



Maya History and Religion (The Civilization of the American Indian Series)

J. Eric S. Thompson

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Believing that Maya studies today are "suffering from imbalance," J. Eric S. Thompson here approaches Maya history and religion from the standpoint of ethno-history. Present-day archaeologists often tend to restrict their curiosity to their excavations and social anthropologists to observe the modern Maya as members of a somewhat primitive society in an era of change. In this volume, a distinguished Maya scholar seeks to correlate data from colonial writings and observations of the modern Indian with archaeological information in order to extend and clarify the panorama of Maya culture.

The shock of the Spanish Conquest was devastating to the Maya. Not only were they placed under the domination of a people uninterested in their ancient ways, but their religion was proscribed, they were removed from their familiar settlements into new areas, and new diseases were introduced which ravaged their civilization. In spite of these ordeals, the Maya have clung closely to the old ways, and Maya culture is still very much alive, though slowly giving way before modern technology and influences.

Topics discussed include Putun Maya expansion in Yucatan and the Pasión drainage, the depopulation of the Maya Central area at the time of the Conquest on account of newly introduced diseases, the location of the controversial eastern boundary of the Maya area, trade relations between the highlands and the lowlands, the use of hallucinatory drugs and tobacco, lowlands Maya religion, and the creation myths of the Maya in relation to those of other Middle American cultures.

Mr. Thompson's approach to Maya life will prove thought-provoking to archaeologists, ethnologists, historians, and all others interested in the ancient Maya civilization.

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