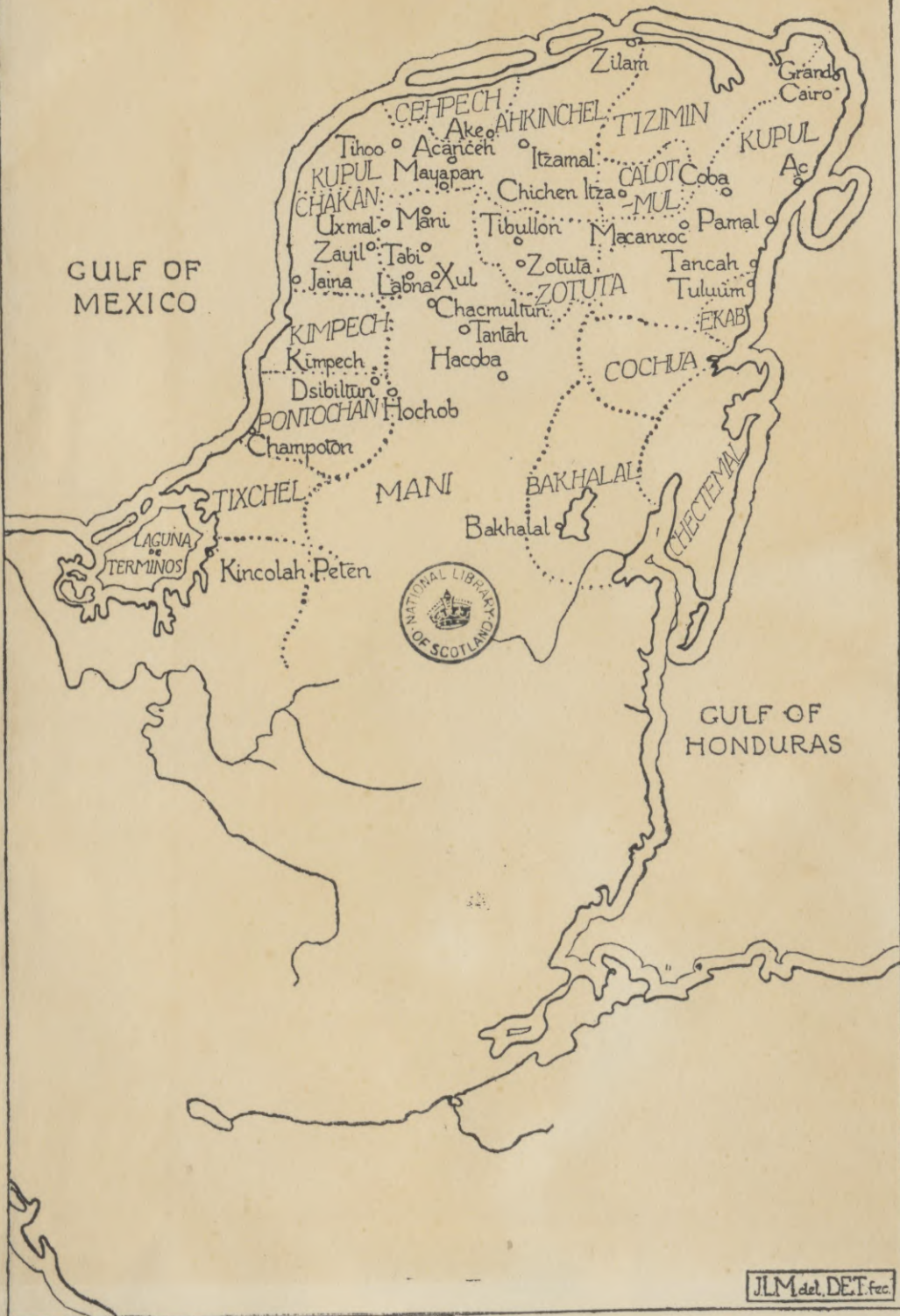


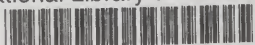
The Maya Old Empire



The Maya New Empire



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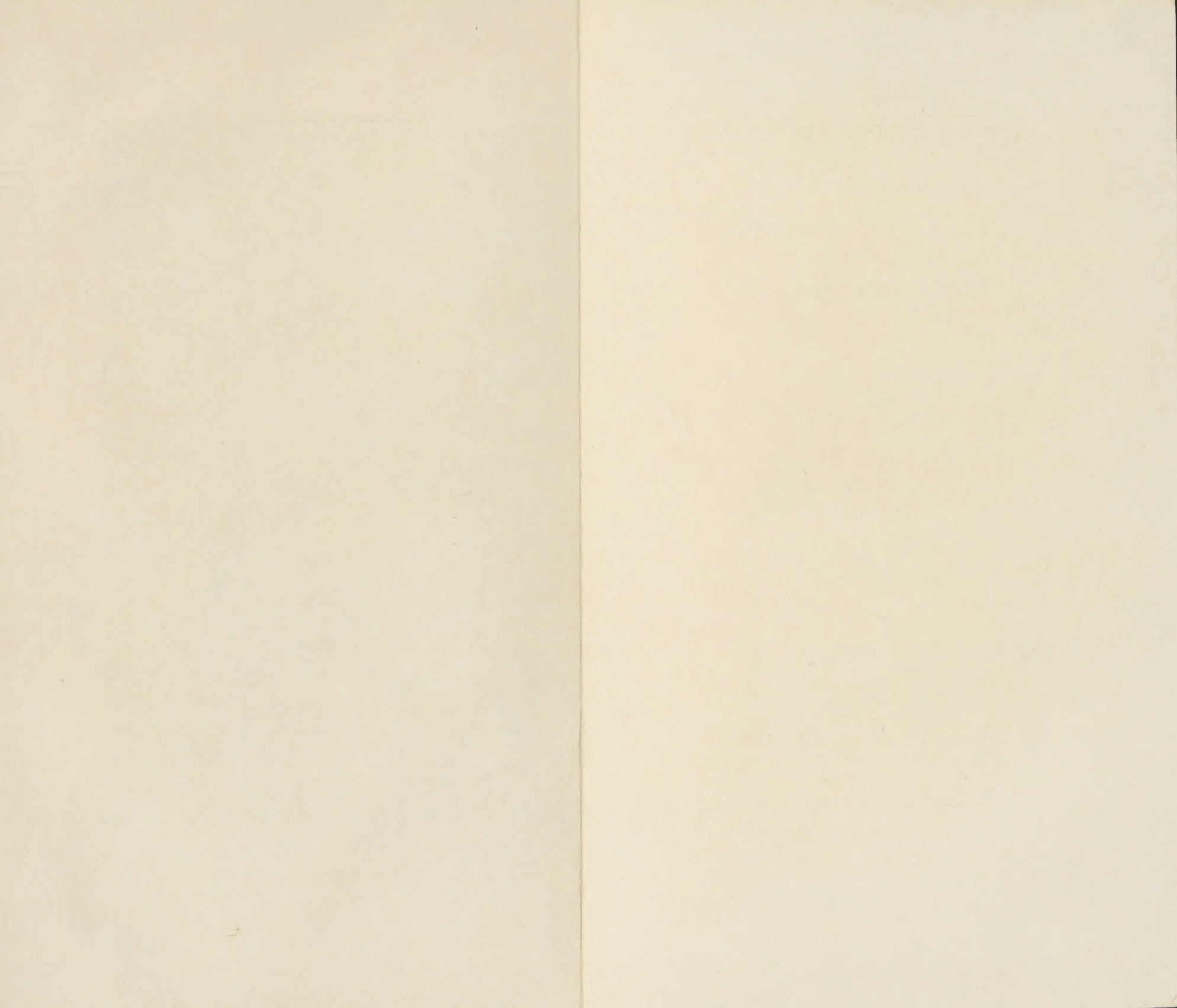
By the Same Author

ANCIENT AMERICA

HANNO, OR THE FUTURE OF EXPLORATION

SPARTACUS

Etc





BAS-RELIEF FROM THE SO-CALLED TEMPLE OF THE SUN, PALENQUE

The figure-carving is among the most exquisite in Old Empire sculpture

By permission of the trustees of the British Museum

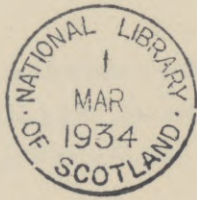
THE CONQUEST OF THE MAYA

By
J. LESLIE MITCHELL

With a Foreword by
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TO
ALEXANDER GRAY, M.A.

FOREWORD

EVER since its existence was made known to the people of Europe, the exotic civilization of the mysterious Maya people in Central America has always excited the curiosity and aroused the interest of both scholars and the man in the street. But the interest and importance of the Maya civilization are far more significant than the merely intrinsic curiosity they excite, for the problems which the attempt to interpret this civilization sets involve the fundamental issues of anthropology. As I have recently devoted a whole volume (*The Diffusion of Culture*) to the elaboration of this aspect of the problem, it is unnecessary for me to discuss it in detail here.

When the Europeans discovered what was aptly called the "New World" they were amazed to find the strange people who inhabited it engaged in practices—architectural, artistic, religious, ritual, agricultural, and social—that presented obvious likenesses to those of the Old World. The problem arose of deciding what significance this resemblance involved—whether it was due to the spread of ideas and practices from Asia or Europe, or whether it implied independent development that led to the same arbitrary result. For centuries men have wrestled with this problem, until anthropological theory for the world at large has become involved in the essentially American issue.

Although much has been written about the Maya people and their achievements, the vast significance of their civilization has never been adequately expounded in a connected and coherent work. It has remained for Mr. Leslie Mitchell to expound this great theme in this lucid and illuminating book, in which he has put the issues clearly and given enough

information and discussion to define the problems and suggest their solution. No discussion of these matters can be regarded as adequate unless it deals with the issues in a comparative way, using the ample anthropological materials collected from the world at large in recent years. Mr. Leslie Mitchell has the wide knowledge and competence to achieve this difficult task and write a book which forms a definite contribution to the great task of anthropology, for he has interpreted the issue which represents the foundation of anthropological theory. If he had done nothing more than cut the Gordian knot of the calendar-discussion he would have rendered a great service to anthropologists: but his achievement is far greater. By explaining the function of the calendar and its intimate relations to the agricultural and social affairs of the Maya, he has incidentally interpreted the essential elements of this people's culture.

He has achieved a great work which will earn the gratitude of all students of Human History.

G. ELLIOT SMITH.

1934.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	9
INTRODUCTION	15
CHAPTER	
I. REDISCOVERY OF THE MAYA	21
i. <i>The Land and the Monuments</i>	
ii. <i>Scripts, Chronicles, and Commentators</i>	
II. PRE-MAYAN AMERICA	38
i. <i>Early Man</i>	
ii. <i>Early Man in America</i>	
iii. <i>The Archaic Culture in Central America</i>	
III. RISE OF THE MAYA OLD EMPIRE	56
i. <i>Origins</i>	
ii. <i>The Ancient Stone-built Sites</i>	
iii. <i>Architecture in the Ancient Sites</i>	
iv. <i>Sculptural Art in the Ancient Sites</i>	
v. <i>Painting, Pottery, and the Minor Arts</i>	
vi. <i>The Sciences in the Ancient Sites</i>	
vii. <i>Script and Calendar in the Ancient Sites</i>	
viii. <i>Religion in the Ancient Sites</i>	
ix. <i>Origins Reconsidered</i>	
IV. THE HISTORY OF THE MAYA OLD EMPIRE	123
i. <i>The Dated Inscriptions Cease</i>	
ii. <i>War or Peace?</i>	
iii. <i>Old Empire Historical Fiction</i>	
iv. <i>The Strayings of the "Toltec" Xiu</i>	
v. <i>The End of the Maya Old Empire</i>	
V. LIFE IN A CITY OF THE ANCIENT MAYA	148
i. <i>Footnotes to Caution</i>	
ii. <i>Morning</i>	
iii. <i>Evening</i>	
VI. RISE OF THE MAYA NEW EMPIRE	169
i. <i>Origins</i>	
ii. <i>The Sites</i>	
iii. <i>Art and Architecture</i>	
iv. <i>The Sciences</i>	
v. <i>The Katun Count and the Ritual Calendar</i>	
vi. <i>Social Grades and the Economic Life</i>	

CHAPTER	PAGE
VII. INTERLUDE IN ANCIENT MEXICO	193
VIII. THE HISTORY OF THE MAYA NEW EMPIRE	203
i. <i>The Great Descent</i>	
ii. <i>The Little Descent</i>	
iii. <i>The Golden Age of Itza</i>	
iv. <i>The Coming of Kukulcan</i>	
v. <i>The Reign of Kukulcan</i>	
vi. <i>The League of Mayapan</i>	
vii. <i>The End of the League</i>	
viii. <i>The Period of Disunity</i>	
ix. <i>The Great Hurricane</i>	
x. <i>Pestilence and War</i>	
IX. THE CONQUEST OF THE MAYA	231
i. <i>Preludes and Prophecies</i>	
ii. <i>Expedition of Hernandez de Cordoba</i>	
iii. <i>Expedition of Juan de Grijalva</i>	
iv. <i>Expeditions of Hernando de Cortes</i>	
v. <i>Montejo lands in Yucatan</i>	
vi. <i>Eviction of the Spaniards</i>	
vii. <i>The last Five Years of Mayan Freedom</i>	
viii. <i>Return of the Spaniards</i>	
EPILOGUE	268
BIBLIOGRAPHY	271
INDEX	275

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

BAS-RELIEF FROM THE SO-CALLED TEMPLE OF THE SUN, PALENQUE	<i>Frontispiece</i> FACING PAGE 66
TIKAL: SMALL TEMPLE ON PYRAMIDAL FOUNDATION	66
MONOLITHIC SCULPTURE AT COPAN: THE "ARCHAIC PHASE"	80
MONOLITHIC SCULPTURE AT COPAN: THE "FORMAL PHASE"	82
MONOLITHIC SCULPTURE AT COPAN: THE "CLASSIC PHASE"	84
BAS-RELIEF FROM MENCHÈ—YAXCHILAN	116
SKULL DECORATION ON AN ALTAR AT COPAN	118
TRANSPACIFIC DIFFUSION OF A SCULPTURAL MOTIF BASED ON A GREEK MYTH	120
RUINS OF A MAYA "COLLEGE" AT CHICHEN ITZA.	142
FRONT OF THE SO-CALLED HOUSE OF THE GOVERNOR, UXMAL	156
INNER DOORWAY OF THE GREAT BALL COURT, CHICHEN ITZA	162
SCULPTURED MONOLITHS OF THE SO-CALLED TEMPLE OF THE TABLES, CHICHEN ITZA	164
FAÇADE OF THE SO-CALLED HOUSE OF THE NUNS, UXMAL	174
APPARENT BUILDING IN STOREYS: THE "PALACE," LAYIL	176
A TEMPLE AT CHACMILTUN	178
A FINELY-PILLARED TEMPLE AT LABNÀ	186
HEADS OF THE RAIN-GOD ON THE HOUSE OF THE NUNS, UXMAL	194

IN THE TEXT

THE EGYPTIAN-LIKE FIGURE AT PALENQUE	PAGE 26
ITZAMNA, THE MAYA ZEUS	34
THE "FALSE ARCH" IN TARENTUM AND PALENQUE	78

	PAGE
THE WINGED DISC	87
THE UPPER PART OF STELA B AT COPAN	88
THE ELEPHANT-HEADED GOD CHAC	113
THE HINDU MONKEY-GOD HANUMAN AS A MAYA DEITY	114
THE ELEPHANT-HEAD DECORATION ON STELA B AT COPAN	121
THE SO-CALLED MAYA "DEATH-GOD"	144
A GOD	160
THE SO-CALLED "SUN-GOD"	184
THE SO-CALLED MAIZE-GOD	227
A VARIANT OF GOD CHAC	229

INTRODUCTION

THE explorations, excavations and writings of Gann, Blom, Le Farge, Eric Thompson, Morley, Earl Morris and others within the last two decades have made the word Maya well known to the average educated reader ; and only a very little research would open his eyes to the immense amount of literary discussion the ancient Mayas have provoked during the last four hundred years. He would find books by the score on them : books by antiquaries, books by archæologists, books by Americanists, books by Egyptologists, books of science and books of senility ; books of incredible dullness, books with exasperating lacunæ, books of a fatuous erudition. He would find that the Maya were descended from the ancient Israelites, from the Prophet Joseph Smith's colonists, from the ancient Egyptians, from the Polynesians, from the Chinese, from the Thibetans, from the Cro-magnards, from Plato's Atlantians. Also, he would discover that they civilized ancient Egypt and Sumeria, and were the originators of all human civilization, including that of Atlantis. He would learn from one school of writers that they were not even semi-civilized, that their buildings were masses of rubble, their writing a primitive picture-script, their religion fetishism, their kingdoms myths, their social life and customs similar to those of cannibal Caribs, who were probably their cultural superiors. Alternatively, it would appear that in certain aspects of art and branches of science they were on a level with present-day Europe and far in advance of the Europe contemporary to themselves—immoderately beyond the furthest achievements of the old Nilotic or Two River civilizations ; that their glyphs undoubtedly enshrined an alphabet ; that their religion was foreigner-

debased, but originally pure, containing a figure as morally impressive as the Buddha; that their customs and speech differed completely from that found anywhere else on the American or any other continent. . . .

Except in the case of the hardiest, the natural reaction before this choice of fine, mixed reading is a recoil of dismay. To charter these swamps and seek out the life and history of an actual people and civilization appears such task as might occupy several lifetimes.

Fortunately this is no more than a superficial impression. That the Maya are capable of being at least partly rescued both from the ancient litter of the antiquary and the modern piled detail of excavation is proved by two recent books—the *History of the Maya*, by Dr. Thomas Gann and Mr. J. Eric Thompson, and *Histoire des peuples mayas-quitchès*, by MM. J. Genet and P. Chelbatz.

Both of these books are plain-told tales, and the author of the present volume, had he considered them completely (and satisfactorily) explanatory and expository, would have had no excuse for attempting to supplant them. Therefore it is worth while considering in what measures they appear inadequate.

The History of the Maya was not, as the authors themselves make plain, written in close collaboration: each collaborator wrote a certain number of chapters, one collaborator writing in Chicago, one in Central America. Consequently the book has a ragged sequence and suffers from a certain amount of tautology. More seriously, it is written by two Americanists who appear in considerable ignorance of the dictum of M. A. Gagnon: "Je dirai même que l'archéologue que faire de l'Amérique l'unique

champs de ses études, pourra certainement nous donner des détails du plus haut intérêt sur les civilisations indigènes, mais il n'aura pas qualité pour nous en dire l'origine s'il ne peut en même temps comparer ces civilisations avec les civilisations orientales." (1). Unawareness of, or disregard of that dictum, has left the *History* little more than a stale compendium of archæological data.

The case is different with *Histoire des peuples mayas-quinché*. Here the attempt is made, and with considerable success, to set forth plainly the position of the Mayas-Quiché in American history. The authors, however, are more concerned over racial origins for the actual autochthones of Central America than for the origins of their culture, and suffer (like most Europeans of last century who dealt with the matter) from an unfortunate "Toltec complex"—leading them to ascribe most of the causes of the efflorescence of Maya genius to the Toltecs of Mexico. Further, the middle sections of the book appear to have been written in the completest ignorance of the last thirty years' excavation and ground research.

Three principles have guided the present author : To correlate the information in the ancient writings of the Conquistador historians and check it with the results of archæological research and excavation in modern times ; to recheck these sources of information by references to all pages of Old World history which appear to have any bearing on them ; and to mould the whole with such simplicity and elegance as he may command into a narrative history of the most remarkable culture discovered in the New World.

The title will no doubt suggest comparisons to the two histories of W. H. Prescott—*The History of the Conquest of Mexico* and *The History of the Conquest*

of Peru. But the vision of history is apt to change and enlarge in the course of a hundred years. What for Prescott was of predominating interest—the overthrow of the final efflorescence of the American cultures by the Spanish conquerors—may now be seen as only a culminating play of the historic forces, and in the present work is relegated to a final chapter. The “Conquest” of this title is the term that may be applied to every racial grouping which apprehends the essence of civilization—the conquest of the human spirit and its limitation and broadening through the channels of culture, the conquest of the means of power over the animate and inanimate universe—an apprehension of a cultural history as a whole, not merely from a military aspect.

At the end of this history a short bibliography of the more interesting and less exhausting works on the subject is appended, these works being occasionally referred to throughout the text by the numbers given them in the appendix.

This list might be easily enlarged to an unhealthy *embonpoint* which would at least pay tribute to the author's erudition if it gave little help to the general reader in search of further information. The inaccessibility of a mass of such publications warrants their omission. Similarly, footnotes and their stray vagaries have been dispensed with.

Lastly, it must be observed—as Sir Walter Raleigh observed from the Tower of London long ago—that there is no such thing as authoritative history. Witnesses are mistaken, scripts prevaricate, and mendacity is the child of excavation. One does no more than fill in a tenebrous outline with the fragments of a broken mosaic, and that this was the seeming and shape of the mosaic, far less its colouring, each successive

generation may doubt. Nevertheless, deal in fantasy though he may, the historian's task is still plain : to attempt with good will and care the disentanglement of contemporary desire or distaste from the face of antique times, and honestly apprehend the miracle of the change and transmutation of the human spirit under the burden or inspiration of alien cultural forces.

