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# Book Reviews

WALTER H. LEWIS, BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

**Amazon Frontier: The Defeat of the Brazilian Indians.** John Hemming. Macmillan Ltd., Brunel Rd., Hound Mills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, R.G.21 2XS, England. 1987. 647 pp. £19.15.

Here is a masterly contribution to the social and economic history of the Amazon. It is written in a readable, highly detailed, equitable style, and throughout demonstrates full and understanding handling of the often difficult-to-obtain bibliographic sources. It is a book that must be on the shelf of anyone interested in the Amazonian regions and even to readers whose interests lie in the exploitation of primitive societies in other parts of the tropical world.

This book stresses the middle 18th to the early 20th centuries. It is the period during which the Indians were "decimated by battle and imported disease and deeply demoralized . . . stripped of their traditional way of life and of their homelands." It is the period when Brazil began its climb towards nationhood from a colonial status, a change due in great part to two economic plant products: coffee and, in the Amazon, rubber. It was also a period when European naturalists by the scores began studies of the extraordinary natural wealth of this, the largest rain forest region of the world. From both points of view—rubber and natural history exploration—this volume should be of the greatest pertinence, especially to economic botanists. The author's discussions of the field work of outstanding natural history explorers, such as Martius, Spix, Wallace, and Spruce, to name only a few, are thorough and are supported by biographical sketches of the travellers and explorers that make up the 29 page Appendix I.

Of the four parts of the book (I. The Directorate; II. Independence; III. Amazonia: the Rubber Boom; IV. 1840–1910 (Missionaries, Anthropologists and Indian Resistance), part III will be of the greatest interest to economic botanists. This part, comprising 91 pages, is one of the best available discussions of the frenetic rise of the nefarious exploitation of wild rubber and its socio-economic-political connections to the detriment of the Indians, their culture, and even their lives that I have ever seen. The sole disappointment that I can point to in the excellent summary of the rubber boom is the author's almost tentative acceptance of the myth that Sir Henry Wickham smuggled the rubber seeds out of Brazil for the British in 1876, a widely repeated tale that has no foundation in fact and which has repeatedly been refuted.

Appendix II, Chronology, traces important events relevant to the theme of the book from 1730 to 1912. A section entitled Notes and References occupies 77 pages, and details research and other information. A complete bibliography of 472 items, and a most detailed index of 25 pages convert this large volume into almost a reference book of encyclopedic nature.

Would that there were more such factual and sound books on the effects, good and bad, of exploitation of economic plants on the demography, politics, and development of tropical regions and their native peoples.

RICHARD EVANS SCHULTES, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

**Evolutionary Biology of the Fungi.** A. D. M. Rayner, C. M. Braser, and D. Moore (eds.). Cambridge University Press, 510 North Ave., New Rochelle, NY 10801. 1987. 465 pp. \$80.00.

The volume is based on a symposium of the British Mycological Society held at the University of Bristol in April 1986. The organizers deserve hearty commendations for