970. Praeger. Ancient Peoples and Places. Photographs. Drawings. Maps. Index. Pp. 56. Cloth. \$8.50.

In this volume Donald Lathrap guides the reader through the prehistoric record of lowland South America in search of clues to the culture history of the Upper Amazon Basin. The author, whose extensive knowledge of the region is first-hand, should be congratulated both for his multi-disciplinary approach to the archeological study of what has been, until this publication, a poorly documented area, and for the originality of his interpretation of regional development in Amazonia.

Basing his conclusions on evidence drawn from geology, ecology, historical linguistics and ethnology, as well as from thirteen years of archeological experience in the area, Lathrap provides a coherent picture of life in the Upper Amazon between the years 2000 B.C. and 1500 A.D. In a final chapter he brings us up to date on the current ethnographic situation in the Peruvian Amazon, emphasizing the Central Ucayali Basin where he worked himself.

The author's careful reassessment of the Upper Amazon environment and its resource potential sets out the foundation necessary for his subsequent claims about population movements and adaptations to ecological niches. Lathrap points out that this vast region, once thought by anthropologists to be a cultural backwater, was instead a rich and varied area which in pre-Columbian times served to attract a large number of ethnic groups. Migrant aboriginal bands coming into the region vied with one another for permanent positions along the alluvial flood plains of the major tributaries of the Upper Amazon. Unsuccessful groups in this competition for first-class riverine land were forced onto the less fertile interfluvial uplands where they had no choice but to pursue a nomadic way of life. From fishing and

farming they turned to hunting and gathering, and their cultural level declined as a result of the move to poorer terrain.

Such a hypothetical reconstruction of culture history in the Tropical Forest zone echoes a similar theme of disinheritance and decline proposed earlier by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1952) to account for cultural discontinuities in prehistoric Central Brazil. But neither Lévi-Strauss nor Lathrap has given us the empirical evidence necessary for the acceptance of these interpretations. Certainly Lathrap's vision of waves of migrations pouring into the Upper Amazon Basin, creating land shortages and population pressures, cannot be deduced solely from a study of the archeological materials presented in *The Upper Amazon*.

Today, decimated by disease and all but destroyed through colonization, the present Indians of the Peruvian Amazon are reminders of a once flourishing agricultural community. Ironically, it is the relict bands of forest nomads whose presumed degenerative culture is found relatively intact. Almost all that we have to attest to the high level of cultural achievement of the early riverine horticulturalists is a fragmentary inventory of their ceramic wares. It is from these pieces that Lathrap ingeniously puts together the story of the Upper Amazon. If his readers judge him not entirely successful in this attempt it is owing to the paucity of information available about the prehistory of the region, and not to his imaginative reconstruction of past events in tropical South America.

Brandeis University

JOAN BAMBERGER

RELATED TOPICS

Bridging The Gap: Articles on Mexican Literature. By JEFFERSON REA SPELL. Edited by LOTA M. SPELL. México, 1971. Editorial Libros de México. Tables. Bibliography. Pp. 393. Paper.

Professor Jefferson Rea Spell, for forty-seven years a member of the Department of Spanish at the University of Texas, who died in 1967, was one of the pioneers in the United States in the study of Latin American and especially Mexican literature. His books on *The Life and Works of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi* (Philadelphia, 1931), *Rousseau in the Spanish World* (Austin, 1938), *Contemporary Spanish American Fiction* (Chapel Hill, 1944), and his editions of comedies of Eusebio Vela (in collaboration with Francisco Monterde) and of the several novels of Lizardi, are standard works.

The present book gathers together sixteen articles from his pen,