J. LESLIE MITCHELL

THE CONQUEST OF THE MAYA

I

RE-DISCOVERY OF THE MAYA

i. The Land and the Monuments

A HUNDRED years ago nearly all Mexican and Central American ruins were still spoken of as Aztec, in spite of the hauntings of the ghostly "Toltecs." The Mayas of Yucatan were given little space by the historians of the time. They were presumed to have been an Aztec-influenced tribe at a slightly lower level of culture than the Mexican. They had been mentioned by Cortes and Bernal Diaz, conquered by the two Montejos, and their history—the usual thin comminglings of fantastic legend and fable—committed to writing by two clerics, Lizana and Cogolludo. Remote on the lands of the Pacific coast the Quiché and Kaxchiquel were also recognized as tribes of Mayance blood, and justly assessed as barbarous. But the land lying between the Pacific and the northern Yucatecan coasts was credited with but a feeble cultural development prior to the arrival of the Europeans.

If Yucatan possessed some degree of mention and importance in the histories, far less was ascribed to that stretch of country in which it is probable that the first American civilization rose into prominence. This stretch of land, watered by the Grijalva, Usamacintla and Pedro, joining in confluence to flow into Campeche Bay in the north-west, and by the Rivers Hondo, Belize, Grande, Motagua and Chamelicon, flowing into the Gulf of Honduras in the south-east, is a swampy and densely forested region, partly comprising the modern Mexican states of Chiapas and Tabasco, the Republics of Guatemala and Honduras,

and the colony of British Honduras. A great mountain-chain runs west of this country, severing it in some measure from the Pacific. On that Pacific coast the descent is comparatively short and steep to the long rollers of that ocean which separates Central America from Asia and the Australasian islands. East of the mountain-chain lies the country with which we are concerned, and with which, in exploration and excavation, the nineteenth century began to concern itself.

The climate is tropical in the great forested belts, with a heavy rainfall that produces a dense and bright-green vegetation. In ancient times the main mode of communication through this region must have been the rivers—principally the Usamacintla, along the course of which are strewn some of the most remarkable ruins of the antique civilization. But in cleared spaces, as in the lowlands that slope down from the mountain shoulder, cultivation of maize, beans, cacao and other food products is a comparatively simple and unlaborious task. The great triangle where the Old Empire Maya culture rose was rich with forest detritus and a virgin and welcoming soil to greet the agricultural necessities of that civilization.

In this densely wooded region, where the air is bright with the wings of insects and the sheen of water through the dark-green glow of the lianas, the fauna is as rich and varied as the flora. Macaws and birds of a like colourful plumage abound, the quetzal among them, that bird which played as great a part in the life of the ancient Central Americans as the roc and the phœnix, combined with the ostrich, in that of the peoples of the Ancient East. Turkey, large, edible, and not too agile, are plentiful; deer of many kinds and qualities abound—it is possible that the ancient civilization actually domesticated herds of deer. The peccary, small and succulent, is and was another food-animal of considerable value, and the little river-horse of the Americas, the tapir,

probably supplied stout leather for sandals and belt-work, then as now. In the marshy inlets from the coasts the alligator is the lord of the waters, pushing a crusted saurian snout from under the driftage that seeps from the forests, and watching the changing play on the banks that has replaced the bright colourings and frail canoes of the early craftsmen with the motor-boats and pearling-luggers of contemporary times. Saurian philosophy supplies us with no comment on either.

Now, in a great inverted triangle in these forests, prior to and verging on the beginning of the nineteenth century, some remarkable voyagings and stravaigings had been carried on by various travellers—Dupaix, Waldeck, and Galindo the most prominent. Some had special facilities from the then Government of New Spain, some were enthusiastic amateurs. M. de Waldeck (2) penetrated with great labour from the north, on mule-back, to Palenque, and emerged from there (and from Uxmal) with a voluminous account of the ruins which the historians of the time greeted with some caution, especially as the plates which illustrated his accounts showed the ruins in a remarkable state of preservation. Waldeck computed the age of the Palenque ruins as between two and three thousand years: this computation he made on the ringing of trees (which he had sawn for the purpose) and the length and mass of large drip-stalactites in various buildings. At the edge of the period when the antiquary was about to give place to the archæologist, Waldeck's acceptance of such data as authoritative is interesting. For the data is now generally recognized as untrustworthy, tree-rings or stalactites. Trees grow with a regrettable irregularity in their later years, stalactites accumulate or retard their mass in conformity with a straying multitude of causes. A later generation of Americanists is aware of these facts, but is still apt to accept various geological and such-like "evidences" as having dated themselves with the regularity of a

radium chronometer. Particularly, as will be noted later, is this the case with regard to the lava deposits superimposed on the archaic remains at Cuicuilco in the Panuco Valley of Mexico.

Thirty years after the issue of Waldeck's latest publication, and while W. H. Prescott in America was assiduously (through a number of emissaries in Spain and Mexico) compiling material for his *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, John Lloyd Stephens, an American traveller and diplomat, was despatched by the President of the United States to negotiate some nebulous commercial proposals with the then Central American Republic. Arriving in Central America, Stephens discovered that Republic in the process of dissolution, federal and confederate forces in conflict. Between whiles of attempting to discover the whereabouts or actual existence of the Government with which he was to negotiate, Stephens visited a large number of the ruined cities of the great triangle, drawn to this investigation by a mixture of genteel curiosity and genuine historical passion. His books (3) and (4) may still be read with some interest because of his style and comment; from a historical point of view, however, they would be more or less valueless but for the fact that he was accompanied on his visits to the various ruins by an English artist, Frederick Catherwood. Catherwood, considering the unfamiliarity of the subjects which he was called upon to depict, displayed remarkable genius for separating the essential from the non-essential in the grotesque bewilderment of design and over-design to be found in the decorative statuary of such ancient sites as Copan. He gave to the world, in Stephens' books, the first accurate limnings of the strange sculptures and buildings of the Mayas. In a remarkable degree he was the first to unveil the problem that the years had hidden away under the legends and forests detritus of the Usamacintla.

The first of the ancient ruins visited by Stephens and Catherwood was Copan, at the extreme south-

east of the inverted triangle, a site in the modern Republic of Honduras. Accounts of the existence of such ruins had recently reached Europe and America, Stephens tells, and excited the curiosity of Catherwood and himself. "Though I ought perhaps to say that both Mr. C. and I were somewhat sceptical, and when we arrived at Copan, it was with the hope, rather than the expectation, of finding wonders."

Their consequent reactions to the great stretch of ruins have a unique interest, bringing back as they do that primal freshness of appraisal which has been so much overlaid by a century of excavation and measurement. "The sight of this unexpected monument put at rest at once and for ever, in our minds, all uncertainty in regard to the character of American antiquities, and gave us the assurance that the objects we were in search of were interesting, not only as the remains of an unknown people, but as works of art, proving, like newly-discovered historical records, that the people who once occupied the continent of America were not savages. . . . Our guide . . . conducted us through the thick forest, among half-buried fragments, to fourteen monuments of the same character and appearance, some with more elegant designs, and some in workmanship equal to the finest monuments of the Egyptians; one displaced from its pedestal by enormous roots; another locked in the close embrace of branches of trees, and almost lifted out of the earth; another hurled to the ground and bound down by huge vines and creepers; and one standing, with its altar before it, in a grove of trees which grew around it, seemingly to shade and shroud it as a sacred thing; in the solemn stillness of the woods, it seemed a divinity mourning over a fallen people. The only sounds that disturbed the quiet of this buried city were the noise of the monkeys moving among the tops of the trees and the cracking of dry branches broken by their weight."

So, with an elegance and vocabulary unfortunately lacking in most of his successors who have carried out



THE EGYPTIAN-LIKE FIGURE
discovered by J. L. Stephens, at Palenque. (Old Empire.)

(After Catherwood, in J. L. Stephens' "Travels.")

researches either in Copan or elsewhere in Central America, Stephens discovers his first impressions of the antique ruins of America.

Besides Copan, Stephens visited Quirigua, Tecpan Guatemala, Quiché (in neither of the last two he found any inscriptions, and rightly concluded they were posterior to and inferior to such sites as Copan), Palenque, and Uxmal in Yucatan. In still another journey he travelled extensively in Yucatan alone, coming at length to the conclusion that, despite certain disturbing resemblances, the ruined cities presented a spectacle of "a people skilled in architecture, sculpture, and drawing, and, beyond doubt, other more perishable arts, and possessing the cultivation and refinement attendant upon these, not derived from the Old World, but originating and growing up here, without models or masters, having a distinct, separate, independent existence; like the plants and fruits of the soil, indigenous" (3).

The next high-light in the rediscovery of the Maya took place with the rediscovery, in 1863, of the *Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan* of Bishop Diego de Landa. This, written in 1566, had been mislaid for three centuries until retrieved and edited by the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg (5), a skilled and competent Americanist, but unfortunately greatly at the mercy of a wonder-loving imagination over-stimulated in the fables of his Church. The discovery of the Landa MS. proved of great value, quite apart from its excellent account of the Maya of Yucatan, their everyday life and customs, as Landa, the first Bishop of Yucatan, had observed them. Others before the discovery of his *Relacion* had made extensive descriptions of that antique life in the limestone peninsula at the time when the Spaniards came to subdue it. But for well over two hundred years all knowledge of the ancient glyphic writing had been mislaid. In the words of Prescott (6), speaking of the glyphic writing on the walls of Palenque made known by the illustrators of Waldeck

and Stephens: "That its mysterious import will ever be deciphered is scarcely to be expected. The language of the race who employed it, the race itself, is unknown. And it is not likely that another Rosetta stone will be found, with its trilingual inscription, to supply the means of comparison, and to guide the American Champollion on the path to discovery."

The *Relacion* supplied no Rosetta stone: what it did supply was an account of the calendar of the Maya of Yucatan, with illustrations of the signs employed for the "months" and days. This laid the foundation for the interpretation not only of the glyphic writing on the stelæ of the ancient cities, but on such apparently Maya-written scripts as survived in the libraries of Europe.

But the earlier Americanists who based their researches on Landa, especially his editor, the Abbé Brasseur, were led seriously astray by the fact that Landa professed to set forth a Maya "alphabet." There can be little doubt that the signs he gives for each letter-sound in the Spanish alphabet he gives in all good faith: but either the Maya Indians who supplied the signs mistook the meaning and intention of the Bishop's questions, or deliberately lied to him. Considering the activities waged by Landa in his bishopric, the latter seems much the more probable solution. The alphabetic signs were seriously discredited in the famous attempt of the Abbé Brasseur to interpret the Dresden Codex with their aid. The Abbé produced long lines of meaningless words and terms, in which nevertheless he professed to find traces of a coherent narrative—an account of the inundation of a great tract of country, Mu. This inundation had been accompanied by impressive seismic convulsions, including volcanic eruptions. . . . Subsequently the Abbé made a remarkable retraction, declaring his translation was merely "experimental."

The next labourer in the vineyard of Maya redis-

covery was the remarkable Dr. Augustus le Plongeon, an Americanist of something of the order of Schliemann of Troy. One of the most interesting, curious, and combative of men, he spent several years in excavating Chichen Itza, the great Yucatecan site, diversified with pondering over the Abbé Brasseur's attempted translation of the Dresden Codex. From both the result of his individual excavations and individual researches in the Maya literature, he believed he had unravelled the "secret" of the calculiform glyphs and the beginnings of Maya history. In one of his books (7) he reproduced several pages of the Dresden Codex, appending translations and comments. One of the most impressive of these "translations" appears in a footnote—two cramped personages surrounded with the usual cryptic glyphs—from which one learns that the motherland of the great civilization which built Chichen Itza was Mu, another name for Atlantis, and that here the personification of that unfortunate continent is seen invoking a goddess to spare it. The goddess, of a saturnine and taciturn disposition, is declining with singular and sardonic brevity.

Such vagaries of research had the effect of arousing considerable criticism. Le Plongeon's main contribution to the rediscovery of the Maya was the passionate opposition which he upraised like a dust-cloud against his own colourful beliefs. By then there was in existence a considerable body of detailed and documented evidence regarding the Maya, their art, architecture, and life in general. Dr. Daniel G. Brinton introduced a cooling sanity into the overheated imaginings of Le Plongeon, but himself showed that singular barren conservatism of outlook—terror of attempted synthesis or theory outside the general corpus of European criticism—which has afflicted the orthodox Americanist ever since. He ascribed to the Maya of the great inverted triangle a culture—a barbaric culture—post-dating the achievements in civilization of the Nahua of

Mexico. Further than that, however, he translated, very badly, various of the native scripts, written in Zuyua, but in Latin lettering, and published them (8) to act as a fairly reliable check on the results of future excavation.

Between 1881 and 1894 the field-work of Dr. A. P. Maudslay laid the foundation for the scientific study of the monuments to a degree hitherto impossible. Avoiding preconceived notions on the origin of the ruins among which his researches took place, Maudslay carried out a detailed scheme of mapping and photographing in the principal sites known to his time, extending all over the great triangle we have named, and beyond its limits, into Yucatan itself. Further, and most important, he took moulds of many inscriptions and monuments by means sometimes of plaster, sometimes of paper-squeezes, in spite of the difficulties of clearing bush-grown sites and obtaining the necessary labour in an area where scientific archæology and excavation were unknown. These moulds were transported to England, casts made from them, and those casts exhibited in the Victoria and Albert Museum of London. Meantime an account of his researches, very adequately illustrated, was published by Maudslay, somewhat incongruously, as the "archæological" volume of a ponderous series of works, the *Biologia Centrali-Americana*.

Maudslay's work presented to students divorced from actual contact with the sites and monuments considerable material for study. The age for either the glowing visions of a Le Plongeon or the bleak sterilities of a Brinton was definitely over. Förstemann, Seler, and others in Germany set to work on elucidating the calendar-dates of the monuments reproduced by Maudslay's labours. W. H. Holmes, of the Field Columbian Museum of Chicago, carried out in 1895 and 1897 excavations and architectural measurements (9) of an importance secondary only to Maudslay's. C. P. Bowditch (10) pro-

duced the first cautious and well-documented study of the astronomical, calendrical, and mathematical systems of the ancient builders of the ruined sites, as left in the evidence of the inscribed stones at the ruins. The great face of the problem now appeared to be known in its dim outline: further and more intensive research could fill in that outline, both by the discovery and exploration of other sites and the sifting and testing of the accepted signs of the calendar—not to mention that large host of signs which at first appeared to have little relation to calendrical calculation.

From 1900 onwards the archæological unveiling of the antique face has proceeded with great rapidity. A grouping of fresh and important cities—the Tikal-Uaxactun group—has been laid bare by Dr. S. G. Morley and his corps of assistants from the Carnegie Institute of Washington. Dr. Thomas Gann, a retired medical officer of British Honduras, has carried out a series of independent researches engagingly described in a series of travel-books—researches which have the great benefit of opening up afresh many dormant problems, besides discovering a number of subsidiary architectural sites. Mr. J. Eric Thompson, in charge of the Marshall Field Expedition to Central America, has carried out both ethnological and archæological work of high order and importance. Tulane University, in 1926, despatched Messrs. Blom and Le Farge on an exploring mission into the heart of this triangle, a mission which made some unique discoveries. From the labours of these and many others the evidence continues to accumulate for a detailed interpretation of the history of the Maya, long lost to the memory of men, now rediscovered to pose a number of fascinatingly interesting questions, as well as to demonstrate the manners and beliefs of an existence both aberrant from the human norm and yet copying with singular and apparent fidelity many phases of art and architecture and conduct long vanished elsewhere from the

world while it still flowered strangely in the Central Americas.

ii. *Scripts, Chronicles, and Commentators*

Before launching on a description of the Maya civilizations and their conquest of the Central Americas, it is necessary to give a slight outline of the further sources of information available to the student—apart from the monuments and sites, the most enduring and authoritative. These further sources may be regarded as a constant litter of footnotes upon the pages where the monuments stand: sometimes they definitely relate, sometimes they are obviously irrelevant, sometimes the footnote blandly contradicts the evidence carved with such ingenuity and care on the face of the jungle-surrounded stones.

The first contact of the Spaniards in Central America was with the Maya of Yucatan—a people descended from or cognate to that which inhabited the great triangle to the south and west. These Maya, in the words of Mr. T. A. Joyce (II), were discovered “inhabiting villages of considerable size, with stone-built shrines erected on pyramids, using a hieroglyphic script and a calendrical system almost (though not quite) identical with that of the early Maya, and preserving traditions which can be shown to connect them beyond doubt with sites which are, indubitably, extensions of the Early Maya civilization.”

This summary, slightly ambiguous, nevertheless pictures neatly and succinctly the state and people which were to provide, through the chroniclers among their Spanish conquerors, nearly all the oral or translated history which had a bearing upon the past of pre-Columbian Central America.

In the Conquest great quantities of native scripts, written in the characteristic calculiform (i.e. pebble-shaped) glyphs on a tough, durable paper made from the *Agave Americana*, were destroyed, the

Catholic priests who accompanied the conquerors holding, with some measure of reason, that the preservation of these scripts would continue to add authority to the discredited theology of the native priests, and perpetuate the heathen abominations of their worship. From the great holocausts there survive intact only three of the actual scripts, though several others were translated from the literary Yucatecan of the time into Spanish before the originals were destroyed and knowledge of writing or interpreting the hieroglyphs lost.

The three actual survivals are the *Dresden Codex*, preserved in the great public library at Dresden; the *Codex Peresianus*, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; and the *Troano-Cortesian Codex*, divided into two parts and preserved in separate museums in Spain. It is possible, though not very probable, that a few other native scripts may be in existence, hidden away in great private libraries in Spain or elsewhere, and awaiting chance discovery or destruction.

The three codices supply a singular paucity of historical material. This is for two reasons: they appear to be little concerned with historic happenings, greatly with obscure astronomical calculations involving the presidency of various gods over various periods; secondly, only calendrical information, or some extensions of such information, can yet be translated, with the aid of Landa's "key" and the further "keys" provided through the researches of modern Americanists.

In appearance the *Codex Dresdensts* is by far the finest piece of art-work: the figures of the grotesque gods are outlined with spirit and force, the grotesqueness has the deep intentness of true art, the glyphic signs, carelessly executed (as is to be expected) in comparison with those on the monuments, are nevertheless easily recognizable, showing the definite conventionalisation of each outline on which the scribe-painter worked. The hieroglyphs and pictionary

are painted in various colours that still have a fine glow on the white "size" ground applied to the dried fibre of the *Agave Americana*.

The two other codices are much inferior in execution, and apparently (though this is not certain) of much later date.



ITZAMNA, THE MAYA ZEUS

(From the *Dresden Codex*.)

The general style of the *Codex Peresianus* seems to approximate it to the murals of the Late Maya site of Tulum, and to date it very close to the Conquest. The third Codex may actually post-date the Conquest, compiled by some scribe in hiding from the Spaniards or living under even more ignominious Spanish patronage, with a mind that grew misty on the function and form of many

of the glyphs, and fingers either unapt or uneager to execute their outlines.

So much for the actual survivals, the last torn volumes from what was once (apparently) a great native literature.

Here it may be noted in passing that various scholars of some eminence and note flatly deny that the Maya possessed anything whatsoever in the shape of a literature. These scholars affirm, from consideration of the codices just mentioned

and the inscriptions on the ancient monuments, that the glyphs were used for the purpose of recording astronomical calculations and calendrical computations only, plus a meagre spraying of proper names here and there associated with the calculated date of an event. This theory appears premature in the state of our present knowledge of the glyphs: the ancient writing may be rebus-writing, or picture-writing, or even (it is possible) a syllabary. And the early Spanish chroniclers definitely lay it down that great quantities of the codices burned in enthusiastic *auto-dà-fé* by Landa and his compeers were historical records of the natives, as well as calculations for ceremonial or agricultural purposes.

This would appear to be borne out, though in an admittedly meagre fashion, by the next section of the documentary evidence to call for consideration—the so-called *Books of the Tiger Priest* (*Chilan-Balaam*), native historical records, compiled by the priests attached to various Maya clans in days before the Conquest, and subsequently translated from their glyphs into Spanish by scholars acquainted with both languages and in command of both methods of writing.

The *Chilan-Balaam Books* supply a thin thread of fine light through the darkness of Maya history, shedding here a confusing glow, here a helpful gleam. The inevitable and overloaded datings apart, they contain curt historical references to trek, capture, dominance, and defeat on the part of the Tutul-Xiu and other clans. If brevity be the soul of wit, the native chroniclers of the fortunes of the Tutul-Xiu were amongst the most mirthful folk who ever existed. Nevertheless, it is from attempted correlation of the "Katun count" in the *Chilan-Balaam Books* to that in the Julian and Gregorian calendars that modern Americanists have been able (with doubtful success) to set some of the main events in the ancient history in a European calendrical setting.

Next in importance are the Spanish chroniclers themselves. The most important readable of these is that Diego de Landa, Bishop of Yucatan, already referred to. A stern and bigoted priest, he ordered the destruction of large quantities of the native literature and possibly also of the native *litterateurs*. But also, surprisingly, he sought to leave a fairly complete description of Maya life and custom and belief, writing and art and science. As already noted, his *Relacion*, lost for three centuries, was re-discovered by the Abbé Brasseur and has helped materially in deciphering the dates of the great monuments.

Cogolludo (12), Lizana (13), Villagutierre (14), and Herrera (15) deal with various aspects of Maya life as observed by themselves or hearsay from others. Villagutierre's book, published in 1701, only a few years after the conquest of the last independent Maya state, gives an intimate picture of the life of a fragment of the antique, though degenerate, civilization, which survived the main corpus for 150 years.

With these, the list of scripts and intimate chronicles may be said to close. After Villagutierre there follows that host of commentator-historians which culminated in Dr. D. G. Brinton. Most important of them all, though he knew little of the Maya and confined most of his researches and comparisons to the northwards Valley of Mexico, is undoubtedly Alexander von Humboldt. In his *Vues des cordillères* he gives a graphic, though "dated," summary of the many similarities between certain aspects of antique American and Asiatic culture. This for long served as the text-book of those Americanists and non-Americanist historians who believed in Asiatic influences as obtrusive in America in days before the arrival of Columbus.

