

the most powerful tribe in North Island. They waged a series of violent tribal wars until his death in 1827. He was in fact fatally shot in the chest although at the time wearing a suit of English armour.

*Le Magasin pittoresque*, which was to serve into this century as a much-used source of illustrations for artists of the Paris school, appears to have received its information about New Zealand from the French circumnavigator, Dumont d'Urville, who was at the time compiling his great work appropriately entitled *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde* (1834-5). These volumes also include many illustrations of what today are regarded as fine examples of primitive art, which is not surprising from one who, among his many achievements, rediscovered the Venus de Milo and was ultimately responsible for its finding its way into the Louvre.

J.B. Donne

## OBITUARY

### SIR ERIC THOMPSON

Eric Thompson's work on Maya hieroglyphs and the correlation of Maya and Christian calendars is well known, and an outline of his career has been well summarised in *The Times* (11 September). Perhaps less known is his ethnological work among the living Maya. An early publication was *Ethnology of the Mayas of Southern and Central British Honduras* (1930). He was always very close to the Maya and this was shown by his lifelong friendship with his old foreman Jacinto Cunil. He had asked Eric to be a godfather to one of his children, always a very close link in Latin America, and I still remember the welcome I received when I paid a visit to Jacinto at Socotz in British Honduras, and told him that I came from his compadre far away in England, and that I also was a compadre of his. Thompson's 1966 Huxley Lecture shows how well he knew all parts of the Maya area, and the distribution of the various Maya groups and dialects at all times from the 16th century to our own day.

His book *Maya Archaeologist* gives many vivid pictures of life in Guatemala, Honduras, eastern Mexico, and British Honduras, as it then was, in less comfortable times for travelling than our own. He tells of his visit to Tikal on mule back. He had tried to reach it before, but lost his way, and when in the end he reached it he slept in a hammock in a Maya 'palace' and had a miserable night of being bitten by sandflies. I went there many years later by an easy flight from Guatemala City, and one of his companions in that journey long ago was in the party. I still remember how she pointed out that palace and said 'You can tell Eric Thompson that you saw the building he slept in'. He tells of dreary days waiting for trains in Puerto Barrios, of long days on mule back, of all-night curing ceremonies, of a New Year party on his birthday at which the host gave a toast 'Vivan Dios y meester Tonson' ('Long live God and Mister Thompson'), and at the end he writes of 'this land of Mexico' to which 'I had given a large

share of my heart'.

Another of his interests is shown by his edition of Thomas Gage's *Travels in the New World*, the almost incredible story of an English Dominican friar belonging to a recusant family in the 16th century, who was sent to be educated abroad, was largely trained in Spain, volunteered as a missionary to the Philippines, sailed to Mexico, gave the authorities there the slip and yet managed to work in Chiapas and Guatemala in good standing with his Order. Later he returned to Europe, then England, joined the Church of England, became Vicar of Deal, and ended his life as a 'preacher of the word' and chaplain to a Cromwellian expedition to Jamaica in 1656. No one but a devout Churchman would have the sympathy and understanding to edit such a story, and this Thompson was. He served as a lay reader both in the United States and in this country. He had many friends in many parts of Latin America, and in the United States, as well as in his own country, and his death, when proper recognition had just come to him, has left a great gap in their lives.

G.H.S. Bushnell

### GLYNN FLOOD

Readers of *RAIN* may have read accounts in the press (*Guardian* and *Times*, 8 October) of Glynn Flood's brutal murder by Ethiopian soldiers. Glynn disappeared in June while carrying out field research for a Ph.D. under my supervision among the Afar nomads of Ethiopia. The mystery surrounding his disappearance has at last been unravelled, not by the British Embassy staff in Addis Ababa but by his French wife Michele. With great fortitude she went with her father-in-law to Jibuti to assess the many conflicting reports of Glynn's disappearance with Afar refugees there who had direct evidence of his summary arrest and savage execution.

Glynn was one of the most outstandingly gifted young anthropologists I have ever had the privilege of supervising. His death is a tragic loss not only for his wife and eighteen-month-old daughter, his parents and all who knew him, but also for the subject to which he displayed such single-minded devotion. He had spent almost three years studying these elusive nomads and had collected a unique corpus of material which would have filled an important gap in the ethnography of N.E. Africa and also promised to make an original contribution to anthropological theory. Glynn's professionalism and talent for field-work were matched by a deep and sincere attachment to his Afar friends and by a very clear understanding of their interests and aspirations. This finely balanced commitment to the Afar as people and to anthropology informs his incisive analysis of the exploitative politics of development in the Awash Valley, his passionate concern and indignation at 'man-made' famine; it explains his return to the field early this year when he had exhausted all his research funds and while he was still convalescing after a severe attack of brucellosis. It can