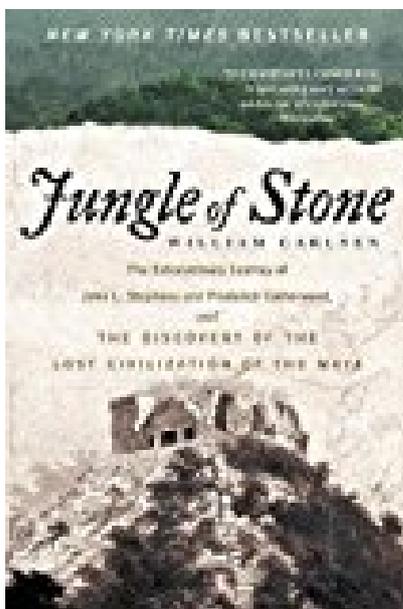


Jungle of Stone The Extraordinary Journey of John L. Stephens and Frederick Catherwood and the Discovery of the Lost Civilization of the Maya



BOOK DETAILS

- Author : William Carlsen
- Pages : 544 Pages
- Publisher : William Morrow Paperbacks
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BOOK SYNOPSIS

“Thrilling. ...A captivating history of two men who dramatically changed their contemporaries’ view of the past.” — Kirkus (starred review) In 1839 rumors of extraordinary yet baffling stone ruins buried within the unmapped jungles of Central America reached two of the world’s most intrepid travelers. Seized by the reports, American diplomat John Lloyd Stephens and British artist Frederick Catherwood—each already celebrated for their adventures in Egypt, the Holy Land, Greece, and Rome—sailed together out of New York Harbor on an expedition into the forbidding rainforests of present-day Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. What they found would re-write the West’s understanding of human history. In the tradition of *Lost City of Z* and *In the Kingdom of Ice*, former San Francisco Chronicle journalist and Pulitzer Prize finalist William Carlsen reveals the unforgettable true story of the discovery of the ancient Maya. Enduring disease, war, and the torments of nature and terrain, Stephens and Catherwood meticulously uncovered and documented the remains of an astonishing civilization that had flourished in the Americas at the same time as classic Greece and Rome—and had been its rival in art, architecture, and power. Their remarkable book about the experience, written by Stephens and illustrated by Catherwood, became a sensation, hailed by Edgar Allen Poe as “perhaps the most interesting book of travel ever published” and recognized today as the birth of American archeology. Most importantly, Stephens and Catherwood were the first to grasp the significance of the Maya remains, recognizing that their antiquity and sophistication overturned the West’s assumptions about the development of civilization. By the time of the flowering of classical Greece (400 B.C.), the Maya were already constructing pyramids and temples around central plazas. Within a few hundred years the structures took on a monumental scale that required millions of man-hours of labor, technical and organizational expertise. Over the next millennium dozens of city-states evolved, each governed by powerful lords, some with populations larger than any city in Europe at the time, and connected by road-like causeways of crushed stone. The Maya developed a cohesive, unified cosmology, an array of common gods, a creation story, and a shared artistic and architectural vision. They created dazzling stucco and stone monuments and bas reliefs, sculpting figures and hieroglyphs with refined artistic skill. At their peak, an estimated ten million people occupied the Maya’s heartland on the Yucatan Peninsula, a region where only half a million now live. And yet, by the time the Spanish reached the “New World,” the classic-era Maya had all but disappeared; they would remain a mystery for the next three hundred years. Today, the tables are turned: the Maya are justly famous, if sometimes misunderstood, while Stephens and Catherwood have been all but forgotten. Based on Carlsen’s rigorous research and his own 1,500-mile journey throughout the Yucatan and Central America, *Jungle of Stone* is equally a thrilling adventure narrative and a revelatory work of history that corrects our understanding of the Maya and the two remarkable men who set out in 1839 to find them.

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