Until the opening of the era of scientific excavation inaugurated by A. P. Maudslay, most histories and historical papers remained no more than repetitions and enlargements of the comments of the

antique chroniclers. But the opening of that era added to literary comment the results of archaeological research. The works of E. Seler (16) in Germany, T. A. Joyce (17) in England, Jean Genet (18) in France, H. J. Spinden (19), S. G. Morley (20), J. Eric Thompson (21) in America, and the relevant publications of the various American universities and the American Bureau of Ethnology outline the results and the divergences of opinion on the origins, functions, and status of the Maya civilization.

These, the main sources of Americanist evidence, are generally accepted by the historian (in conjunction with his own individual researches) as all-sufficing in delimiting the Maya history and arriving at conclusions upon it. As previously hinted, with a quotation from a French-Canadian historian (1), the present writer believes that a careful comparison of Old World and New World cultural history is essential for understanding the Maya efflorescence, and to be omitted only by the historian still in the bonds of such beliefs as that "The bournes within which the human mind and the human hand can function are in truth rather limited everywhere, and the intellects of men in this or that plane of development the world over are therefore bound to create objects for the use and delight of their makers which vary only between certain not very distant extremes" (22).

Only through quotation of such hazy summarizings of outdated psychology is it possible to realize the limited vision imposed, like a biological aberration, on much of contemporary Americanist research by a jealous misinterpretation of the processes of cultural evolution.

II

PRE-MAYAN AMERICA

i. *Early Man*

THE Europeans who came to America after the discovery of Columbus were greatly exercised to account for the origin of the Red Indian races. It was necessary to fit them in the prevailing theological and cosmological opinions of the time, and, as the true size of the New Continent and its diversity of peoples was gradually apprehended, this task became the more difficult. Either, however, it was concluded that the Red Indian had survived the Deluge, or was descended from one of the sons of Noah—a nomad who had trekked with speed to the New World after the landfall on Ararat and then proceeded, with true Semitic fertility, to people America with his descendants from the North-West Passage to Tierra del Fuego.

It is interesting and amusing to note that there was no gradual transition between this era of fantastic theorizing and the application of those theories of slow and causal development which were almost instantly applied to human affairs with the revolution in biological method initiated by Darwin. It is true that the new method for a time was still an uncertain tool to handle: presuming the presence of some "ape-stock" in the New World, it seemed that man might have evolved from that stock separately to his striving compeers on the other four continents. Those were the days when it was presumed (as indeed, it still largely is) that man's development had a flowing inevitability, and whatever the divisions of time and space, any given portion of the earth infested with "ape-stock" would have instantly and strenuously set about the production of *Homo Sapiens*, and striven until that end was achieved.

The fluid flesh of man which produced the Neanderthaler and the man of Boskop gives little foundation for such belief: without outside interference or

immigration, and supposing the existence of an American "ape-stock," a species strange and remote from *Sapiens* might well have been produced. However, not only is there in America no evidence of the existence of any ape of the order of Primates, but, with some very doubtful exceptions, there is no evidence that Man himself reached the New World until the greater and more violent of the geological changes were over. It is now generally accepted that Man came to America across the land and ice-bridges of the Behring Straits and Aleutian Islands, perhaps in migrations spread over several thousands of years, perhaps in several short and rapid drifts. Dr. Hrdlička (23) has set out in detail the evidences, such as they are, for the prolonged migration, and estimates the coming of the original settlers as between 25,000 and 10,000 years ago.

But it is also a possibility, as others (24) have urged, that America was at least partly peopled, in a time as antique, by immigrants of the Late Stone Age who followed the deer northwards through Europe and so crossed the ice into Greenland and so to America in that dim morning of Time. Mr. T. A. Joyce champions (25) the long-heads, as distinct from the Mongolian round-heads, as the European immigrants. A third theory, much in favour with modern archæologists and ethnologists who are themselves South Americans, finds overwhelming proof of the southern half of the continent at least having been settled by successive incursions of Melanesians and Polynesians. The coming of the latter, however (if come they did), must have considerably post-dated the arrival of the Mongoloids, for there is no good evidence that the Australasian islands, the home of Melanesian and Polynesian, were peopled until early historic times.

It is interesting to cast a bird's-eye glance over this antique planet of 20,000 years ago. According to those more modest calculations now in general acceptance, the last Glacial Age was then fading

from the wintry European landscape, the Cro-Magnard and his successor the Magdalenian were painting their caves and hunting the horse on the bleak plains and amid the snow-crowned mountains of France, the last Neanderthal survivors prowled Eastern Europe and Palestine, (and perhaps tracts still more to the east), low-browed, bowed of head, a discarded experiment of Nature, watching the fires of true humankind light up the nights. Africa is a land of mystery, with perhaps here and there proto-humans each with his little skill of stick and stone, but soon to vanish as time and true man come south. In its north, and along the still uncultivated banks of the Nile, true men hunted the geese and deer and pulled handfuls of wild barley. Around the æons-long reservoir of the White races in south-central Asia, the geological confines—marsh, swamp, ice-belt—were at length breaking down and releasing the sparse wandering bands of hunters. In India, even the dark tribes from Africa were as yet inapparent. Australia and all the South Seas had yet to know human habitation, the Pacific gleamed under a sun that not for many a thousand years was to see the prow of a Polynesian vessel. In the Central Chinese area, the short, squat, broad-faced Mongoloids were also wandering forth from their ancient area of differentiation. Probably it was a time and an era, twenty thousand years ago, when the planet stirred and moved, with the winter retreating and unlocking new waves and flows of fauna and flora upon the continents. It was the great Spring of our humankind; the greater beasts had passed from the planet, in their millenniums-long lives as hunters and scavengers men had developed great skill and adroitness, a fine synchronization of hand and brain and eye which left them little at the mercy of other animals. America still undiscovered, inapparent, nameless as were all the continents, men set out, slow millennium on millennium, on their conquest of the earth.

Some such picture modern research in geology and

anthropology presents to our eyes. All these tribes of men were at what has been called the Palæolithic stage of culture—they chipped or pounded or smote their rough flint and stone tools into shape—they were percussion tools, spears used in the hunting of wild animals, knives used in cutting up their meat and such-like activities. So, for thousands of years, with periodic waves of technique that swept the world, these tools had been used, and for thousands more were to be used.

And here a curious fact is apparent, one which can be noted only with brevity here, though its implications are fascinating. Among all these widely diversified proto-races of modern men *the same tools were in use*. At first glance this seems to lend unqualified support to the theory that accounts for all human similarities by the "narrow bourne" in which all mental and physical activities take place. But on deeper investigation it is quite otherwise. In the late Palæolithic Age in France there appeared a highly specialized method of tool-chipping which has been called the Solutrean. Speaking in the space and great time-periods of pre-history, it did not endure for long in the land of its apparent origin. Other methods of tool-treatment took its place. But long after that time Solutrean blades were made in India, were made in Australia, are discovered in southern South America. Yet this quite unreasonably, if one is to presume independent evolution for each district. For there are scores of methods of chipping tools on an equal scale of efficiency with the Solutrean. Similarity of the human mind, in the phrase originally blessed by Dr. Robertson (26), and for the past one hundred and fifty years so productive of bad analogy and poorer reasoning, may account for the fact that two children scribble meaningless whorls upon their slates. But the two children would not by any means scribble exactly the same whorl representationally meaningless. And if twenty children of the same age, with the same materials at

hand, scribbled, how many of the whorl-inscriptions would have even chance resemblances, far less be accurate repetitions ?

It may seem unnecessary to over-elaborate this point, but it has both a very acute bearing upon the stage of culture of the original inhabitants of America and upon the ingredients of the great Maya culture. It seems obvious that in the ancient world, twenty or twenty-five millennia before Christ, there passed, slow year on year, with lacunæ and lapses, methods of tool-working from one group to another ; till, arising from a central inventive spot, that method would penetrate in widening ripples to the furthest confines of the planet. Men learn by imitateness, by absorption : inventiveness is the most uncommon of faculties in a cultureless condition, otherwise the great Palæolithic era would surely have been reduced by nine-tenths its immense duration in time.

It was the long Spring of the human race, the Spring, it would seem, of a spiritual adolescence, not a cultural one. Awakening from the long winter of the planet with centuries-sharpened vision and skill of hand the sparse hunting-hordes wandered into new territories through long centuries, hunting and food-gathering here and there, drowsing long years away at convenient camp sites, uninventive, friendly, quick and lazy in their appraisal of the speed of deer and horses, the strength and bellowing agility of the mammoth, that antique survival, sometimes moved to portray him and his compeers in swift brush-strokes in caverns and under the lees of cliffs ; stumbling over an abandoned tool of some other family-group and chipping tools of like model till some newer fashion strayed in his ken ; or, once in a millennium, himself inventing and setting adrift the seeds of his invention out on the wind. This was his life and existence for many thousands of years after the vanishing of the great sea-and-ice barriers.

It is worth while to make a note of another aspect of early man—his character. So far from being that

monster of lust and blood whose brutalities, in the words of Mr. H. J. Massingham (27), "keep our circulating libraries on a sound financial footing," there seem excellent reasons for believing that Early Man, of whatever race and in whatever land, was of the normal sanity common to all undiseased and not over-bitterly pressed animals. The foundation of his life was the family-group, with a measure of toleration for the young male unakin to that shown by his nearest relative, the African gorilla, or probably by the Neanderthaler either. Very early in his career, with a happy gregariousness, the definite family-groups of man seem to have enlarged into groups incorporating many families. It is impossible to call these groupings clans or tribes: they were the freest of assemblies and associations, for there was no rule, no authority, no chief, no council of elders, no law, no sexual problems, no wives, no husbands, no gods, no devils, no science, no war, few irrational hopes and possibly fewer irrational fears. Men were sturdy children in a world hard, but not entirely inhospitable; they doubtlessly bred in great numbers and died in equally great numbers before they reached maturity, they had little salvation from the cold of night, the chances of famine, or the fear of death. But, that last chance excepted, it is possible they had as little need of shelters, physical or spiritual, as they had of the as-yet inapparent clothes.

Such is the picture of early life which historic anthropology excavates from the evidences of the past, the French and African caverns and the Indian river-drifts, in conjunction with the character and type of life led on this planet until recent years by a straying diversity of surviving peoples from the Old Stone Age—Mr. H. J. Massingham gives a list of over thirty (28)—lost pockets of men in this and that crinkle of our planet living the ancestral life as at the time when, it may be, the first Asiatic immigrants crossed the first land-bridges into America.

ii. *Early Man in America*

The first emigrants from Asia into America in that remote era of time Mr. P. A. Means (22) describes as members of the "yellow-brown race of Asia and Polynesia." No such race has ever existed—it is tantamount to speaking of the pinky-white race of Europe. Such definitions belong to the childhood of anthropology. To judge by their cranial and hirsute characteristics, the majority of the Red Indian races are descendants of a migration, or series of migrations, from North-Eastern Asia. Either these migrations took place in a time when the Mongol stock had not yet reached its historic characteristic development in such detail, or—more probably—there was a considerable infusion of Alpine blood in those Siberian stretches around the sources of the Yenisei whence the migrations appear to have originated.

Groups of the hunters and fishers doubtlessly strayed for long centuries, of mixed and unmixed race, in the great Siberian forests. Then, in an era definitely more genial as to climatic condition than that prevailing to-day, for that Springtime of the world extended far to the north, exploratory groups of early men, together with their women folk, drifted across the land-bridges from Asia into Alaska, following game, perhaps: certainly not driven by starvation or war, as sometimes has been supposed. Starvation was a remote possibility haunting a vigorous race of hunters and fishers, war a thing which had not yet come into the world. And, so far from finding themselves shivering aliens in a bleak and hostile world, it is probable that the immigrants wandered down to the conquest of the two Americas in happy-go-lucky migrations, finding a land of strange fauna and flora, edible fruits, plentiful game, and a climate that grew the more equable the further south they penetrated. The hunter of those days required a great stretch of country for his livelihood not through lack of game, but through that straying propensity

that led mankind on his conquest of even the remotest corners of the planet.

Some strange animal survivals of geologic time had not yet died out when Man reached South America. The Glyptodon still crashed through the Amazon jungle paths. The giant sloth was a strange and awesome monster to look upon, if a harmless beast in the hunt. So, slow century followed on century, hunting, fishing, stravaiging in thin groupings across the antique American scene till a great differentiation of tongues arose—that rich differentiation of which an agglutinative basis was capable. Possibly in their wanderings the proto-Amerindians discovered earlier settlers from Europe. More probably these came later, and mingled and interbred with the Mongoloids. But the latest of the European hordes turned northwards into the snows in pursuit of walrus and bear, and upbuilt there, with the ready adaptability of the earth's most adaptable species, the singular cultural life of the Eskimo.

It is probable that the main treks from Asia were not very widely separated in time; on the other hand, all the evidences, despite Dr. Hrdlička, point to the fact that communication between the American and Alaskan coasts, via the Behring Strait or the Aleutian Islands, was kept up remotely into historic times. Tribes and clans crossed or recrossed, changing their habitat at pleasure. The early archaic civilization came pressing up through North-East Asia and crossed the strait, its arms loaded with its dubious gifts which were to alter the face of man's fortunes in America. Remote in Patagonia, thousands of years after its invention in France, crossing three-quarters of the world, there came such fitful epics of technique as the making of the Solutrean blade. Reciprocal invention in this and that small item of tool-chipping doubtlessly flowed back into the mother-continent. Inventiveness in Palæolithic Man was confined almost entirely to changing and reshaping his tools; inventiveness in the sense

of altering the shape or function of his habitat was beyond his vision. The tool was an extension of his arm ; with a ready and swift and skilful arm he could envisage no other needs.

— This peace, millennial in several senses, appears to have lasted on the American continent from the day of the earliest immigrants until close to the beginning of the Christian era. America was remote in space from the Old World where, as the result of a series of accidents, there arose, to alter and dominate, and seemingly conquer, the ancient free spirit of the food-gathering groups, the first civilization.

Modern evidences, as we have seen, demonstrate that the belief that cultures developed independently at different points on the surface of the globe " through the similarity of the innate disposition of the human mind " is a belief without objective foundation, a theory not evolved from facts, but superimposed upon them. Civilization, culture, did not arise independently at various points all over the earth : there was no slow upward climb from primitive to savage, savage to barbarian, barbarian to civilized man, in the ordering beloved of the older school of historians. Civilization rose from the midst of primitive freedom, with comparative suddenness, revolutionizing human life and spreading abroad the planet much as the technique of the Solutrean blade, from one accidental point in the Old World.

That accidental point was Ancient Egypt, and the history of the beginnings of the strangest adventure of the human spirit has been set down in considerable detail by such competent investigators as Professor Grafton Elliot Smith (29), and Dr. W. J. Perry (30). Here only the briefest summary need be attempted.

Barley and millet grew wild in the Nile Valley. For thousands of years, possibly, members of the hunting and fishing communities which made the Valley their home were in the habit of adding to their meat and fish diets by devouring the harvested

heads of these plants. But this they did without thought of either sowing or harvesting, gathering them casually as they gathered now and again other seeds and fruits. Yet nowhere but in the Nile Valley, with its peculiar times of flood and ebb, its obvious influence of the water upon the seed, could the connection have been so impressed on the mind of primitive man. It is indeed extremely doubtful if either of these cereals grew elsewhere in a condition likely to tempt the food-gatherer to add them to his stores of food. Chance and long centuries of observation forced agriculture upon the Ancient Egyptian. Here, in all the doubts and delays of the hunt, appeared a secure and certain way to procure periodical quantities of succulent foods.

Men, naked, cultureless, houseless, imitated the processes of nature. They invented the first crude system of basin agriculture to enlarge the area of the Nile's fertilizing floods. They found forced upon them the necessity of inventing gourds and sheds in which to store the seed. They saw an apparently obvious connection between the heliacal rising of Sirius and the Nile inundation; they saw beyond that the power and interconnection of these two events with the First Irrigator: controlling the flood, he surely also created it. They made of him, the King-Irrigator, dead, the First God. Burying him in state, they created Architecture in making his tomb.

Agriculture gave birth to theology, the arts, and a multitude of handicrafts within the limited period of a few hundred years in the Nile basin—this at no remote period in human history, but probably between the years 5000 B.C. and 4000 B.C.

Thus, in a lonely valley in a world where the rest of men still wandered in food-gathering tribes, in the life that later ages were to remember with a wistful memory as the Golden Age of Mankind, originated the first civilization. Presently it spawned the seeds of the Archaic culture all abroad the Ancient World.

The pre-dynastic Egyptian sought woods and spices and presently gold and precious stones to add to the decoration or sanctification of this new edifice of civilization. He trekked into the wastes of Syria, camping and exploring; he went by sea, sailing the sounding coasts to the lands of Sumer, exploring there; and so, in slow centuries, around each of these new focal points, the Archaic culture grew into a strange new flower, with petals and pistils of different colour and shape, but the same roots and stalk. Agriculture was its basis, the bait that drew primitive man to apparent security of existence and actual slavery—worship of its dead and mummified King its central rite, the search for Life-Givers its principal urge.

From very early times in various parts of the Palæolithic world Man had associated life-giving functions with various objects and qualities—the cowrie shell had an obvious resemblance to that “humble portal through which we all enter the world.” It was prized accordingly, and strung in necklaces by the Magdalenians and their compeers of Europe. So were the teeth of animals—strength-giving—and beads of such material as red carnelian—partaking of the qualities of blood, which Early Man believed to be the essence of life. These symbolic saviours with the coming of civilization were added to, and the vision of symbolic salvation greatly enlarged. Shells in ancient Egypt came to be imitated in the light and durable material of gold—so that, in conjunction with the obvious life-giving properties of the sun, to which gold had an acute resemblance, gold itself came to be prized as the supreme life-giver, and was sought accordingly. So was malachite—green, the colour of the new-coming crops. So was jade—with, as we shall see, a possibly close connection to the growth of civilization in America.

Rearing their great megalithic monuments in varying shapes but all with the same initial idea, mummi-

fyng their dead or remembering that practice in various debased forms, settling ever on the sites of apparent gold-fields, pearling beds, or other repositories of Life-Giving objects, the prospectors of the Archaic civilization penetrated far and wide into the countries of the Food-gathering peoples. These in time themselves took to agriculture, upbuilt their state religions, modified the superstructure of the Archaic culture in their own likeness, and sent abroad their own travellers and prospectors in the unceasing search for gold and precious stones.

By about 2500 B.C. the prospectors of the Archaic civilizations of Central Asia were opening up the gold-fields of the Yenesei in Siberia—whence, as we have seen, Dr. Hrdlička and others have good reason to believe the first Amerindians had originated long before.

Nor, as we have also concluded, is it likely that that communication had ceased, however slowly and irregularly men wandered northwards now in a climate again with a great chill upon it. But civilization spread on, conquering the world, slow millennium on millennium. Boats reached the northern, as the southern Pacific. Half a millennium in advance of the Christian era it is possible that the first Asiatic prospectors were paddling and sailing their boats across the narrowed passages to the now detached Aleutian Islands, to Alaska, even making longer coastings than that, till they touched the Californian coast. The Polynesian was abroad in the Pacific, with the Archaic prospectors in his midst or following at his heels, reaching further and further from Asia, year on year, to Hawaii, Tahiti, and Easter Island, those furthest outposts of Oceania.

Beyond these islands lay the Americas.

iii. *The Archaic Culture in Central America*

At Cuicuilco, near Coyoacan, in the Valley of Mexico, Dr. Byrom Cummings (31) in 1923 carried

out a series of excavations and calculations in and regarding the remains of an ancient culture buried there. At Cuicuilco there had occurred an extensive inundation of molten lava, covering the original soil from a distance of ten to fifteen feet. Underneath this crust lay traces of an extensive settlement—house-walls, graves, artifacts of various sorts and conditions, all now recognized by the Americanist as belonging to the Archaic civilization in America.

In its almost undeviating characteristics this culture is the most widespread, as it is the most ancient, of any on the American continent : domestic pottery of a crude sort was made ; “ neolithic ” tools were made ; squat human figurines were modelled in clay ; basket-work was in use ; and maize was planted and cultivated.

Two things are to be noted regarding this eruption in the hunter-and-fisher life of the Amerindians : the uniformity of the Archaic civilization and the impossibility of attempting any dating of it except in such places as Coyoacan. There are Amazonian and Guianan peoples who are still at the Archaic stage of culture : but we may fairly presume that they were by no means at that stage when the despairing inhabitants of Antique Cuicuilco watched the volcano overwhelm their settlement. Similarly, the Mound-Builders and pueblo-dwellers of Northern America were at a stage of culture when the Europeans reached America which was, for all practical purposes, Archaic. But in their own history and legends their cultural ancestors had come from the south in no very remote times, bringing—this especially marked—the practice of agriculture. And—a third complication—the small cinerary vessels and figurines found at various degenerate cultural sites in Central America, products of the descendants of a people whose ancestors had reached a much higher command of technique, differ hardly at all from the pottery productions of the Archaic civilization.

In this fine confusion of terms and appearances, a wary scepticism of two things is necessary: the datings applied to the Archaics; the very term Archaic as applied to many sites.

Dr. Cummings computes the period of the remains under the black lava flow of Coyoacan as between 3000 and 2000 B.C. But, as we saw in the case of Waldeck's tree-rings, such apparently conclusive calculations are apt to be quite arbitrary. Lava is as lava does. To presume its age from the appearance of a deposit and the calculated periods of activity of a volcano is allowable only in dealing with vast ranges of geologic time, when a lapse of a few thousand years one way or the other is taken as the ordinary possible fault of the calculation. For calculating inside that period of pre-history which is definitely associated with a not too remote period of actual human history elsewhere, it is a method of appraisal, not a factually based result. And the fact that only discreet and disingenuous juggling with figures based on rates of mould-deposit and the like unchancy evidences provide the Archaic culture elsewhere in America with an antiquity so remote, lends considerable doubt as to the validity of Dr. Cummings' figures.

