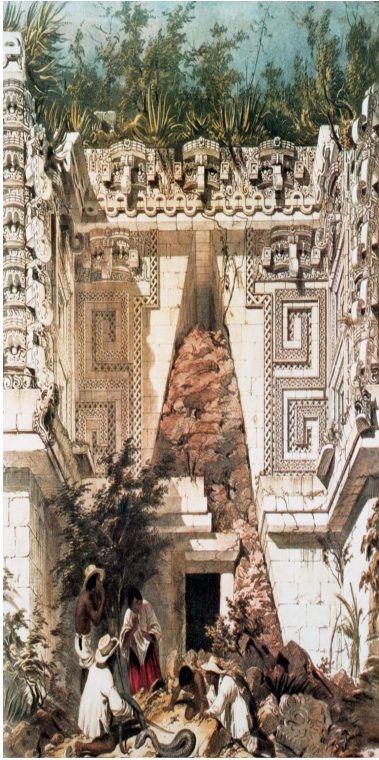


Elusive Treasure: The Story Of Early Archaeologists In The Americas



MICHAEL D. COE

*John Lloyd Stephens &
Frederick Catherwood*

1845-53 and 1796-1854
REVEALING MAYA CIVILIZATION



*We sat down on the very edge of the wall, and there in vain to penetrate the mystery
by which we were surrounded. Who were the people that built this city? In the ruined
city of Egypt, even in the long-lost Petra, the stranger knows the story of the people
whose vestiges are around him. America, say historians, was peopled by savages;
but savages never reared these structures, savages never carried these stones.*

*John Lloyd Stephens, on first seeing Copan
Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan, Vol. 1, 1841*

There is universal agreement among scholars that Maya archaeology as a serious subject was founded by John Lloyd Stephens - American travel writer, explorer, diplomat, lawyer and politician - and his English friend and travelling companion Frederick Catherwood - artist, draughtsman, architect and civil engineer.

STEPHENS' EARLY ADVENTURES

Stephens was born in Shrewsbury, New Jersey, to a prosperous family, but grew up in New York City, where he received a classical education in a private school. At the age of 13 he entered Columbia College, graduating in 1822 at the head of his class. He gained a Law degree, but law was not where his true interests lay. One direction was public, and Stephens began a lifelong second career as a Jacksonian Democrat. The other direction was travel.

In autumn 1834, Stephens began a virtual odyssey that took him to London, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Russia and Poland, and then to Egypt's Nile Valley and elsewhere in the Middle East, including Jerusalem and the famed Nabataean site of Petra. He returned to New York by the end of 1836; in the very next year his *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petrus, and the Holy Land* was published, and was an instant bestseller on both sides of the Atlantic. It made Stephens famous and quite rich. In a somewhat mixed review, Edgar Allan Poe praised his manner

*Catherwood's
illustration of
the facade of the
Governor's Palace
at Thebes, which
particularly impressed
Catherwood and
Stephens with its
beautiful masonry-work.*

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