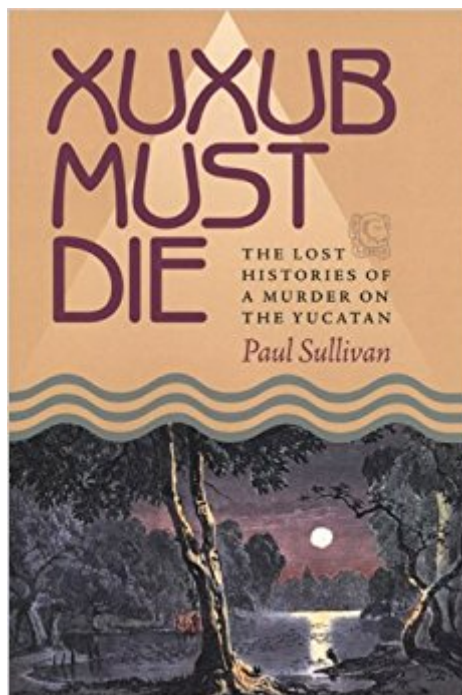




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Xuxub Must Die: The Lost Histories Of A Murder On The Yucatan (Pitt Latin American Series)



Synopsis

Today, foreigners travel to the Yucatan for ruins, temples, and pyramids, white sand beaches and clear blue water. One hundred years ago, they went for cheap labor, an abundance of land, and the opportunity to make a fortune exporting cattle, henequen fiber, sugarcane, or rum. Sometimes they found death. In 1875 an American plantation manager named Robert Stephens and a number of his workers were murdered by a band of Maya rebels. To this day, no one knows why. Was it the result of feuding between aristocratic families for greater power and wealth? Was it the foreseeable consequence of years of oppression and abuse of Maya plantation workers? Was a rebel leader seeking money and fame—or perhaps retribution for the loss of the woman he loved? For whites, the events that took place at Xuxub, Stephens's plantation, are virtually unknown, even though they engendered a diplomatic and legal dispute that vexed Mexican-U.S. relations for over six decades. The construction of "official" histories allowed the very name of Xuxub to die, much as the plantation itself was subsumed by the jungle. For the Maya, however, what happened at Xuxub is more than a story they pass down through generations—it is a defining moment in how they see themselves. Sullivan masterfully weaves the intricately tangled threads of this story into a fascinating account of human accomplishments and failings, in which good and evil are never quite what they seem at first, and truth proves to be elusive. *Xuxub Must Die* seeks not only to fathom a mystery, but also to explore the nature of guilt, blame, and understanding.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In October 1875 a group of Maya rebels attacked an obscure sugar plantation, Xuxub, on the northern portion of the Yucatán peninsula, killing the American co-owner, Robert Stephens, and his laborers, including men, women and children. The next day many of the rebels were overtaken by government troops and killed. Anthropologist Sullivan, whose previous book also centered on the problematic relationship of the indigenous Mayas and the predominantly Hispanic government, tries to put the event in perspective and discover why it occurred. Early on, Sullivan asks, "Why dig it up again?" He answers that the Maya remember the event as a kind of triumph, while the Mexican and American establishments remember it not at all; by studying it, we "might recover something lost, something we should recall." Although there is something to learn from Xuxub, it will not be, for many readers, as much as Sullivan hopes. His research on every facet of historical context is impeccable, and the tangled array of personal, cultural and political factors is well explicated. But there is too much historical minutiae to sustain continuous interest. Part of the problem is that Sullivan is overly fond of dramatic sentences like, "The day had come" and "They would learn to fear him among all others...." He also spends too much time on the less relevant political aftermath, especially concerning Stephens's widow. Still, those with a special interest in Latin American history will find this retrieval of lost history of interest. Maps. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“His research on every facet of historical context is impeccable, and the tangled array of personal, cultural and political factors is well explicated.” --Publishers Weekly
“Under layers of greed, lust, anger and envy, Sullivan discovers a treasure trove of Yucatan history. Xuxub was, to borrow a metaphor from science, a butterfly that fluttered its wings and sent a ripple of discord to far-flung places.” --The Wall Street Journal

This book points out the vast differences between the native peoples of the Yucatan and the rest of the world. Reads like a novel.

Read it before a trip to Isla Holbox. A good read.

Great book.

I am a friend of the author, but I wouldn't read a book that didn't hold my interest and shed some

light on the Yucatec Maya. This book did both. The 19th century Maya are every bit as fascinating as were their ancient ancestors and the million of so Maya who live today. Weren't aware of that? That's a shame because the Maya saga continues to unfold and Sullivan is a person who understands it intimately. An Irish-American hacienda owner is murdered at his remote plantation in northern Yucatan, not far from present-day Cancun. Sullivan knows how he was killed and who killed him, rebellious Maya who lived (and still live) in the region south of Cancun. But why was Stephens killed? This is the task Sullivan sets for himself. The intrigues, political and economic, are complex and twisted. They rise from the level of regional Yucatan squabbles right up to the United States' president, Ulysses Grant. Sullivan documents his information with care (his notes are good reading themselves), but this book reads like a thriller. To know something about the Maya and their history is to gain a better grasp of how people and their culture evolve. I recommend this book.

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