It is extremely improbable that the cultural deposits at Coyoacan or similar sites greatly antedate the Christian era. Culture was late in arriving in America. The exact century of its coming, the methods of its impingement upon the Amerindian primitive—of these things we have as yet little or no knowledge, despite the megaliths of Alaska and the beginnings of building in Mexico and the Central American area. We may picture the coming of boats and trekking travellers amid the astounded gapings of the native hunter, the settling of the Asiatic-Polynesian prospectors around this and that river-bed where pearls were to be found, where gold was to be dug, the setting up at each halting-place of those unremitting elements of the Archaic culture so strangely twisted

and diversified and added to since they left, four thousand years before, their home in the Nile Valley: the dual rule, the mummification of the dead ruler, the ceremonial revivification of that ruler. The basis of its life was agricultural, but the basis of its religion quite arbitrary and agriculturally unwarranted to the same degree in America as in Egypt, Sumeria or India. (Dr. W. J. Perry (32) has ably demonstrated this in his study of the religious life of a North American tribe which late in history absorbed mixed elements of the Archaic and Mayoid culture.) Asia was speedily forgotten, the chance immigrants married and interbred and founded settlements with the primitives; and reared their idols of stick and stone, and died and left to a mixed breed to carry on that antique science grounded in all on fable but for the one basic fact that drew the primitive into these settlements—the fact of agriculture and its yield.

Arising from a common source and method, as we have seen, that agriculture based itself in the Old World on whatever edible cereal was ready to hand and cultivable. Men learned the growing of barley from the obvious processes of Nature: they imitated Nature. But later their eyes were sharpened to other possibilities, they saw the possibility of moulding and re-testing plants to make them the basis of a racial food-life. In Crete and Asia Minor the agriculturists long familiar with the growing of barley and millet tested and cultivated intensely the wild plant which became wheat—not wheat as we know it, but originally of a much inferior quality. So in India, in China, the rice and similar plants were taken into cultivation, till, in a more suitable and native environment, they rose superior to the immigrants' plant-foods from which the natives had learned the whole art and mystery of agriculture. Out in the wastes of the Pacific the Polynesians, as is proved from many lingual and traditional evidences (33), brought with them the knowledge of that rice-cultivation. They

abandoned it for the easier cultivation of the bread-fruit : the essence was the easy growth, cultivation, and eating, not the plant.

Beyond the furthest Polynesian isles came the new immigrants to America—America without cultivable bread-fruit, and consequently raising in the immigrant mind hazy memories of the sowing and selection of other seed. Agriculture was the basis and necessity of their lives, those immigrant explorers, and in Central America their expert eyes saw possibilities in a certain plant.

This was some species of the *teosinte*, or wild maize itself, though, as Dr. Gann says, " The gap between *teosinte* and cultivated maize is, it must be admitted, an exceedingly wide one." And goes on to say : " And it must have taken many centuries to evolve the one from the other " (34).

We are justified in doubting the correctness of this last statement, especially if the original wild maize of Archaic times differed considerably from the wild-growing *teosinte* of to-day. But it is worth while here noticing a remarkable fact, apparently never apprehended by the historians of the older school, who denied all cultural communication between Asia and America : The *teosinte*, or other cultivable grasses, grow wild and meagre heads of corn, hardly likely to have so much as tempted the wandering hunter to gather a handful for occasional chewing. How came it that those hunters, unaided, un-urged by alien thought or system, said to themselves, " If we take these plants and assiduously cultivate them for six centuries—at the end of that time we will procure a worth-while food-plant, maize " ?

It is a possibility too fantastic to need more than passing mention. Agriculture was a science and an art : only an adept could initiate other primitives than the Nilotic, whom Nature herself initiated in a peculiar and never-repeated fashion. Maize in America was obviously taken and cultivated by the nameless immigrants after much scrutiny and search-

ing of the wild grasses of the new continent. It did not grow wild in California or North Mexico: its home was the Mexican plateau or Central America. Those Asiatic prospectors to North America who came seeking Life-Givers and bringing all the paraphernalia of their cult, sought and found the Life-Givers and departed, or failed to find and departed, leaving no fixed and permanent mark on the economic life of the natives, though much on the cultural and social. Lack of a cultivable food-plant retarded and probably killed the direct Asian-brought Archaic culture in the north.

In the south it was quite otherwise. Maize was cultivated, albeit sparsely and inefficiently: settlements, as that of Coyoacan, were reared: the wandering groupings of hunters and fishers were tamed to the half-practice of agriculture in the course of another five hundred years: the search for Life-Givers in America was intensified in a search for jade and similar stones, with a similar appearance of life-giving—greenness, growth. . . . And from there the picture dims.

Doubtlessly the king-priests ruled in their little domains, the people sweated at agriculture and worshipped their crudely carved gods and mummified their kings till knowledge of the practice was lost, and became in time no more than the secure keeping of the wampum-bundles that long figured in American magic and mystery. The transmuted and twisted tales of the great solar gods were treasured and told all over Central America and a great part of Mexico; it was a social life and ritual that enshrined in its tradition many an alien importation, as Mr. Donald A. Mackenzie (35) and Mr. Wilfrid Jackson have shown (36). It remembered milk as a divine drink, though there were no domesticated cattle in America. It regarded the cowrie shell, once the amulet of the Magdalenian, as a precious symbol. It moulded its art techniques on bone and wood and occasionally stone; but, compared with the civilizations that

developed from the sweeping and breaking waves of culture flowing in the greater spaces and more magnanimous agricultural lands of the Old World, it was a civilization singularly limited and lame.

III

RISE OF THE MAYA OLD EMPIRE

i. *Origins*

THE Maya of to-day are a people of typical Amerindian characteristics, though possibly with a tincture of "Caucasian" or rather Mediterranean blood (29) dating from pre-Columbian times. To judge by the evidence provided by the minor figures on the great stelæ presently to be described (the lowlier priests and servants pictured on the frescoes of Palenque for example), the modern Maya differs but little from his remote ancestor on whose shoulders was upbuilt the magnificence of the Maya Old Empire. He is short and rather squat of figure, with small hands and feet, robust and strong and untiring, with a skin-colouring varying up the dun shades from deep brown to a quite "Caucasian" whiteness. The hair is the usual coarse black hair of the Amerindian, a horse-like hair which nevertheless lends itself well to the more ceremonial fashions of hairdressing. The eyes are wide, with large pupils, are generally brown, and have in good measure that staring vacancy which the stelæ portraits possess and which was probably a physical characteristic of the ancient sub-race of the Empire, not merely an artistic canon. They are a broad-headed people, and speak an agglutinative tongue which, to judge by various evidences, was once much more widely-spread than it is now, as, indeed, the race itself possibly was. This tongue possesses a variety of dialects, as the race possesses a variety of tribes, but these appear to be rather the differentiations and classifications wrought by history than the condition of the people when history opened.

Accepting the correlation of the calendar dates on the ancient stelæ as worked out by Lehmann, it may be said that Maya written history opens with the year A.D. 424. This is the date inscribed (a day in Katun 6 of Baktun 8 in Maya chronology) on a small

greenstone figurine discovered in the vicinity of San Andres Tuxtla in the state of Vera Cruz. The next dated record so far discovered is that on a stela in the great site of Uaxactun, remotely four hundred miles to the south, and dated 168 years later.

This poses the pretty problem of the origin of the Maya, and a few of the current theories on the subject may be noted here—theories for the most part attempting, with more enthusiasm than success, to postulate the growth of Maya civilization in a section of America remote from its efflorescence. If outside cultural impulse is denied, this is a necessity. For in the great area of the Maya Old Empire that civilization has the appearance of uprising, like Athena from the head of Zeus, young, yet fully-grown and equipped.

Dr. Morley (20) concludes that the Maya originators of the Old Empire civilization were a nomadic (hunter-and-fisher, primitives, in fact, though this word is probably exiled from Dr. Morley's vocabulary as an invention of "Smith's" [20]) tribe with its wandering habitat the Gulf Coast plain of Mexico, between Tuxpan and the Panuco River. Here for long ages they lived the bare and desperate existence of a people unacquainted with agriculture: in their situation they were unacquainted with even the agriculture of the old Archaic civilization.

The primitive existence was neither hard nor bare: what led the primitive to the ready adoption of agriculture was probably the fact that man is not merely a flesh-eating animal, but, by structure and intention, an omnivorous one. Dr. Morley's Maya lacked vegetables and cereal dishes, those essential morning delicacies of all cultural epochs in America: there is no proof that they lacked cutlets.

Down on those lowly people, the proto-Maya of Dr. Morley, there descended a wave of immigrants from the highlands of Mexico, people in possession of the Archaic culture, its arts and methods, and especially its knowledge of agriculture. Their descent trans-

formed the hungry Maya from free hunters into unfree land-serfs, with leisure to cultivate the sciences and arts. This they proceeded to do. But with corn and agricultural knowledge (to enlarge on Dr. Morley's thesis), population grew. Or famine appeared. Or there was war. Or the genius of the race beheld in a vision the Old Empire awaiting them there in the virgin South. Gathering up such goods and chattels as were appropriate to their time, the Maya set forth on their trek to greatness.

En route, they invented and developed their script and calendar. By the time they passed the neighbourhood of San Andres Tuxtla, they were carving and inscribing greenstone figures and mislaying them as clues for later archæologists. Abandoning the Tuxtla specimen, they disappeared into the wilds of Central America, paid heed neither to the left hand nor to the right of the many suitable and pleasant positions for building sites that lay all around their trek : but pushed on, and at last, in the Peten district, coming to a site which lacked both water and most other amenities, halted and proceeded to develop their culture, culminating in the first of the Old Empire cities, Uaxactun.

This remarkable theory, set forth by one of the greatest living Americanists, requires a careful if brief survey. Maya speech, as we have noted previously, once extended much further abroad than the mere region of the Old Empire. It prevailed among the Totanac people of the province of Vera Cruz, among the Huasteca of the Panuco Valley in Mexico—the people of the Tamarind Land. “ But the entire absence, in the Totanac and Huastec areas, of monuments bearing inscriptions in the characteristic Maya hieroglyphs provides evidence that these peoples played no part in the great cultural development [of the old Empire] ” (11).

Unfortunately, the fact that the barbarous Huasteca and Totanaca resided to the north of the Old Empire area is no proof that the Old Empire

builders originated from the north, and developed their civilization as they came south; for to the west and south-west of the Old Empire lay the territory of the barbarous Quiché and Kaxchiquel, also almost entirely lacking possession of the higher marks of Maya civilization. If there had ever been a civilizing southwards march of the "Maya" from the north, these tribes that are later found remote in the south must have shared it. And only racial amnesia would explain the complete absence of its influence in their primitive buildings and sculpture. Further, it must be borne in mind that, if cultural rise depends (as the more antique school of Americanists insist) on an appropriate cultural locality, all the "barbarian" tribes of Mayance blood and speech were in a much better position to set about the creation of a high civilization than the Old Empire Maya, buried in densely forested land which was to be freed from the grip of the trees and cultivated only with labour and pain. Nor is the Tuxtla statuette very much to the point: A Swiss watch found in the Congo is no proof for a Central African origin of the Swiss. It merely proves one of a dozen things—a stray Swiss has passed through the Congo, a purchaser of a Swiss watch has passed through the Congo, the Congo witnessed the passing of a trader in Swiss watches, and so forth.

Dr. Gann regards (34), or once regarded (37), the Old Empire Maya as the actual descendants of the Archaic peoples of the Mexican highlands. These descended to the Panuco Valley, and there behaved in much the same fashion as Dr. Morley's Archaic-influenced Maya—"abandoned a warm climate, a fertile soil, and a plentiful and easily procured food supply," to hasten southwards, like gangsters in a detective story, to the conquest of the Maya Old Empire tract, dropping *en route* the same clue as before.

Again, it is difficult to guess any reason for this migration, or why what was (judging from their

subsequent achievements) the flower of the Proto-Maya race should desert fertile Panuco and seek a new home in the unhappily-forested centre of the great antique triangle. As with Dr. Morley's theory, this of Dr. Gann's is built almost entirely on the negligible evidence of the Tuxtla statuette.

Mr. T. A. Joyce believes that the civilization of the Old Empire was evolved in the regions where it is found, even though there are no traces of a period when the script and calendar were in a primitive state. The calendar, in mathematical concept, at least, appears as highly developed in the first inscriptions as in the last. Other theories derive either the Ancient Maya or the originators of the Ancient Maya civilization from the Mound Builders of the Mississippi (18), whose culture is undoubtedly later in the time-scale than that of the great triangle, and from "Antilia" a fragment of ruined Atlantis which is supposed to have survived into the third century B.C. (38). Were there any truth in this supposition, we would surely find Yucatan the earliest portion of Central America colonized by the Atlantean refugees, and the West Indies with some surviving ruins and inscriptions. . . . A very complete and amusing summary of the fantastic theories which seek to account for the rise of the Maya and other Amerindian civilizations is set forth by Dr. J. Imbelloni in a recent book (33).

The scientific historian, unbound by the nineteenth century superstition of the independent evolution of cultures, is under no necessity either to create imaginary continents where the essentials of Maya civilization may be brewed, or to set the Maya nations on unlikely and fantastic marches—marches whereon they left no other mark of their trek than a minor statuette. Recognizing all racial histories as the living parts of an organic whole, his task in viewing the rise of the Maya civilization is to seek for causes both American and extra-American, and set forth the probable urges, native and foreign,

which led to the great cultural flowering on the low lands that slope from the Cordilleras.

In spite of the comparative fewness of its deposits in the actual area, there can be little doubt but that the great forested triangle was, from early in the Christian era, the habitat of a number of tribes organized according to the social customs of that Archaic culture which circled the globe from China to Peru: though neither of these countries was the focal point of its origin. The forests were cleared in mild patches for the growth of the maize plant—a plant selected and nourished by the earliest Archaic immigrants. The tribesmen were civilized, in the sense that they were dwellers in villages with a definite social organization, a cult, and doubtlessly a priesthood. Nearly all of the sites are sites such as we expect of the explorers and missionaries of the Archaic civilization—they are near to beds of Givers of Life, pearls in the Copan River—gold in the Peten lands. Some of the sites, indeed, appear associated with no “life-giving” deposits at all. But it seems probable that they had been settled for nearness to surface-workings of gold and copper (also a Giver of Life) which speedily became exhausted, or at least were exhausted throughout the industrial stress of the Old Empire’s millennium of existence.

This Archaic people, heritors of a culture stretching from the highlands of Mexico to Bolivia in South America, compiled from a strange medley of drift-age washed across the Pacific, appear to have been, like their successors the builders of the great monuments of the Maya sites, a people lacking possession of metal tools. Stone was still the implement, now polished, now a “palæolith.” North of the great triangle, in Mexico, there seems little doubt but that the Archaic culture was already rearing primitive trilithons and making chambered barrows for its dead: south, in the region of the Panama neck, the Coclè culture marks the final

development of the Archaic as seized and transformed by native American genius (39). But the life of the great inverted triangle was possibly a languishing one until close upon the fifth or sixth centuries A.D.

A description of the principal architectural and sculptural characteristics of the Maya ruins that survive from those centuries is a prerequisite to any attempt at determining the origin of the architects and sculptors. Prior to the rise of the modern historic school of research such investigations were apt to lead the investigator who looked beyond America for origins into such quagmires of supposition as speedily bogged whatever track of truth he followed. For Sumer, Egypt, or the Polynesian Islands to have laid directly the seeds of the Central American civilization with their own cultural capital only to hand, is as absurdly impossible as for the Maya culture to have arisen, in all the glory of its mathematical, artistic attainments, from the murky deeps of the Archaic times.

ii. *The Ancient Stone-built Sites*

The most ancient of the great city-complexes so far discovered in the Old Maya area is that of Uaxactun in north-eastern Guatemala; or, to speak more cautiously, it bears the earliest date of any of the inscriptions in a Maya city which is apparently connected with an event contemporaneous to the sculptor who carved it.

This date is 8.14.10.13.15.8 Men 8 Kayab, according to that Maya calendar which awaits description in a future section; and this, according to the correlation of Christian and Maya dates adopted throughout this book, was on the 16th of June, A.D. 592. It is carved on a large monolith, a much-worn stele uprising more than nine feet above the ground; it stands solitarily bearing the date and the undecipherable glyphs that companion it, a true

landmark in history, and as enigmatic as it is unique. For these great sculptured blocks of stone were erected in Maya cities to commemorate the passage of certain periods in the calendar—twenty, ten, and five “year” periods. The Uaxactun stela is an exception, uneven in its numbers of days and months, and therefore generally imagined to have been erected to commemorate some political event of outstanding importance.

But this is by no means certain: it may mark no more than the end of a period of irregular datings, the commencement of a new era of rule or computation. It is certainly not the oldest stela even in Uaxactun, though bearing the oldest deciphered date. Near the stela stands a circular altar roughly hewn from the remains of an older stela, overturned, the carved figures upon it partly obliterated in the attempt to shape it into an altar.

Around the great abandoned site, thick and almost impenetrable, a blue-green haze in the intenser heats of the day, stands the forest. It is a rainless land for the greater part of the year, and there is no natural water-supply in the vicinity, other than a small water-hole. This, in the rainy season, expands into a fair-sized pond; in the hot season it is a discouraged, stagnant pool. No doubt in the days when Uaxactun flourished at its apogee there were other water-supplies, long lost to the sight of men, perhaps several of those carved water-cellars, chultunes, discovered elsewhere in the limestones of the Maya area. But certainly the settlers at Uaxactun, if an agricultural people settling in a spot that seemed propitious for them to lead their agricultural life, were either singularly obtuse or singularly afflicted with ophthalmia. They settled there, there can be little doubt, for quite other reasons than agricultural well-being.

The architectural ruins at Uaxactun may be divided into two main sections. The largest and most loftily-placed, the so-called Capitol of Uaxactun,

crowns the summit of a small natural pyramid. In the antique times this hill was doubtlessly artificially planed of its top and the sides cut into seemly shape. On this summit is reared the ruins of that complex of temples, plazas, stone long-houses miscalled palaces, and open courts with carved stelæ which doubtlessly dominated Uaxactun both architecturally and politically in the city's heyday. It was a High Place in several senses. Here, to judge by the evidences, lived their ceremonial lives the ministers to the agricultural life which was the basis of Maya economy—the priests, the priest-rulers, the sacrificers, the astronomer-mathematicians, the priestly architects and designers. In that remote heyday, with alien strange eyes and alien strange minds (to ours) they must have glanced up occasionally from the busiedness of the day-to-day, when the evening winds came, and have seen below them the lowly thatched city of the plebs stretching around for great distances, probably in orderly streetings, the smoke of the evening cooking rising up still and blue in the air and setting a haze on the bright green of the maize plantations: plantations which possibly encircled the city for many miles.

Did the members of the antique ruling caste from their temples on the Capitol look away from the sunset in those evenings, they would have seen rise to the east the second great temple-plaza complex of their city. Grouped around a central court, with altars and carved and inscribed monoliths, the temples stand on the usual pyramidal sub-structures, now crumbling in ruin, no building still roofed, the luxuriant vegetation twining amidst the carving and the stones. The whole complex is oriented, with the temples to the east and west of the central court recording the positions at which the sun rose at the Spring and Autumn equinoxes, and at the Summer and Winter solstices.

The three temples in a line on the eastern side of the court were dedicated in an unmistakable manner.

Under the altars in each were found a number of votive offerings, carved pottery, objects made from the "life-giving" jade, and several human heads. It is with the discovery of such objects as those heads that the mind of the modern investigator is abruptly jolted from the hypnosis of measuring and assessment, seeing no mere vanished ancient civilization inferior to his own, still on a line with our own. He looks into the dark caverns of an aberrant philosophy of long-vanished dreads and certainties.

Those Uaxactun buildings had no windows, no chimneys, and apparently no doors. Certainly there were no hinged doors. Possibly awnings of cotton or reed-work took their place. At their best they must have been tenebrous places, though probably lightened by coatings of paint, by tapestry of feather-work or the like. Of comfort for the theocratic inhabitants of the long-house there could have been, according to modern standards, little. Of their furniture directly we know nothing, though a little we can guess from the representations of it carved at other sites, notably Menchè-Yaxchilan. There were ornamented couches, possibly of stone, more probably of the hard sapote-wood. Leathers of deerskin and the like doubtlessly softened their contours. The table was an unknown amenity. Some kind of store-cupboards the calculations and parchments of the priestly astronomers and mathematicians certainly must have required. As we shall see later in a consideration of the Maya mastery of the technique of wood-carving, there is no very good reason for supposing an inability to supply, at least in the religious and semi-religious buildings, the cruder forms of furnishings.

Uaxactun's first date was the 16th of June, A.D. 592. The last dated inscription so far found equates to the Christian year, A.D. 1163. Consequently, if the dates of habitation coincided with the dates of the inscriptions, Uaxactun was occupied for over five hundred and seventy years. But it is obvious, from the case of the stela made

into an altar, that it was occupied long anterior to the period of "recorded" history, so to speak. And there is the possibility that long after the cessation of the dated inscriptions some part at least of the antique city remained occupied.

Fifteen or sixteen miles south-west of Uaxactun, and in the same densely-forested region, stands the greatest in size of all the Maya cities. This is Tikal, where the earliest date recorded is 9.0.10.0.0, or A.D. 709. From direct evidence, this would mean that Tikal was founded just over 120 years after the foundation of Uaxactun. But again there is the possibility that Tikal may have been contemporaneous with Uaxactun from the beginning. They were the great Twin Cities of the triangle, perhaps held together in that curious social condition, the dual organization, that sprang up all the world over in the trail of the Archaic civilization.

Tikal appears to have been definitely the senior partner, with evidences of the greater wealth, if wealth in any sense could have been understood in those days and in that culture. Maya architecture here almost outstrips its own limitations. The buildings tower with serene arrogance, strongly-founded and secure, each temple with walls of immense thickness that have resisted the encroach of time better than those of any other site, Palenque excepted. The city is an ordered maze of quadrangular plazas, clustered around by temples and long-houses, each and all of those buildings standing upon the characteristic pyramidal elevation, faced with steep—at Tikal very steep: ascent to worship or sleep under religious or other emotion must have been a perilous passage—steps. The five main temple roofs are surmounted by high roof combs, hollow, forming small chambers above the main temples, and perhaps used for the storing of the city treasures, the temple more esoteric apparatus, or the like. Tikal is the City of the Three Hills, natural elevations which the ancient builders, indefatigably sky-seeking, terraced with



TIKAL : SMALL "TEMPLE" ON CHARACTERISTIC
PYRAMIDAL FOUNDATION
(Old Empire)

By permission of the trustees of the British Museum

stone and shore of their crowns in order to erect on these their great stone buildings. From those hills in the days of the city's greatness a wide view of the surrounding country must have been obtained, across the spreading streets of the common houses to the mile on mile concentric stretches of maize cultivation. Probably the forest hardly existed at all then : it had been beaten back. At morning or noon, fifteen miles away, Uaxactun's Capitol gleamed in the rays of the sun.

The art of wood carving appears to have been developed at Tikal as at none of the other Old Empire sites. Either this was through the peculiar cultural bent of the inhabitants, or chance has preserved the wood-work of Tikal from ruin and the white ant, while elsewhere these two have combined to destroy the carved lintels of sapote-wood and the beams traced with surface incisions of gods, men, plants and unnameable grotesqueries.

The last dated inscription found at Tikal is 10.2.000, A.D. 1133, so that, to judge by the monuments, the city was occupied for four and a quarter centuries. But from other evidences there is good reason to suppose that it was occupied, at least spasmodically, for a long period after its apparent desertion.

Round the Uaxactun-Tikal complex are a number of small sites, extending northwards towards the borders of Yucatan. In the region of Lake Bakhahal lies the most curious of these, Tzibanchè, discovered by Dr. Gann, with no certain date but a most curious architectural aberration. Maya building was always a matter more of imposing external appearance than comfort and commodiousness within. Here appearance has devoured commodiousness to such an extent that some temples, immense from outward appearance, are so narrow within that two people cannot pass abreast. This is aberration or inventive poverty at its worst. Undated, Tzibanchè is nevertheless an obviously degenerate site, or one hastily erected

when the original cultural impulses had declined severely.

A glance at the map will show that at the extreme western end of the great inverted triangle lay the city of Palenque. It contains but a single stela, or sculptured monolith, and that with the earliest date so far discovered at this site, 9.10.10.0.0., or A.D. 897. If the dated inscriptions are to be trusted, it was not occupied for at least three hundred years after the foundation of Uaxactun. But on all evidences from artistic criteria (doubtful aids though these may be), it had a much earlier existence. Palenque appears as the Athens of the Old Empire, a great city where art flourished as now here else in the Central Americas. Stephens and Catherwood, coming upon it nearly a hundred years ago, stood astounded in its courts and before its "palace," the great single-storied building standing on the summit of the usual truncated hill. They found it, as it stands to-day, surrounded by an inner and outer gallery, and within a maze of chambers, corridors, and open courts. Here the Maya rulers may have known elegance and comfort as well as grandeur: there are even slots in the stone walls for the raising and erection of canopies against the blaze of the sun. Between the builders of the "Palace" of Palenque and the builders of Tzibanché there is the difference between soaring imagination and cerebral decay.

Hard by this great long-house is the famous three-storied tower, the only one of its kind in the Old Empire area. What was it? A watch-tower, an elevation for surveying the city, an astronomer's observatory? There is no definite answer to these questions, though a multitude of theories.

Round the great long-house, and each elevated on their pyramidal structures, stand various temples, the so-called Temples of the "Cross" and the "Sun" the most famous of those. Stucco was the blessing and bane of Palenque architectural decoration. The Palenque artist moulded in stucco rather than carved

in stone. Palace and temple exterior walls and entrances were set with rich friezes of robed figures—portrait figures, they seem, doubtlessly painted and glowing once, now greyed and faded. But the wall-panels in the temples of the "Cross" and the "Sun," representing sacrificing priests in the act of adoration before an indefinite deity, show a complete mastery in sculptural technique.

Palenque was the great city of the north-west, possibly the outpost of the antique culture for many centuries. The latest recorded date, 9.13.0.0.0. (A.D. 956), seems unlikely to mark the termination of the city's occupancy. This would leave a mere sixty years for the building and decoration of this great complex of buildings, estimated by some observers (for the ground has never been explored completely) to cover a range of eight or nine square miles.

The apex of the great inverted triangle is Copan, the third great city of the Maya Old Empire, on the banks of the Copan River, nearly three hundred miles due south of Uaxactun. Here it was that Stephens and Catherwood stood astounded at such visible marks of an Amerindian civilization; here it is that modern research has revealed the deeper intellectual qualities of that civilization in the unearthing and re-orienting of the pointers of the giant sundial formed by carven monoliths on the hills above the city.

The oldest date recorded on the Copanec inscriptions is 9.1.0.0.0., or A.D. 719. The temples and long-houses have little of the state of preservation of Uaxactun or Tikal or Palenque. They are roofless and their walls in most cases levelled with the ground. The great glory of the city is its series of (apparent) portrait statues carved on and from, as technique developed, the monoliths erected to mark the passage of the 5, 10, and 20 "year"-periods previously mentioned. The ruins show a maze of pyramids with great stairways leading to platforms whence the temples have long disappeared, courts littered with broken stelæ, altars carved in andesite, apparently

with greenstone chisels, for no metal tools have ever been discovered. At Copan more than at any other Maya site, the progress of the technique of the sculptor is observable. The last dated inscription is 9.18.10.00., or A.D. 1064.

Roughly within the area of this great triangle lie all the other important sites of the Old Empire, some older in dated inscriptions than Palenque or Copan, none older than Tikal or Uaxactun. With exceptions now to be noted, they repeat, in greater or lesser degree, the features of the three principal sites. North of Copan lies the city of Quirigua, perhaps a cleruchy of Copan, and justly celebrated for its great Zoomorphic monuments. It consists of the usual plaza-centre, the city, but in Quirigua's case of immense range, a range of eight hundred feet by two hundred feet. On its southern extremity rise groups of temples, on the usual substructures; northwards is a single large temple; and to east and west are mounds of many ruins and here and there a standing wall marking the size and importance of the site in its heyday. Its stelæ are of immense size, though not of such fine technique as those of Copan. One is, perhaps, thirty-five feet in height, projecting twenty-six feet from the ground, a truly heroic statue with its two dropping-eyed, sad-faced figures—bearded, in ceremonial garb and attitude, bearing axe and shield. And here, the only sculptured monolith of its kind, is the giant Earth-monster, a solid boulder of stone, of the estimated weight of three tons, measuring 9 feet 8 inches by 11 feet 6 inches, and 7 feet 3 inches in height. It is carved to represent a double-head monster familiar to other than American art, as we shall see.

Piedras Negras stands on the Usamacintla River, near the boundary of the Republics of Guatemala and Mexico. The earliest date so far deciphered is 9.8.15.0.0. (A.D. 872). The usual temple-structures, pyramided, are here, and once Piedras Negras must have dominated the Usamacintla of that region as

Pesth the Danube. The remarkable feature of the city, however, is its series of altars and stelæ, thirty-nine in all, recording five-“ year ” period-endings in unbroken sequence. Whatever the social, political, or economic struggles that rose and laid waste the Old Empire elsewhere the priestly astronomers directed, and the sculptors carved, these memorials to Time, undisturbed, for a period thirty-nine times five years.

A little south-west of Piedras Negras stands Menchè-Yaxchilan, built on the side of a low range of hills, and apparently founded around the year A.D. 921. The hills altered the usual configuration of the temple-complexes. The highest range is crowned by a large and small complex of temple buildings, the ruins of twenty buildings litter the north-east slope, six ruined structures rise midway, and the foot of this littered Acropolis is guarded by the shells of eight further structures. Many are almost obliterated, but many also survive in such state of preservation that from Menchè, more than from any other source, we obtain a notion of the sacrificial and ceremonial life of the caste which dominated the Maya Old Empire. Here, on the carved stone lintels of the temples, depicted with the utmost minuteness of detail in regalia and arms, parade the ancient priestly rulers, an occasional captive, an occasional tormented prisoner. Palenque gives the idealized, the artist's vision of Maya life ; Menchè's sculpture has something of the hard, bright foolish truth-to-life of Græco-Roman art. The site has the further remarkable characteristic, remarkable in a culture which seemed to worship Time, of erecting stelæ which appear to contain no date-references.

On the Pusilhà River in British Honduras stands the site to which has been given the same name. The earliest inscriptions record the date 9.7.0.0.0., or A.D. 838. Pusilhà is a clumsily-built and decorated site, needing no special mention but for the fact here was found the underground chamber apparently used by

the ancient inhabitants as the municipal dust-bin. In the Old Empire, where the everyday articles in use among the ancient inhabitants have in most cases long mouldered to powder and dust, Pusilhà's kitchen-midden has supplied a multitude of evidences elsewhere unobtainable. Principal among those midden remains were the stratigraphic layers of pottery, lovely and tastefully-made pottery fragments in great numbers, thin and porcelain-like in texture, covered with the usual glyphs and figurings, painted white, black, red, yellow, and green. Pusilhà's notable lacks in architecture and sculpture may be accounted for on the supposition that it was the Pottery of the Old Empire, over-engaged in industrial pursuits to heed to its appearance.

If this is the case, its near neighbour, Lubaantun (probably, as Tikal to Uaxactun, the Twin City of Pusilhà), appears to have been the Spectacle City of the southern Empire. No datings have been discovered at Lubaantun, and no buildings other than immense pyramids, faced with blocks of cut stone. Possibly those pyramids were the sub-structures of wooden temples and long-houses. The lowest and earliest series of terraces yet discovered, in excavating the pyramids, is in megalithic style—megalithic building is elsewhere unknown in the Old Empire. But more remarkable still is the large, raised surface, in appearance a rectangular arena, which is Lubaantun's unique feature. That it was in close alliance, if not dependence, on Pusilhà, is shown by the fact that both cities share almost identical remains in the matter of figurines and pottery.

This short, and by its nature somewhat arid, listing of cities may now be closed. The reader will find references to other sites in the subsequent text, as the need arises, and while a general consideration of Maya culture is passed under review and an attempt made to trace the origins and beginnings of that culture. But they are minor sites, some of them the merest outposts from such giants as Uaxactun or Yax-

chilan, leading apparently a minor life, dominated by their great and inexplicable neighbours.

It should be noted that, with the doubtful exception of Copan, the names now applied to the ancient sites are modern namings. Palenque is named after the modern village which lies near the ancient ruins. Menchè-Yaxchilan is a site to which two fanciful names have been applied—Menchè after the local Maya tribe, Yaxchilan ("green-stones") after its supposed architectural colouring. But the names used by the antique inhabitants have long vanished from the memories of men.

iii. *Architecture in the Ancient Sites*

The main limits set on the science of the Maya architect in the Old Empire were three in number—lack of a knowledge of the true arch, lack of a knowledge of the bonding of corners, and lack of knowledge of a formula by which to lay off a right angle.

All the stone structures of importance are built on the top of truncated pyramids—pyramids shorn of the apex. The pyramids are stepped, the angles generally square. The shorn surface was levelled off with mortar, the design of the temple, long-house, "palace," or what not traced on the fresh mortar, and the masons set to the task of erecting the walls of the building.

When the stone walls had reached a certain height, the mason, to provide a roof in accordance with the not-unvarying principles of the cantilever (corbelled, vault, "false") arch, commenced to build inwards, each course of stones slightly overlapping that below, till the gap was bridged by a single row of slabs. This was a delicate and skilled operation. The arch stones were cut to special shapes so that gravity would hold them in position, layer on layer, until bonding elements secured their tenons. Additional weight was leant to the arch by means of a

“ roof-comb,” which was, in a sense, the only second storey ever attempted by (or possible to) the Maya architect.

The disadvantage of this cantilever arch is the narrowness which it imposes upon the building, the space below being limited to the span of the arch above. Further, the walls of the building have to be of immense thickness to bear the ponderous weight of the arch. For in the cantilever arch, unlike the true arch, where each stone is self-supporting, the weight of each “ step ” has to be carried by the “ step ” beneath it, finally the entire weight pressing down upon the walls.

These walls were composed of rubble and mortar, faced by a mosaic of small rectangular stones. Painted and fresh, and kept in condition, the buildings must have appeared of imposing solidity. In comparison with some other American architectures, however—that of the Andean peoples, for example—it was a slick jerry-building.

There was certainly some definite system of measurement in use, though its units are now unknown. The line and plumb-bob were used with considerable success. With regard to the very general affirmation that the Old Empire Maya used stone, and stone tools only, both in rearing his buildings and carving his sculptures, Mr. Hyatt Verrill, speaking of a practical test conducted personally among the ruins of the Coclè culture of Panama, makes a disturbing interpellation (39) :

“ On one occasion I selected several hundred stone tools and implements obtained from the site of the Coclè temple, and, outlining a coarse, simple scroll upon a fragment of soft stone which was a portion of an elaborately sculptured column, I set four of my Indians to work upon it with the prehistoric tools. Although the four were unusually intelligent and skilful men, and despite the fact that they worked and laboured diligently for a week, and broke or wore out all of the stone implements, their united efforts

failed to result in any noticeable carving or even in a recognized pattern on the stone."

The Old Empire builder had at hand two methods of roofing : by means of beams and by means of the false arch. The latter was employed in all religious or "theocratic" buildings. The former, possibly, was used extensively in roofing the houses of the higher castes of the population. The proletariat, like the proletariat elsewhere, lived in reed huts and admired in awe the residences of their superiors which they themselves had upraised.

The employment of the false arch gives to Maya buildings the deep entablature which their sculptural artists put to such extensive and varied use. Relief designs on this entablature were either carved on facing blocks, or, as at Palenque, applied in stucco. With the great stone buildings the pyramidal sub-structures were as invariable as the corbelled arch. The reason for this structure the older school of Americanists ascribed to a desire to upraise the buildings into prominence, thus inspiring in the minds of the populace feelings of fear and awe. Dr. T. Gann varies this theory slightly, as does Mr. J. E. Thompson, with the notion that these elevations were a health precaution : elevated, the priestly rulers escaped the densest of the nightly mosquito hordes. In the Americas the pyramidal sub-structures were used far and wide from the Maya area, on the bleak hills of the Andes, on the arid Mexican plateau. The superstition of the mosquito must have spread afar. Mr. T. A. Joyce gives a good account (II) of the more orthodox hypothesis :

"The practice of elevating buildings upon some form of sub-structure (conventionally termed a 'pyramid') was common in the Mayan and Mexican areas from the earliest times, but the American pyramids differ from those of Egypt both in form and function. They are not carried up to a pointed apex, but terminate in a platform upon which a building in stone or wood was erected. The Egyptian

pyramid was itself *the* building—a tomb. The American pyramid was itself an accessory, a platform on which to erect a building or an altar.”

Apart from the square-founded Tower of Palenque, buildings of more than one storey are unknown. Pilasters do not occur until the New Empire—evidently a Toltec importation. At Palenque, for example, they are merely squared wall-sections. The temples and religious buildings vary in size from one, two, and four-chambered structures up to the immense complexity of rooms in the Palenque “Palace.”

Such are the main characteristics of the ancient architecture, and, as the reader will have noted, there are a number of incongruous features. The mathematicians who could calculate to a nicety immense passages of time were incapable of applied mathematics, not only for the construction of the true arch, but for laying off a right angle in simple building. This argues not only a divorcement of theoretical and practical science, but an entire lack of any such thing as a corpus of science. Whatever the examples of such in the Old World (Hero’s theoretical steam-engine, incapable of practical execution in his world, is the best known), there are no such apparent divergences in the cultural life of any other race as in that of the Ancient Maya. Architectural science, so far from appearing to have a spontaneous rise and generation, has every appearance of a bold, skilful, but fundamentally unintelligent imitativeness. This is not to deny its achievements along lines that did not require purely intellectual research: but it is to deny that the architect found his science a living one, part of the general cultural life of his people, growing and spreading and developing. This fact is so obscured in the multitude of publications on Maya art and architecture that it needs repeating that, accepting the datings of the various sites, it is the later and minor sites that show crudity in their architecture, as at Pusilhà, and sometimes positive

unintelligent aberration, as at Tzibanchè. From study of various examples of sculpture, mostly stelæ and mostly at Copan, Dr. S. G. Morley (20) has classified their execution into an Early, Middle, and Great period. No such classification seems possible in the case of the architecture. It springs full-blown, and is presently over-blown.

Its essential basis, the pyramidal sub-structure, is known the world over. It is true, as Mr. T. A. Joyce points out, that the use and purpose of the Egyptian and Mayan buildings are very different. But the Egyptian was not the only form of pyramid known to the Old World: it was merely the *fons et origo* of all Old World pyramidal buildings. The next in age, and that which spread abroad the ancient world, down through India, into Indo-China, into the Oceanic islands, was the ziggurat, the terraced pyramid, which, in Asia as in America, was not "*the building*," but an accessory. The Mesopotamian ziggurat was built on the same pattern and for the same purpose as the Mayan. In the words of Layard: "It is highly probable that one uniform system of building was adopted in the East for sacred purposes, and that these ascending and receding platforms form the general type of the Chaldean and Assyrian pyramid temples."

They formed the general type, as modern research shows, over a much more extensive area. "We have already seen the way in which India received the elements of Western culture both by land and sea. The type of civilization that developed in Southern India exhibits many marks of an original Egyptian inspiration, although the Egyptian elements are intimately interwoven with others of Mesopotamian origin. Long before these Western elements were completely assimilated and had a distinctively Indian character, the stream of cultural diffusion had passed farther East to Burma, Siam, and Cambodia, and the Malay Archipelago" (40).

At Angkor and Angkor-Vat, in Cambodia, the

traveller appears to be in cities that might have been transported from Central America. The Khmer pyramidal sub-structure is also the ziggurat. Remote in the Pacific, the ziggurat was reared in Tahiti, of earth, into the seventeenth century. It was the ground-work of a wooden temple.

Mesopotamian, Cambodian, Tahitian, Mayan pyramidal sub-structures are too definitely of a type, in building and orientation, to leave doubt of



THE "FALSE ARCH" IN
TARENTUM
(Italy.)



THE "FALSE ARCH" IN
PALENQUE
(Old Empire.)

the common inspiration of the architects. This is not to say that they repeat each detail with exactitude, so that the sub-structures of Palenque are exactly those of Babylonia. Each race or nation made its variations according to its tools, its needs, its building material, the size of population yielding a large or small quantity of unskilled but subservient labour. Even so, there are remarkable similarities in detail on detail, similarities which suggest that the Totonac pyramid, reared by the "barbarous" Maya at Papantla, might have been built by the same architect who reared that of the Fimeanacas at

Angkor. The analogy of conception and execution even in minor matters seems conclusive.

The corbelled arch, as we have seen, was the only arch known to the early Maya. By the time they were rearing their greatest temples, Africa and Asia were both long and well acquainted with the true arch. But, as we have seen in the case of the pyramidal sub-structure, there is no reason for presuming that Oceania, with a haughty exclusiveness, refused to accept the lessons of pyramid-building which flowed down from the East Indies, disregarded the lessons, turned its back, and built pyramids of its own design—*of exactly the same design*. Nor is there any reason for imagining that the architects of the Papantlan and Cambodian pyramids were each suddenly, in the dead of night, visited by exactly the same vision of a pyramidal form, and duly put it in execution, each racially ignorant of the cultural existence of the other. So with the case of the cantilever arch, once apparently a fairly widely-spread feature of palace building in the Mediterranean, and of tomb-architecture in ancient Sumer (where, however, the building material, of light brick-work, hastened the discovery of the principles of the true arch). But in the Old World cultural details flowed and eddied, east and west, in a fusion and confusion, as we see in India. The detail of the corbelled arch passed lightly across the Old World scene, hardly halted in Further Asia, and, far from the Argolid structures, found new builders of heavy stone in the Central American clearings.

For nine hundred years those same builders used that arch : there was no evolution, there was no progress, as presently that original culture stream dried up : in the great spaces of the Old World culture waves flowed to and fro from innumerable points, focal points, now that the inspiration was common to all. In the restricted cultural area of America the alien importation of architectural science never took deep theoretical root : it imitated, in essentials, to the end.

iv. Sculptural Art in the Ancient Sites

The sculpture of the ruined cities of the great triangle was concerned primarily with the carving and embellishment of the stelæ set up to mark the passage of certain periods of time, the adornment of the exterior of temples, and the portrayal in relief, as at Palenque, of scenes of a religious or ceremonial significance.

Limestone was the characteristic stone over a great portion of the area, though sandstone and conglomerate were worked in at Quirigua, and andesite at Copan. The carving of figures in dioritic stone was as successfully carried out as in South America, apparently with the aid of stone tools only in the Central American cities, though an admixture of copper and tin, producing bronze, is now admitted for the higher Peruvian cultures.

The commonly accepted stylistic classification of the sculptured stelæ, the most important of all the Old Empire sculptures, those monuments to Time and debatable gods or their servitors, divides them into works of the Early Period, up to 9.10.0.0.0. (A.D. 897), the Middle Period, up to 9.15.0.0.0. (A.D. 995), and the Great Period, to the end of the art efflorescence in the Old Empire (A.D. 1163).

Copan illustrates this growth of the sculptor's technique in the fullest way. A Middle Period stela, Stela P at Copan, is separated by a stretch of some 160 years of cultural history from Stela H, and the sculptor's progress in that period is sure and definite. Stela P is a relief framed in a pillar, it is a statue carved by an artist still insufficiently sure of his art to desert the basic block of the stone. In Stela H that fear is almost gone: the statue almost walks forth from the block, it commands and dominates the stone. Nevertheless, it is still tied to the stela.

In the first stela there is a certain crudeness, and uncertainty, if also a dark, surgent life: the face has a brooding humility that is strangely effective.



MONOLITHIC SCULPTURE: THE "ARCHAIC PHASE" AT COPAN
(Old Empire)

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Lacking in technical execution though it is, it is by no means the first attempt in stone of a sculptor climbing the rungs of progress unaided. The *concept* is mature, quite as mature as the concept in Stela H. Of the portraits themselves one is cold humility, one is cold and magnificent arrogance. They possibly shrine a great political change as well as show a great artistic advance. But they do not show any such advance in concept as that which lies between the finest productions of Archaic art and the earliest stelæ themselves.

Sometimes the great stelæ are sculptured on only one side, sometimes on two alternate faces. Whatever the sculpture, the glyphic explanatory matter is never absent, even in the magnificence of Stela H. The glyphs were the important things, one guesses, the portrayed gods or priests fitted the event for which the date required inscription.

Stela H measures 12 feet in height, by 3 feet 3 inches in breadth, heroic proportions of a heroic figure. The "statue," the colossal figure which actually seems to bear the stela, though the reverse is of course the case, occupies the front of the block, with a heavy, un-Mayan face, broad-browed, full-cheeked, thick-lipped, with rounded chin and wide, cold eyes. It is a powerful and haughty face. The ears are distended to receive great plugs, the ear-plugs of the Americas, and the figure is richly clad in a full-skirt, belted and tasselled and decorated in what appears a bewildering complexity of detail. But the essentials of belt, skirt, and "sporrán" may be made out with careful scrutiny, as indeed they can be made out on every other stela. The sporrans of the stelæ are of particular interest—with the appearance of small pouches, the flaps decorated by grotesque heads. The sides of Stela H are deeply carved, and with consummate skill, bearing a sprawl of subsidiary figures. From the high and elaborate head-dress the fringing feather tassels fall down the sides and back. At the

rear is a mask with the Kin-sign on its forehead—a mask bearing a striking resemblance to that of the rear figure in the double-headed Earth-Monster at Quirigua. Over the mask is poised that strange commingling of antique monster and decorative design which is generally referred to as the Serpent-Bird, the mark of the God Quetzalcoatl. The inscription in glyphs, towards the foot of the stela, gives a date regarding which there is considerable uncertainty, for it lacks Introductory Glyph or Initial Date. But it is probably 9.17.12.9.9. 4 Ahau, 18 Muan (A.D. 778).

The bewildering complexity of ornamentation, the superabundance of detail on this masterpiece of Ancient American statuary, is characteristic. Design and spacing and execution are admirable: but there is too much design. It is an effloration of the sculptor's mastery of technique. But it must be borne in mind that most of the stelæ were probably painted, as were the temples, and in varying colours, so that in the days following its execution Stela H must have dominated its plaza in Copan, with the great central figure not fading back in the wilderness, the stone jungle of accessory details, but standing out in bold relief from a colourful and unconfusing background.

This fact complicates a consideration of the Maya sculptor's technique. Nevertheless, at its best, it was probably unsurpassed anywhere else in the world with regard to purity of line. To desert the stelæ and note the best example in low relief, as opposed to the high relief of the statues, is to travel from Copan to the North-western corner of the triangle, to the co-called " Temple of the Sun " at Palenque. This relief, as previously mentioned, shows two sacrificing priests on either side of a spear-slung emblem, apparently the face of the Gorgon-like sun-god. The carving of these figures, representational of the human figure in a three-quarters posture, is triumphantly done. The right-hand priest has as



MONOLITHIC SCULPTURE: THE "FORMAL PHASE" AT
COPAN. STELA P.
(Old Empire)

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perfect a figure as is to be found in antique American sculpture, as perfect as anything contemporaneous in Asia. Each sacrificing priest stands on the crouched back of a slave or servitor: two more of these alien inferiors support the decorated platform on which rest the spears that uphold the emblem of the god. They also are carved with fine power, minutely, grotesquely decorated, no mere conventionalisation of a scene, as may be seen in the half-upraised slave under the feet of the minor priest while the other lies crushed almost flat under the heels of the stalwart principal. Here, with perfect figures (and, it may be added, the faces of devils), we have apparent portrayal of members of the contemporary theocracy. (*Vide* Frontispiece.)

It is at first almost unbelievable that these individuals can belong to the same race as those represented at Copan, on such sculptures as Stela H. Nor, as we shall subsequently see, is it necessary to accept this belief, in spite of the fact that the technique has obviously the same groundwork, the glyphs are the same, both Palenque and Copan the products of a common American culture.

Sculpture in the true round is less common. This for a number of reasons—that the statues, life size, have in many cases been destroyed or are so defaced that it is impossible to judge the degree of skill with which they are executed. But from Copan comes the statue, full and complete, absorbed in or detached (as you please) from its stone, the figure generally described as that of the Maize God. Attitude, appearance, and decoration have a startling familiarity for those even meagrely acquainted with extra-American sculpture. For this reason, it is amusing to note, the Maize God receives somewhat curt and shabby treatment from the older school of Americanists, as does the statue from Palenque which Stephens found so uncomfortably resembling those of Ancient Egypt.

More, perhaps, than in anything else, the Old

Empire sculptor excelled in miniature sculpture. The much and justly quoted examples are the date-symbols on the rear of Stela D at Copan. As a rule such numerals are expressed by a series of grotesque heads; but in this case the heads have been supplied with complete human figures, each symbolically burdened with captive macaws, with a captive earth-monster, with simple human captives, each no doubt relating symbolically to the cognate time-period. Here the work is executed with skill and delicacy: the artist had a supreme command of his chisel, greenstone, copper, or the much-disputed nameless metal which he used. Here also is well illustrated that purity of line which the Maya sculptor could achieve on surfaces large and small, and in the motif-treatment of feathers especially.

Animals on the whole fared poorly at the hands of the Old Empire sculptor: the Earth-monster has already been noted and will be noted again. Copan has its carved ocelot-head, treated with a kind of hollow strength: the decorative monkey-heads are amusing, but little more. The birds recognizable as of a definite species, macaws and perhaps an occasional vulture, are made, for religious reasons, figures more horrendous than representational. The snake is already a favourite subject: it was to grow and flourish on the Maya imagination in the period of the New Empire.

Allied to the temple as it was, Maya sculpture is obviously greatly subordinated to religious purpose. But this is not invariably the case. The life-like figures discovered by Blom and Le Farge (41) in the underground chamber near Comalcalco are obviously neither gods nor mythological figures: they are individuals, highly individualized, portraits of the artist's contemporaries. Now, portraiture has been generally denied to the more well-known figures on Maya statuary—a denial obviously made without prolonged objective scrutiny of the stelæ at such sites as Copan, the panels at Menchè, and the stuccos of



MONOLITHIC SCULPTURE: THE "CLASSIC PHASE" AT COPAN
(Old Empire)

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Palenque. The Copanec figures are certainly not (as we understand the term) gods: they seem to vary between contemporary portraits and portraits of idealized or legendary beings. Between these two there is no sharp dividing line. The being who dominates Stela H so magnificently probably never walked the soil of the Americas, with his unwrinkled brow, but certainly a sneer of cold command. Yet this Mayan Ozymandias has his individuality stamped upon him in a very complete and unmistakable fashion—in brow and lip and the lidless stare of the wide eyes. Compared with the still, brooding figure on Stela P or the giant stelæ of Quirigua, this is a remembered or legendary overlord of whose characteristics the sculptor had heard much. Again, it is only the heaven that lies about the childhood of research that would find a stiff, uniform sameness in the brooding Titans of Quirigua. With sites like Menchè-Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras we are confronted with obvious portraits, executed with a kind of floriferous, haunting clumsiness.

Old Empire architecture, we concluded, was substantially founded on a few principal designs which arose remote in Mediterranean and Mesopotamian countries and passed across the world, eastward, in ebbing circles of various speeds and reach. Maya sculpture, as we have seen, was predominantly a temple sculpture. It is therefore of interest to consider its relation with the sculpture of the Old World.

First, it reproduces, in innumerable details now seldom denied, the sculpture of Angkor-Vat and other sites in Cambodia. It reproduces, again and again, *details* of that more eastward sculpture. Its method of treatment is largely its own, but there is again and again an obvious similarity of both technique and subject. This extends to matters reaching back to the parent culture of Indo-China: the great earth-monster of Quirigua, for example, is obviously the makara, the legendary beast, part crocodile, part elephant, of India and its cultural dependencies. In

its jaws squats the figure of the Indian Indra, complete in too many details of attitude and dress to be mistaken for other than he is. Yet this monster that long irritated the Asiatic imagination has been solemnly declared a turtle by the older school of Americanist, though no turtle was ever so shaped. Similarly with the Egyptian-like figure of Stephens found at Palenque: it is not only Egyptian-like, it is, one might say, Egyptian at one remove, and probably of much more ancient carving than any other sculpture at Palenque.

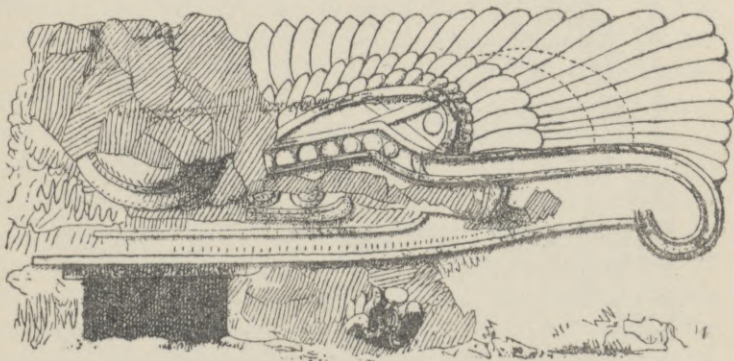
Again, and again to quote Stephens, whose eyes were fresh to such sights, and not to begin with blinded by preconceived theories of the Monroe doctrine in American archæology (he is describing an exploration of the main temple at the minor site of Ocosingo): "In the back wall of the central chamber was a doorway of the same size with that in front, which led to an apartment without any partitions, but in the centre was an oblong enclosure eighteen feet by eleven, which was manifestly intended as the most important part of the edifice. The door was choked up with ruins to within a few feet of the top, but over it, and extending along the whole front of the structure, was a large stucco ornament which at first impressed us most forcibly by its striking resemblance to the winged globe over the doors of Egyptian temples. [But] it differs in detail from the winged globe. The wings are reversed; there is a fragment of a circular ornament which may have been intended for a globe, but there are no remains of serpents entwining it" (3).

Stephens was already in retreat, and found comfort in the lack of serpents. Therefore it was not Egyptian. Such a modern investigator as Dr. J. Imbelloni, on the other hand, proves conclusively that the design is overlaid and elaborately and principally serpent. Therefore it is not Egyptian (33).

Nor, indeed, we may presume, is it: the winged globe travelled far from Egypt and suffered a series

of sea-changes in Babylonia, in India, in Indo-China. But it is still the winged globe, a design not to be mistaken in Ocosingo or Persia, and one extremely unlikely to occur as sculptural motif, over and over again, invented carefully and sedulously apart from its previous representations.

The most famous sculptural detail in the Old Maya region, however, is that at Copan—the famous, or rather infamous, elephants at Copan. Maudslay was among the first to come on those unchancy beasts :



THE WINGED DISC

sculptured over a doorway at Ocosingo. (Palenque.)

(After Catherwood, in J. L. Stephens' "Travels.")

they tower in the details above the head of Stela B, giant elephant-heads with curling trunks, heads somewhat distorted with ornamentation, with an apparent slit half-way up the trunk, but still recognizably heads: and, further, the flattened head of the Indian elephant.

Americanists for the last fifty years have been constantly vexed by those elephants. For there is no elephant in America. So the beasts have been disposed of as macaws, as alligators, as tapirs, and finally, in a desperate attempt to turn the tables upon the elephants, as *elephas Americana*, the long-extinct American elephant, vanished from the

American Continent thousands of years before the rise of the Maya culture. Nevertheless, they are unmistakably Indian elephants, surmounted by mahouts, complete with turbans and goads: they are



FULL VIEW OF THE UPPER PART OF STELA B AT
COPAN

(Reproduced from "The Diffusion of Culture," by courtesy of Professor
G. Elliot Smith.)

the beasts as a sculptor, who had never seen them in the dun flesh, might record from legend.

(They are—or rather, they *were*. For the blot has been removed from the family escutcheon: the elephant-decoration on Stela B has been badly

mutilated, in recent years, by "bandits." Is it too much to suspect that the "bandits," refreshed by this exercise, have now returned to their more orthodox and respectable archæological pursuits?)

One might travel far outside the Maya region in America and find other architectural and sculptural representations of the elephant—at Huaycama, on the mounds of Wisconsin, on the famous pipes of Iowa. All are obvious representations of an animal never seen by the sculptors, a legendary beast, the tale of him travelling up from the far Pacific coasts where doubtlessly there ground the boats of the culture-bringers who brought alike him, the Indra-Ganesha cult, the makara who made the Earth-Monster, and more anciently the technical inspiration that carved the great Egyptian-like statue at Palenque and the winged disc over the lintel at Ocosingo. The Maya artist, we may assume from these evidences, received a cultural beginning on which he worked, confusedly, on a confused wash and flow of cultural driftage across the Pacific: the elephant, the makara, the winged disc, the bearded priest, the obvious Buddhist with begging-bowl who is one of the finest statues in the round at Copan,—all these details came to him and confusedly he told their story in stone, intermingling with that story the rise of his own city states, the being and appearance of the great gods who presently flowered so rankly in the Central Americas, the everyday life of the civilization that sprang, thus strangely manured, from five thousand years and sources.

v. *Painting, Pottery, and the Minor Arts*

The Goth, the Christian, Time, war, flood and fire have all dealt unkindly with the actual paintings in the Maya sites. Apparently the ancient civilization dealt lavishly in colour for purposes of complementary decoration: sculptures in high as well as low relief were painted in varying and various colours, temple-

walls, stelæ, and lintel ornaments. But except in little cracks and shaded portions, these colours have long vanished.

The principal colours used appear to have been red, black, blue, and the "life-giving" yellows and greens. All these are obtained from ochreous earths. Scarlet cochineal was obtained from ground insects, purple from the immemorial purpura, used for obtaining such dye the civilized world over since the days of Tyre. This last dye was brought from the Pacific coasts.

Even the New Empire monuments, somewhat more recent in erection and sculpture than the Old Empire, bear little trace of the painting which doubtless as much enhanced their appearance as concealed the technical deficiencies of architect and sculptor. In its heyday such a site as Palenque must have glowed and shone with that fine crudity of colouring much beloved of inheriting civilizations: Copan one can imagine a grave city of dazzling statues, not the dead and rather wearied-eyed titans who now look forth from the monuments, but startlingly alive and life-like. Representationalism probably reached its apogee, with painting and sculpture combined, at the beginning of that epoch classified by Dr. S. G. Morley as the "Great Period."

Neither do any fresco paintings survive from the Old Empire times—at least, none that have been so far discovered. There are fresco-paintings at Tulum, in Yucatan, a site occupied at times contemporaneous with the early Old Empire. But the frescoes themselves are not contemporaneous, they are comparatively modern work. Only on pottery, the rare complete specimens from Nebaj and such-like centres, and the broken fragments from Pusilhà, may the paintings of the ancient artists be studied with some degree of satisfaction. Even so, it may be said that painting was never an art of its own: it was allied to sculpture, to pottery, to astronomy, to the calendar, to the script, an accessory always.

As elsewhere in America at the time of the arrival of the Europeans, the potter's wheel was unknown in the Maya New Empire area. Probably it was never known, in the Old Empire or elsewhere. As a result the pottery, even the finest, lacks that complete and symmetrical finish which the revolving wheel under the potter's hand gives to his pot as can no use of mould or accurate and loving hand-smoothing. Maya pottery has beauty and the charm of all purely handicraft productions. It lacks, however, the glowing shape and delight of such productions as those of ancient Greece, and has been zealously overpraised for a purity of line it cannot, in the nature of things, possess.

The wheel apart, the Ancient Maya appears to have had no lack of technical resources. He has left jars, beakers, and bowls, tripod bowls with cascabel feet, which may have been either modelled, built, or moulded, simply or in combination. Decoration is applied in relief, by incision or engraving or even by the impress of moulds—a kind of printing. Sometimes the specimens are glazed, whether accidentally or not is uncertain ; so is the actual method of baking the pottery. Some kiln-method appears to have been used in producing the finer specimens for religious and ceremonial purposes. But ordinary household pottery was doubtlessly, in the Old Empire as in the later New, baked in the open air under a heap of glowing charcoal. Various kinds and qualities of paste were in use—an extremely gritty variety for the simplest domestic utensils, finer for the ceremonial bowls, the two categories roughly corresponding to the probable methods of firing. Apparently the great pottery region of the Old Empire was Pusilhà, where, as previously noted, fine pottery has been found in great quantities in a site with crudely and carelessly built temples and “palaces.” Industrialism even in a minor form knows no ruth.

The general colour of the pots varies from red to pale yellow. Brown in its varying shades occurs,

black is rare, blue and green unknown. And upon these surfaces, turning from the religious complexities of existence, the Maya painter and sculptor and potter—possibly in some instances the same person, probably in others three different craftsmen—recorded with a considerable degree of representational skill the everyday life of his time. A cylindrical and almost perfectly-preserved vase from Nebaj is justly famous. Figures in breech clouts and ceremonial hats stand and squat in black outline, with explanatory glyphs that unfortunately to us explain nothing. One figure with folded arms records antique Maya scepticism in a pleasing and effective way. In an art and culture that set its face towards recording fear and the more horrific emotions, humour never, and complete human dignity only at Copan and Quirigua, this ironical scepticism is as pleasing as would be the never-discovered smile. The body colours are in red and yellow, and perspective is conveyed not by shading, but by line alone, and with a considerable success.

If literature is an art, we can say nothing of its quality in the Old Empire. Probably it was confined to the purpose of sheer record of fact. Pottery apart (rated here as an art for the purpose of considering it in alliance with painting), the ancient sites have left few impressive examples of the minor arts. They were accessories: and time has shorn away the accessories. In a consideration of the practical sciences the reader must turn to filling in the outline around that shadowy and uncertain theme, the life of the man of the Old Empire.

vi. *The Sciences in the Ancient Sites*

The most outstanding scientific achievements of the Old Empire Maya, as the monuments record them, were in astronomy, and, in a related degree, in mathematics. To this achievement a subsequent section is devoted, for it may be said with great truth

that Maya intellectual life *was* the Calendar: whatever its original inspirations and divergences, on that calendar ultimately all the intellectual energies of the race appears to have been narrowed. If sculpture and painting and architecture were all handmaids of religion, religion itself was little more than a decorative fringe on the calendrical codices, even as that calendar itself found practical foundation and reason, there is no doubt, in the science of agriculture. This was its expression not only in the lives of the common people, but in that of the ruling-caste, which, of course, depended for its existence on an ever-more certain supply of cultivated foodstuffs.

But of that agricultural method and science we know nothing directly, unless through a few doubtful glimpses on lintels or painted potsherds. The forests have crept up over the great clearings that once surrounded the cities and have long devoured all traces of the giant maize plantations that must have kept these centres in being. Throughout this consideration of the cultural life of the Old Empire Maya the attempt has been made, as far as possible, to dispense with unreliable analogies from the life of the New Empire Maya. But it is necessary to note now the agricultural method practised in Yucatan at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, and, indeed, practised extensively in that area even to-day.

This was crude and simple in the extreme. The same piece of land was cultivated for only two or three years on end: at the end of that period it either became exhausted or the growth of thorny scrub made it extremely difficult to re-clear for a fourth annual sowing. Accordingly, a new piece of ground might be chosen, or one which had lain fallow long enough to have recaptured its ancient virtues. The Mayas then banded themselves in groups of twenty or so and set to clearing a patch for each individual in the group. First the minor trees, bushes, and the like were cut down and gathered in heaps. Large trees were partly burned as they stood,

and then felled. As soon as one patch of ground was thus perfunctorily cleared, the farmers passed to another patch, finishing operations by mid-March or thereabouts. By this time the felled jungle was crackling dry and ready to be burned. This was done in early and mid-April.

By the end of April, as the calendrical accounts foretold, the rains came. Prior to their coming the clearings were ploughed and sown. The term ploughing is euphemistic. The farmer plodded back and forwards the clearing with a bag of maize and a primitive hoe—generally a stick, sharp, with its head hardened in fire, or occasionally made of stone or copper. This he inserted and twirled in the ground at fairly close intervals, and into the hole strewed from the sack a few grains of maize. There was no harrowing. The farmer, in the method of a dog with a bone, covered the seed by tamping over the hole in the earth with his foot. When harvest came the grain heads were plucked and carried away in baskets.

This is agriculture at its simplest—the method still used not only by the Santa Cruz Indians but those Amerindians with clearings in the Amazon forests. It is probably the agricultural method of the Archaic men of America. The question of how far it represents agricultural science in the Old Empire will never be settled. First analogies suggest the impossibility of such method, without any other fashion of turning the earth, without any method of manuring it apart from the detritus of the annual fires, as being impossible in some Old Empire sites. Uaxactun and Tikal, to judge by their appearance, had at their apogee each a population of a million or so grouped round the great temple-complexes. Palenque, if there is truth in its nine-miles area of ruins, may have had half a million inhabitants. With the agricultural method described, the maize plantations would not merely have surrounded the cities: they would have made of the ancient site one gigantic plantation, tree-

less, pushing its milpas into the sea and across the Tehuantepec neck. Further, in the area round Tikal we must picture not a planned growth, but a straggling waste of primary and secondary fields, half under new jungle, half cleared and sown.

It seems improbable that the ruling caste laboured to such extent to perfect the most gigantic farmer's almanac ever in use for an agriculture capable of no more than this. The mountain laboured and produced a furtively under-nourished mouse.

But we have seen already that there is a considerable divergence between the Maya's apparent ability in mathematics pure and mathematics applied. This is true of architecture and perhaps was true of agriculture. Chichen Itza, when the Spaniards landed in Yucatan, is reputed to have had a population of a quarter of a million. Even allowing for the usual exaggerations, it had possibly one of a hundred thousand. Yet there is no record of this gigantic city, or the large cities in the vicinity, being fed by other means than those described. Exhaustion of the soil through this wasteful method of husbandry is, as we shall see, one of the theories advanced to account for the "desertion" of the Old Empire, when the dated inscriptions ceased on the monuments.

Maize was doubtlessly the groundwork of economic life. Wheat, oats, barley, rice, were unknown in the New Empire region, and possibly (though not certainly in the case of rice) unknown in the Old Empire. This American staff of life was gathered from the fields and stored in huts, possibly stone-built ones in the Old Empire. As each quantity was required it was shelled, and then soaked in a solution of water and lime, rinsed in clear water, and ground in a stone mortar with a primitive stone pestle, or rather roller, rounded in the middle, tapering at the ends. In the process, as mortar and pestle were of comparatively soft stone, much grit must have become mixed with the paste: dentistry in neither New nor Old Empire was probably entirely decorative

in consequence. From the ground maize a dough was produced, and the cook might then enter upon an exhibition of his or her culinary skill. Pots and a griddle were the sole cooking utensils. Fermented, maize also made a strong intoxicant.

Next in importance came cacao, the ancient chocolate, sedulously if inefficiently grown in the plantations, the beans roasted and mixed with condiments to make the ancient sustaining drink. In the New Empire these beans served as money. Other beans and a fair list of vegetables were also grown, sweet potatoes and tomatoes, and numerous fruits had been more or less domesticated, plums, pears, papaya.

But apart from representations of the maize plant and the so-called water-plant, the Old Empire sites are silent on these matters. The technique may well have been higher: it certainly could not have been lower. Cotton, the *agave Americana*, must have been grown in plantations outsize those of the maize, for this is the obvious ground-fabric of the many decorated dresses. The gorgeous feather-work mantles and head-dresses of the rulers argue the domestication of the macaw, the quetzal. It was certainly domesticated later. Maize and plant-food apart, the ancient Maya no doubt hunted deer, perhaps kept them domesticated. If so, it was their only domesticated animal, apart from the dog. Dogs, bred, fattened, and gelded, were greatly prized food-dishes among the New Empire Maya.

Dr. Gann has advanced the theory that there was probably intensive cultivation around the ancient sites. If this means that the cultivation methods were on a higher plane of technical efficiency than those of later and modern days, he is at divergence with most contemporary Americanists; and it is difficult to understand how any advance above the primitive methods of the Archaic men could ever have been mislaid, whatever degeneration set in. On the other hand, it is possible that some series of rotation of

crop—maize one year, mandioc another in the same patch, may actually have been worked. Confirmation of such a theory would go far to explain the mystery of how the ancient cities were fed, and for so long—as in the Peten region—resisted with apparent success the wordy theories of “soil-exhaustion” which have been so sedulously foisted upon them.

Architectural science has already been dealt with, in a consideration of Old Empire art. Their other feats of what may be described as civil engineering have vanished from sight under the forest detritus. Pusilhà is an exception. There still stand the stone abutments of a bridge over the Pusilhà River, raised by the ancient inhabitants. Abutments are in a good state of preservation: the bridge itself has vanished. Probably it was of the same order as the Incaic—grass and fibre slung between stone supports, a dizzying and harrowing method of passage from a modern view-point. But the antique Maya were probably an unqueasy people. No roadways such as those in Peru, or that which stretches from Cobà to Chichen Itza in the New Empire, exist, though both of these are contemporaneous with the Old Empire in dating. Probably the Cobà-Chichen road was an exceptional feat, like the stone monster of Quirigua or the stucco decoration of Palenque, and a source of pride to the two municipalities. The great towns of the triangle, so far as they communicated, may have done so largely by canoe or merely by forest tracks.

Cotton growing and the elaborate dresses represented in the statuary and the wall-panels have already been referred to. Wool, of course, was unknown, so the dresses must have been made, as they appear to have been made, from cotton or the fibre of cactus and aloe, gathered wild. It has been suggested that much of the material of the loom was fibre from the perennial tree-cotton. Messrs. Blom and Le Farge in their 1926 expedition into Central America, discovered in the cave near Comalcalco the only fragments of Old Empire textiles so far recovered.

They are of a coarse cotton cloth—apparently *cultivated* cotton.

Spindle whorls, of pottery, have been recovered from the excavations, and presumably the loom was as simple as the spindle, and of the same character as that employed in later times. It was of horizontal pattern, one end of the warp secured to an upright of convenient height from the ground, and the other to a belt on the body of the weaver himself. From this simple frame it is probable that the magnificent tapestry-like ceremonial robes of the Old Empire were produced, if not in blood, at least in much sweat, for the cloth-strips could but rarely have had a breadth much over a foot, and in the case of giant or intricate patterns the problem of weaving the pattern on several strips, to dovetail when sewn, must have required considerable ability and concentration.

Maize may have been kept in great pottery jars, as in the later Yucatecan cities, or in baskets: some of the stelæ suggest an intimate knowledge of basketwork, if not of baskets. (The sculptor of the intricate pattern on Stela J at Copan was surely acquainted with basketwork, and saw that his women were acquainted with it also. But here again is the possibility that the design was as ceremonial in significance, and as lacking in applicable relevancy to his actual everyday life, as the rites connected with the divine drink of milk practised by several North Amerindian peoples.)

Stone carving and stone working are inseparable in consideration. Constant mention has been made of the generally accepted fact that the architectural building and the sculptural efforts were carried out with the aid of stone tools only. This, as Mr. Hyatt Verrill has made clear, is open to doubt through the best test of all. Stone tools, nevertheless, were obviously greatly in use. The sculptures themselves when they represent weapons seem almost invariably to represent stone weapons.

The heads of the spear-shafts which uplift the

head of the Gorgon in the " Temple of the Sun " at Palenque are obvious flint heads. And from the excavations a multitude of stone implements, of various styles and degrees of technique, have been recovered. The victim's heart at sacrifice was ripped from his chest with a Solutrean blade. Neoliths and palæoliths of almost every conceived technique exist, in flint and obsidian: conceived, not conceivable. There is nothing that might not be paralleled in the stonework of Asia or Europe a score of times, in spite of the multitude of ways in which flint and chert may be worked.

The chert was possibly the secret of the Old Empire's lack of metals. For the ruins have a supreme lack. Only two or three copper implements have been discovered, and these of negligible size or utility. The Old Empire Maya had apparently the technique of copper production at hand: he laid it and its laboriousness aside in favour of the plentiful chert for weapons and the like, greenstone for chisels and mauls. Obsidian (volcanic glass) also provides, by pressure, long flakes, thin and narrow, making excellent skewers, knives, and what not. Maya domestic table-ware was no doubt of this material, excellently adapted for dealing vigorously with his victuals when one of the antique priests sat down to a meal of hot dog.

The ruins say nothing of any other type of metalwork, unless the ear-plugs of the great figures of the statues were of copper, as no doubt they occasionally were. Copper and bronze as material for the making of knives, axes, and chisels became common in the New Empire at a date only (there is good reason to believe) a century or so after the datings on the Old Empire stelæ had ceased.

vii. *Script and Calendar in the Ancient Sites*

In 196 B.C., Ptolemy Epiphanes, the ruler of Egypt, promulgated at Memphis a decree which

was no doubt extensively copied in various materials. Unlike any other decree of which we have knowledge, however, this at Rosetta was inscribed on a slab of basalt trilingually. The topmost inscription is in hieratic characters, the old, priestly hieroglyphic writing of Egypt; the middle inscription is in demotic or enchorial writing, the modification of the hieratic in use among the laity; and the lowermost legend is in uncial Greek. Time passed. The Rosetta Stone was buried from the sight of men. The centuries smoothed away from the face of Egypt all knowledge of how to read the antique characters inscribed on the walls of tombs and the surviving papyri. A multitude of theories flowered, urging this and that method of reading the hieroglyphics, urging them as unreadable, until, in 1799, Champollion discovered the trilingual basalt slab now in the British Museum. With this complete, or almost complete key, the science of Egyptology may be said to have secured a firm foundation.

Mayology has no such concrete basis in its interpretation of the Mayan script, the calculiform glyphs. It is generally denied, in spite of the deposition of Bishop Landa and others, that the glyphs conveyed more than items of calendrical or mathematical fact. About half of the known inscriptions on the monuments can now be translated, and that half is exclusively concerned with the permutations of the calendar and its marching adjuncts of gods, rites, or simple religious ideas. But of the remainder of the inscriptions, in spite of confident assertions to the contrary, it seems unlikely that the majority are calendrical.

They possibly name, with the brevity of the *Chilan Balaam* records, this and that event or happening of importance which took place within the time-period commemorated. Some of them (the "cartouche" calculiforms) are almost certainly personal names, on the analogy of the much cruder script of Ancient Mexico. Indeed, most of the

glyphs appear to have been ideographic: they portrayed an idea, directly, not through the medium of a number of arbitrary signs, as with an alphabet. But it is also obvious, as careful scrutiny has revealed to many scholars, that phonetic-writing and rebus-writing enters into the script. It is a medley: it probably conveyed little more than hard fact, and that with great brevity. And from first to last, to judge both by the monuments of the ancient triangle and of Yucatan, it did not advance from that picture-writing, semi-phonetic phase. It flowered: and the flower remained and bloomed, and finally died, leaving no seed of a more comely or vigorous offspring in methods of communication.

Landa's *Relacion*, as stated in the introductory sections of this book, supplied the key to the interpretation of the calendrical sections on the monuments. With the beginnings of that interpretation it was discovered that the civilized inhabitants of the great triangle had in their possession one of the most remarkable mental instruments ever fashioned. In less florid language, they were the possessors and manipulators of a remarkable farmers' almanac. That the measure of this achievement was greatly exaggerated, and continues to be exaggerated, by Americanists, is understandable. Assuming its growth from a culture which was autochthonous, as they believed, yet so sadly lacking in many of the essentials of a homogeneous civilization, its effect upon students of American antiquities was unbalancing. Even to-day such statements as that the Maya were the first to invent a sign for "zero" continue to be made. The Maya invented no such thing. But they built up from very mixed origins a system of notation clumsily efficient, and a system of daily, seasonal, and yearly calculation to which the same term may be applied.

The sign for zero and the principle of varying the value of the numeral according to its position was in use in India as early as A.D. 500 (42). The actual figures are many centuries older, descendants of the



famous "cave-numerals," which supplanted the more antique arbitrary signs in which perpendicular and horizontal strokes were employed, in clumsy fore-running of our present shapely notation.

Maya numerals were expressed on the monumental inscriptions by three different series of glyphs: Normal glyphs, the current method of computation, a kind of demotic; Face glyphs, arbitrary heads of gods or mythical beings, a priestly hieratic; and Figure glyphs, with bodies attached to the Face glyphs—hieratic itself in feather-hat and priestly vestments. In the Normal numerals, 5 was expressed by a horizontal line, units below 5, or above one or more multiples of 5, by single dots. Owing to the peculiarities of Maya dating presently to be explained the highest numeral on the inscriptions is 19—three horizontal lines and four dots. The figure 0, the much-praised Zero, occurs as a coefficient to month-signs and in the various periods of the Long Count of the Calendar, and is expressed by means of at least three grotesque symbols, neither Normal nor Face numerals, the grotesque head held in an open hand being the most common. To represent the numbers 11 to 19 in the Face count, a fleshless jaw, the symbol for 10, is added to the numbers 1 to 9.

As ours is the decimal, the Maya was a vigesimal system, the same in essentials as that prevalent in various regions of Eastern Asia. This fact dominated its calendrical calculations. That calendar, a gigantic almanac for agricultural purposes, not only made clear the recurrences of times of sowing and reaping and worship, but dealt with a vast and elaborate structure of superstitious astrology imposed upon the agricultural life of the great cities.

There were two Maya years, running concurrently, a ceremonial year of obscure origin and of 260 days, and a "normal" year of 365. The ceremonial Tzolkin was composed of twenty day names, the days combined with the numbers 1 to 13. These days and numbers marched side by side, in uninterrupted

procession, returning to their beginnings at the end of their rounds of 20 and 13 respectively. This gives the root essential of the 260-day calendar: the lowest common multiple of 20 and 13 being 260, the same name and number might commence the concurrent run over again only at the end of this period. Thus:

Names of days in 20-day month	Cycle of thirteen numbers
Imix	1
Ik	2
Akbal	3
Kan	4
Chicchan	5
Cimi	6
Manik	7
Lamat	8
Muluc	9
Oc	10
Chuen	11
Eb	12
Ben	13
Ix	1
Men	2
Cib	3
Caban	4
Eznab	5
Cauac	6
Ahau	7
Imix	8
Ik	9

and so on, the 20 days of the "month" continuing to overlap their numerical attachments. A remote analogy to the Tzolkin is the Gregorian 52-week calendar, each week with seven days, each unit of the week identified by a distinctive name, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, etc. But the advantage of the Tzolkin was that a number accompanied each day-sign which definitely placed that day in some position in the "year" of 260 days.

The Tzolkin has, of course, little relation to solar time. This was supplied by the Haab, the year of 365 days which ran concurrently with the short divinatory calendar. The days of the Haab were divided into eighteen named sections, of 20 days each, and one section of 5 days. This last was (in Yucatan and later in Mexico) the famous "unlucky" five days. In accordance with the whole bent of Maya chronology, which dealt with only elapsed time, the twenty days of each of these sections were numbered not from 1 to 20, but from 0 to 19—the unlucky five-day period 0 to 4. The names of the eighteen period "months" in the Haab were :

Pop	Zac
Uo	Ceh
Zip	Mac
Zotz	Kankin
Tzec	Muan
Xul	Pax
Yaxkin	Kayab
Mol	Cumhu
Chen	Uayeb (the "un-
Yax	lucky" five days.)

Haab and Tzolkin, as has been said, ran concurrently. But the Haab contains 105 days more than the "sacred Tzolkin." Therefore the positions of the days in the Tzolkin were each year a hundred and five positions further in advance than those in the Haab. As 5 is the highest common factor of Haab and Tzolkin, the same combination of day number, day name, period number, and period name can only return after 52 years of 365 days. This fifty-two year period, the calendar-round or lesser cycle, appears to have played much the same staple in Old Empire chronology as the century in the Gregorian.

But in order to distinguish one day from another over very long periods, for the calculations they considered necessary to set the date on any of their

monuments, the Old Empire Maya reckoned onwards from a day 4 Ahau, 8 Cumhu, remotely 4000 years (in our chronology) before the birth of Christ. Setting up a stela and dating it, or the event of importance which the setting-up commemorated, the Maya calculated forward the number of days from that remote 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu. These elapsed days in long periods were divided thus (Kin being the word for day and also for sun) :

20 Kins	=	1 Uinal
18 Uinals	=	1 Tun
20 Tuns	=	1 Katun
20 Katuns	=	1 Baktun
20 Baktuns	=	1 Pictun

A little calculation will show that a Pictun numbered 2,880,000 days, over 7000 years. Naturally, datings employing the Pictun seldom occur, the initial date referring to some remote mythological event analogous to the Mosaic creation of the world.

This was the Maya long count, and Mr. T. A. Joyce gives a clear explanation of how it was employed on the monuments :

“ In a Maya time count, it must be remembered, the unit was the single day, and any complex numeral represented a sum of days grouped in periods corresponding to the numerical system above described [the vigesimal system] . . . Consequently, a Maya day count, expressed in a Maya ‘ Initial Series ’ . . . in the terms 9 cycles [Baktun], 14 Katun, 19 Tun, 8 Uinal, 0 Kin (usually written for convenience 9.14.19.8.0.) as on Stela A at Copan is worked out as follows :

9	×	144,000	=	1,296,000
14	×	7,200	=	100,800
19	×	360	=	6,840
8	×	20	=	160
0	×	1	=	0
				<hr/>
				1,403,800
				<hr/>

a total of just under 3846 of our solar years with their recurrent 'leap-year' days.

"This was the so-called 'Long Count' of the Maya, and such an Initial Series was invariably followed by a day and month [period] sign with their accompanying numerals. Thus, in the instance of the particular inscription cited, the count is followed by the calendar-round date 12 Ahau, 18 Cumhu" (11).

Nor did this play of days into cycles and great cycles exhaust the Maya fertility in calculating calendrical time. Lunar and Venus counts were also employed. For example, were the current moon four days old on the day the inscription commemorated, this was stated, also the moon's position in a five- or six-month period, and the details of whether this current moon were of 28 or 29 days duration. The Venus count came from observation of the synodical revolution of that planet—the period elapsing between its successive reappearances above the horizon as the morning star. This period is the length of the Venus year, but it is improbable that the Maya, calculating that period with great accuracy as 584 days (it is really 583.92), realized the fact: it is extremely improbable that they had any knowledge of the planetary motions round the sun. Once in 104 years the Venus count of 584 days, the calendar-round count, and the Haab count coincided to a day, thus forming an effective check on the "terrestrial" calculations. Neither fractions nor (naturally) decimals were known to the vigesimal system of the Maya, or at least they appear to make no use of such on the inscriptions, and the error accumulated by using a 584 day period for the Venus count, when it was actually a 583.92 period (as they were evidently aware in some measure, though not in these terms), was corrected by omitting four days at the end of every sixty-one year grouping of Venus years, and eight at the end of every three hundred and one Venus years.

Besides sun, moon, and planet, it is possible that

the Maya further checked their calculations by observation of the fixed stars, and that further elucidation of the glyphs will give proof of this. The Haab is only 365 days in length, therefore the Maya system, having no leap-year, gradually crept ahead of the true year. But the Maya mathematician-astronomers were aware of the fact, and calculated the error by making use of the coincidences of the moon with the tropical year over long periods. For very long any knowledge of intercalcation was denied to the Amerindian civilizations, but the researches of Dr. John Teeple (42a) in particular have put the fact beyond doubt.

In the majority of monumental inscriptions the initial dates recorded are even Katun endings, or fractions of a Katun, Lahuntuns (10-Tun period) and Hotuns (5-Tun period). This is because of the system, particularly noted at Piedras Negras, of recording the passage of every Hotun with a monument. When the initial date does not record an even Hotun, the inscription is carried forward by additions to the Hotun that marks the date of the dedication of the monument, as in that cited from Copan.

The question of the correlation of Mayan and Christian (Gregorian) chronology has never been settled satisfactorily, and is too long and complicated to be posed afresh in such outline as this. As we shall see when we deal with the New Empire, the authenticity of the various "Katun" counts in the *Books of Chilán Balaam* is exceedingly doubtful, and it is on calculations from the "counts" in one or other of these *Books* that most modern systems of calculation are based. The Bowditch, Spinden, and Goodman correlations respectively equate 9.0.0.0.0. with 94 B.C., A.D. 176, and A.D. 436. All three correlations rear up, like inverted pyramids, from different and disputed points in Late Maya chronology, and all three rather shadow than lighten the Maya scene. Throughout this book the system

followed is that first suggested by W. Lehmann (43), one of the most skilled and competent of Americanists, whose correlation would lead to the tentative equation of 9.0.0.0.0. with A.D. 700.

This brief account of the complicated and interlocking systems of calculation used on the ancient monuments, is, so far as the names for the days and "month" signs are concerned, based on those supplied by Landa's *Relacion*. As yet research has been over-busy in disentangling the calendar meanings themselves from the inscriptions to attempt disentangling their origins. And, in spite of much facile affirmation to the effect that the Maya recorded these innumerable calendrical inscriptions for religious reasons and agricultural reasons, it is difficult to see how either religion or agriculture called for such immense outlay of intellectual and physical labour. The Tzolkin, as we shall see later in our account of New Empire life and customs, was certainly a ceremonial calendar, it revolved with lists of feasts and fasts, planting times and reaping times, through the lives of the people even as it revolved through the 52-year Calendar round. To check its aberrant revolutions, the 365-day year, the Haab, was an elementary necessity of a primitive agricultural people. Observations of the sky, the sun, the moon, even of Venus, were no doubt good and fairly simple and obvious checks for the Mayas to use upon the Haab. But the immense and ponderous super-structures of cycles and great cycles and great-great-cycles, the practice of erecting every five or ten years a stone to commemorate the passage of that period, has no obvious relevance to any agricultural or economic necessity.

Had the Maya civilization grown up alone and apart from the civilizations of the rest of the world, had it even had an initial impetus from another civilization and then proceeded itself to "climb the ladder of culture," either the calendar would have remained at the level of the economic necessities of

the time, or calendar and economic life would have ascended together. But it is evident from many evidences already cited that there were a multitude of unassimilated strands of culture in the Old Empire civilization. Of these the calendar is the most strange. Its essentials are simple: its amplifications are closely paralleled, up to the system of the calendar round, by the "cycles" of time in use in Eastern Asia, as Humboldt discovered long ago in his study of the kindred Aztec Calendar (44). Time cycles seized on the imaginations of many peoples, from the Greeks to the ancient Hindus: they were, once the uses of the economic life were satisfied, the natural surge of wonder in a people finding themselves in the possession of an exhilarating mental instrument. Nevertheless, there is nowhere such apparent divorce between the physical groundwork of his civilization and the theoretical attainments of his mathematics as there is in the case of the Maya.

There is no good reason to suppose that the "evolution" of this calendar required the centuries, or even thousands of years, which some Americanists ascribe to it. Agriculture learned or assumed, the Haab is inevitable. Peculiar local conditions create the Tzolkin, unless it also is imported. Certainly we can assume that the vigesimal system, together with the elements of notation, came from the same trans-Pacific source as supplied the essentials of architecture and much of the sculpture-motif. The "cave-calendars" of India place this beyond much doubt. Contrary to a very general assumption, it is also probable that the Haab was the earlier time measurement: the Tzolkin most likely came out of the seas with a later incursion of immigrants.

A curious light is thrown upon the life of the times when the great monuments were erected by the fact that many miscalculations, inside the framework of Maya chronology, are recorded on the monuments. These miscalculations, obvious to our eyes, suggest

several interesting possibilities. First, that the sculptor who carved the inscriptions had generally no knowledge of their meaning: he was no more than a labourer, in spite of his excellent technique, probably copying from a manuscript prepared by the priestly astronomer-mathematicians. On the other hand, in Eastern Asia, and all the lands influenced by the religious thought of India, there is fear of the perfect creation exciting the jealousy of the gods. One makes a mistake as one makes a libation, a mark of human inferiority and fear. Both explanations of the mistakes are probably true, and both are unfortunate witnesses against the autochthonous origins of Maya culture.

Dr. John Teeple's researches in the matter of intercalcation have already been noted. In studying the hieroglyphics of the lunar count, he finds that there was, in early times, a diversity of method in writing these glyphs. The sculptor carved the same glyph, but with a recognizable individuality in each city. Like the Amerindian artists who have carved the elephant from hearsay, the early sculptors of inscriptions all sought to carve the same symbols, but did it without a commonly accepted standard of size and twist and height for the symbol. But later there followed a Period of Unity in the ancient sites, when the supplementary glyphs were carved, from Palenque to Copan, Copan to Uaxactun, in exactly the same fashion. Later still, in what Dr. Teeple calls the Period of Revolt, the supplementary glyphs again show a diversity of method in the various sites.

Further intensive research along the lines followed by Dr. Teeple may result in throwing some light on the history of that period which brought to an end the dating of the monuments, and possibly—though not probably—an end to most of the intellectual activity in the great sites.

viii. *Religion in the Ancient Sites*

Culminatingly, in this outline of the cultural elements which comprised the civilization of the dwellers in the Maya Old Empire, their religion as recorded by the monuments and the temple-walls requires a short description. Nothing whatever is known directly about either their gods or their religious system, though details of apparent rites of sacrifice and propitiation are met with from the dedicated altars of Uaxactun to the wall-plaques in Palenque's Temples of the "Sun" and "Cross." All the names applied to the gods are either names used by the New Empire Maya for their deities, or such clumsy christenings as those which modern students apply to figures on the monuments and codices—the long-nosed God, the death-God, God B, and what not. This is to recall by a shadowy burlesque that pantheon of beings which doubtlessly moved, terrified, or inspired the antique Maya.

Their civilization was based on that agricultural system and ritual which had risen in America with the coming of the Archaic explorers. It is reasonable to assume that the basis of Maya religious life was concern with the crops and seasons, and with the deities which controlled them. Principal of those deities, as elsewhere the world over, was the Sun. But intermingled with that inter-continental sun-cult were Earth Gods and Fertility Gods and their worship, a wash of reminiscence and legend of the life, the fate and activities of the First Irrigator on the Nile, and the rites which had been celebrated to revivify him and pass on his revivifying power to a successor of his blood. Upon this structure, largely the rite of inducing divinity upon an earthly king that he in turn might bring divine magic to bear upon the fields and bring them to yielding, all Archaic religion was up-built. In each new country of Asia and Europe the essential rites came in time to be overlaid with a multitude of new ceremonies, there

was a weeding and transplanting and re-naming, a dividing or coalescing of celestial attributes. New civilizations uprose upon the Archaic foundation and spread their influences far and wide.

Yet in the Asiatic and European countries the rise and ebb of the new culture-waves observed a certain time sequence. The Pacific knew no such law. It was the final receptacle of hosts of gods, yet alive and strong as they breasted its waves, but forgotten shadows in the lands of their origin. With obtrusive details of sculpture and architecture we saw that the area of the great triangle contained the Babylonian ziggurat, the Indian makara, and the winged disc of Ancient Egypt. Those fantasies and imaginings of the mind of the Old World were separated in conception and birth by great stretches of time: but in the triangle of the Old Empire they seemed capable of life in cities and sites contemporaneous one with the other. So it seems to have been with the gods and the religious systems.

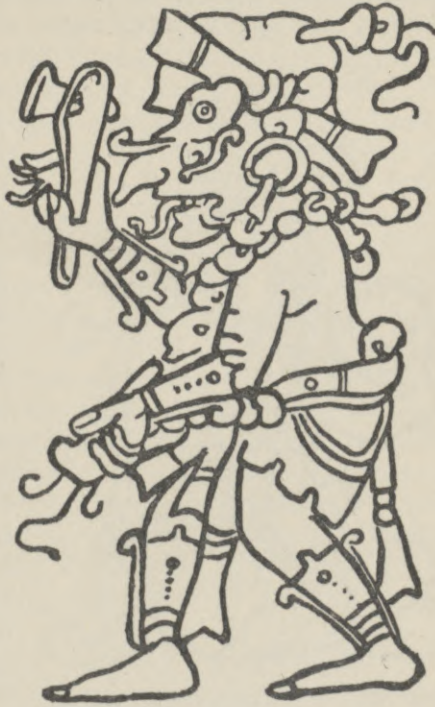
On the monuments are carved certain figures (generally as decorative adjuncts, forming portions of glyphic blocks and so forth), which, from their likeness to figures portrayed in the *Dresden Codex* of the New Empire, are labelled "gods" by the modern investigator. This is to miss out the ingenious theorizings regarding the great statue-like figures which dominate some stelæ, like that of the famous H at Copan.

A predominant figure on the monuments is that being whom modern investigators call variously the Long-nosed God, the Rain-and-Earth God, and Chac (from Yucatecan tradition). With some reason he is compared to Tlaloc, the Rain God of the Mexicans, who had a similar lengthy nose. He emerges from a convoluting overlay of symbols as a hideous figure—with few exceptions the deities of the monuments, if deities they be, are unhandsome figures—with a curved and pendant nose, a protruding tongue, and vigorously gesticulating hands and arms. In the

Dresden Codex he walks with a thunder-bolt in his hand. Uningenious commentators of the older school, alarmed at the length of this god's snout, so suggestive of an elephant's trunk, suggested it was modelled on the trunk of the tapir. But tapirs possess no special ferocity, such as this God obviously does: neither have they the remotest connection with agriculture. The long-nosed God has a very close connection, an interesting metamorphosis for the son of Shiva.

For a comparison of the attributes and appearances of the Indian god and the Mayan can leave but little doubt that the latter is at least the stepson of the former. Elephant-headed Ganesha or Gana-pati, the Son of the Destroyer, that stout and malignant being

who ruled over the demon-kingdom and all its malignantly stirring inhabitants has here, across the Pacific, very naturally changed into the Rain God. It is an understandable and uncomplex metamorphosis. Controlling the celestial demons, Ganesha, in his journeyings across the Pacific, came quite naturally to control the results of the playful celestial



THE ELEPHANT-HEADED GOD
CHAC

(Indra-Ganesha.)

(From the *Dresden Codex*.)

activities of these beings. Were all other of the dark Maya gods and dark Maya historical epochs as easy of elucidation, Mayology would be robbed of half its excitement.

Nor need there be much difficulty in identifying the bright Maize Spirit, of whom a statue comes from Copan, and who is represented elsewhere and numer-

ously as a young and commanding presence, with the early Indra of Hindu mythology, the conserver before he became the philosophical destroyer. That he represented for the Old Empire Maya the maize god is by no means certain, but he may well have done so, through an inter-linkage of a cause and effect clear enough. Another deity with a fairly clear paternity is the monkey-faced God. Who has not met him in the Hindu Hanuman?



THE HINDU MONKEY-GOD HANUMAN AS A MAYA DEITY

(From the *Dresden Codex*.)

To a half-dozen more deities of the monuments no such clear ancestral origin can be traced. The Sun-god, so called, the Gorgon-like grinning face with the filed teeth and lolling tongue, is a frequent figure on the monuments, owing for one reason to the fact that his head is a variant for the single-day period—the Kin sign. He it is who is portrayed on the shield before which stand the sacrificing priests in Palenque's Temple of the "Sun." An heritage of an older and darker era

than that of specifically Indian influence, he was yet to remain bright in the minds of the Maya, when other and more ephemeral gods had faded or were sternly tamed to mundane affairs. Among the more obvious and recognizable of the other deities is the death-god, also nameless, a grinning skull, a malignant skull.

The rites of the Old Empire theocracy appear to have included a provision of skulls to the gods. For long it was denied that the Maya had indulged in human sacrifice, at least in the Old Empire ; and this unpleasant custom was blamed upon the later Toltec who, as we shall see, invaded the New Empire. This denial was based upon a misconception of the purpose of sacrifice, or the degree of culture at which a people acquired or shed the rite. It was no necessary sign of barbarism. And it was closely linked with agriculture, the propitiation of the sun and earth gods by means of blood. From that connection it naturally spread out and presently blossomed into a necessary rite at multitudes of celebrations, feasts, fasts, commemorations, and what not. Ultimately, in Aztec Mexico, long after the heyday of the Old Empire Maya, it led to such gruesome holocausts as the sacrifice of 70,000 captives at the dedication of a single temple.

It seems improbable that Old Empire human sacrifice ever approached, in number of those sacrificed, such proportions as Aztec. But it is evident, in the skulls recovered from the hollow altars in the city of Uaxactun, that there also temples were dedicated with sacrifice. An altar at Tikal is carved with a design of human heads in bowls—heads of miniature Ganeshas, as the sacrifices assumed the divinity of the god. And at Piedras Negras there is a stela which bears a representation of the actual rite of human sacrifice—the victim stretched across a sacrificial block, his chest expanded, and blood fountaining in the gash from which the heart has been plucked. Again, the commonest of glyphs—those of the Full

Figure numerals, for example—show various bodies in tormented situations and positions. Agony was the tribute that humankind paid to divinity.

One of the lintels at Menchè-Yaxchilan shows a corpulent and richly-dressed figure kneeling in front of an even more podgy individual who bears in his hands a foliated staff with which he may be either threatening or blessing the kneeling figure. The surrounding glyphs give no clue, for they are uninterpreted. The kneeling figure grasps in his two hands a cord, or rather, a rope, set with thorns, and protrudes his tongue. Through a hole in his tongue he is drawing this cord, presumably as an act of sacrifice or penitence. It is a grisly scene, such as suddenly bares again the grinning face of the death-god behind the fine pomp of ceremony exhibited on the Copanec altars or the stuccoes of Palenque.

ix. *Origins Reconsidered*

A summary of the evidence of the monuments of London or New York in ruins would possibly supply an investigator with exceedingly erroneous views on many matters of Atlantic culture: it would certainly supply him with little insight into the lives of the vast mass of the people who inhabited these cities, or, apart from their ceremonial appearances, the lives of the priests, scientists, and rulers. Indeed, an irreverent side-glance upon the results of such an investigation might find the figures on a frieze, in conventional Græco-Roman costume, described as representative of the London or New York proletariat, and the unauthentic togas and sandals as the dress of these days! Least of all would our monuments tell definitely of the racial origins of the people who reared them.

In considering the monuments of such a civilization as that of the Old Empire Maya, however, the case is fortunately narrowed, together with the margin of error. It had complexities enough,



BAS-RELIEF FROM MENCHÊ—YAXCHILAN. A PENITENT
DRAWING A THORN-SET CORD THROUGH HIS TONGUE
(Old Empire)

but its sculptors seldom appear to have been called upon to portray more than three types which can be definitely regarded as representative of three distinct and different races.

These three racial types seem portrayed (i) as the tall, handsome, undeformed, haughty, or pensive rulers on the stelæ at Copan and Quirigua; (ii) as the ordinary, dominant individuals, with deformed heads, on the stelæ and stucco of all the other sites; (iii) as the minor, serf type, also, though not always, addicted to head-malformation—a type already instanced as the human supports for the feet of the sacrificing priests in Palenque's so-called Temple of the "Sun," and to be found elsewhere in crouching and subject attitudes on the sculptured monuments over the entire area.

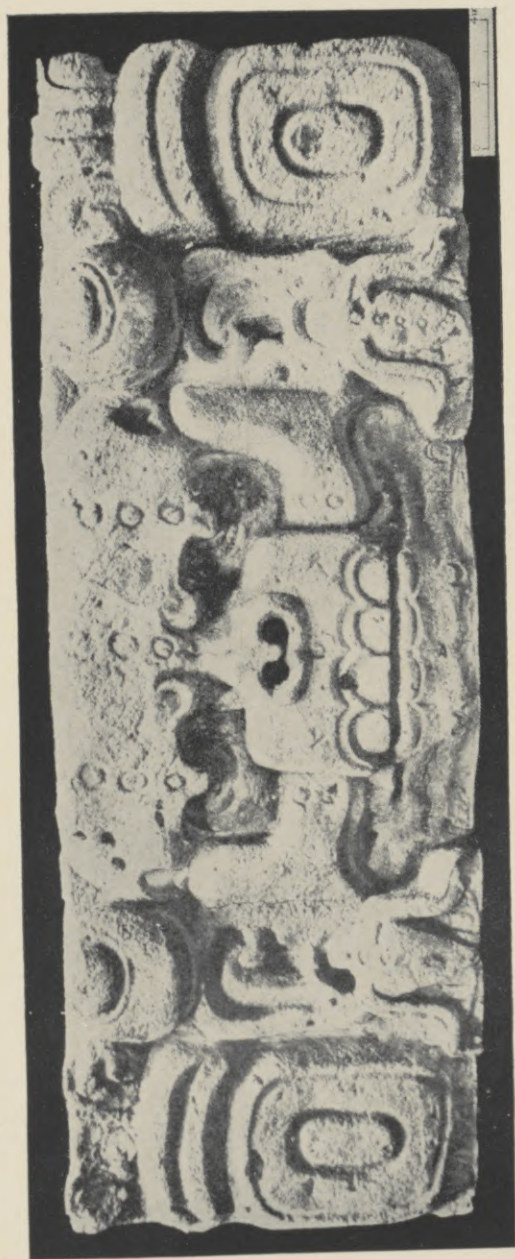
As seen from the preliminary survey of the theories which seek to trace the origins of the Maya people, nearly all the theorizers identify the Maya people with the Maya civilization. But the evidence we have adduced from the sites demonstrates that a large part of this civilization, all its important cultural basis and many entirely decorative adjuncts, was imported from Asia and Oceania. Whatever the origin of the Maya people of the Old Empire, that origin is connected only remotely with the origin of the area's antique civilizers.

So far from forming peculiar pockets in the Mexican territory to the north, and occupying the Central Americas only with a solid majority, it seems possible that most of Southern Mexico as well as Central America was originally inhabited by tribes of Mayance blood and speech. At least, there are legends of origin for all Mexican tribes but the Totonac, the Zapotec, and the Huastec—the first and the second of whom are "Mayoid." All other peoples in Mexico of non-Maya speech had definite legends of migration from the north. None of these migrations appear to have taken place much before the sixth or seventh Christian centuries, and possibly most of them took place much

later. Therefore, accepting the correlation of Christian and Mayan calendar entertained in this book, we must conclude that at the time of the rise of the Maya civilization (from the beginning of the 8th cycle onwards), Maya tribes had settled the country from the Panuco Valley to the borders of the present Republic of Honduras—all tribes in the Archaic state of culture. Individuals of those tribes very possibly bore a close resemblance to category (iii) of the types depicted on the monuments, and also, though in a lesser degree, to Type (ii).

Somewhere early in the 8th Cycle or late in the 7th, incursions of explorers, and finally definite prospectors and colonizers, began to enter the Central Mayan area, in search of the surface gold so thickly scattered in the Peten and Usamacintla area, in search of pearls and precious stones. These newcomers found many settled sites, and settled there themselves or reared fresh settlements and set up the marks of their characteristic civilization. They were full-blooded Asiatics, small in numbers; they bred and intermarried with the native population till, in a generation or so, they disappeared as a type. But they were remembered (or fresh comings supplied the models) and stand portrayed on the Copan and Quirigua statues as the racial aliens they were.

This, of course, is supposition. The monuments, having awakened our curiosity, are as silent on this matter, in the way of interpreted inscription, as on most others which we would like them to treat conclusively. No one, however, can resist the conclusion that the prevailing types at Palenque and Copan were racially alien to each other. Further, there is a difference in dress and accoutrements, in Copan and Quirigua the head-dress has the flowing uniformity of a people concerned greatly with seemliness of line. In Yaxchilan and Palenque head-dress and dress sprout in a floriferation of unattached and uncomely feather-work. Both these northern sites, as we saw, are later in the time-scale than Copan, though not than Quirigua, which



SKULL-DECORATION ON AN ALTAR AT COPAN
(Old Empire)

may well have been a cleruchy of Copan. That they were sites imitative of Copan, though developing their own characteristic art-forms, is a conclusion forced upon one; just as is the supplementary conclusion that the alien civiliziers had died out, or become merged in the higher strata of the native population, before these northward emigrations were attempted.

The Archaic civilization which the new-comers supplanted and transformed in such degree, had, nevertheless, we must assume, its own theocracy and civic rulers, its own Children of the Sun regarded as divine. With these the new-comers would naturally have interbred; to these they would have imparted fresh tales and legends of the world beyond the Pacific, the stories of the great Brahman gods, the stories of the makara and the serpent-bird; these they would have initiated into the mysteries of temple-building on gigantic scale, perhaps even attempting the true arch, and themselves passing, leaving the native architects to the simplicity of the corbelled; in conjunction with these they worked out a native record-script and a native calendar, even as did Hindu colonizers in conjunction with native ruling castes in many a tract of Indo-China and many an island of Indonesia. This is the ordinary method of script-creation, and went on in post-Columbian days. "A Cherokee Indian in North America, who had seen the books of the white man, was led thereby to devise an elaborate mode of writing for his own countrymen, and the curious syllabary invented by the Vei negroes by one of their own tribe had the same origin" (45).

In other words, the founding of the Maya Old Empire was not the work of the ancestors of the present-day Maya, either of the old triangle or of Yucatan. It was an alien importation from that ferment of cultural activity which reared the palaces and temples of the Chams and Khmers in Cambodia, which inspired the Buddhist Temple of Voro-Budur in Java and the Temple of Kalasan.

It is interesting to note the why and how of these trans-Pacific influences reaching ancient America at the time they did. About the middle of the fourth Christian era one of those great cultural renaissances, founded on economic change and prosperity, came into being in India, the inauguration of the Gupta epoch. In the words of Professor G. Elliot Smith, "The Gupta period witnessed the highest expression of art in India. Its influence spread far afield, to Ceylon and Burma, to Siam and Cambodia, to China and Japan. . . . This great wave of cultural renaissance swept not only along the whole Eastern littoral of Asia, but also passed by way of the islands of the Malay Archipelago (in particular Java) into the wide spaces of the Pacific Ocean. The small islands of Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia were able to seize and retain only a small contribution from the rich stream that flowed across Oceania. But that stream carried to Central America, Mexico, and the Pacific coast of South America the inspiration for the marvellous civilization of the Mayas and Incas, which reached their fullest expression between the sixth and twelfth centuries A.D." (40).

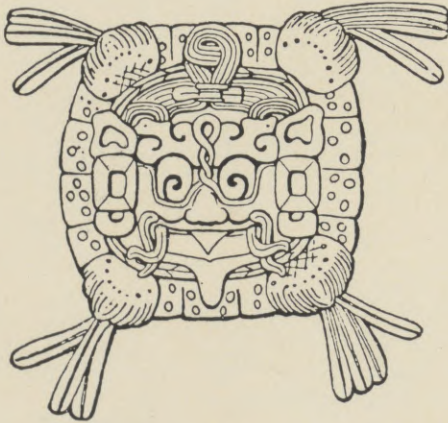
Diffusion of Indian culture (intermixed with other elements) into Cambodia between the third and twelfth centuries awoke a native art and civilization into being. For example, inscriptions for long were made in Sanscrit; presently these gave place to inscriptions in the native Khmer, just as, remote in Indonesia, on the verge of Micronesia, the Indian systems of writings stimulated the creation of native scripts, such as the Battak, even among the antique peoples but slightly affected by the passing of the great culture wave. In Cambodia the immigrant Hindu mythology suffered certain changes: the inscribed memorials and monuments make it clear that Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, was regarded as the chief of the pantheon, though Vishnu was also highly venerated. Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat were dedicated to Vishnu in A.D. 825. Beyond



The Gorgon's Head, Athens (Greece)



The Gorgon's Head, Syracuse (Sicily)



The Gorgon's Head, Palenque (Mexico)

TRANSPACIFIC DIFFUSION OF A SCULPTURAL MOTIF BASED
ON A GREEK MYTH

(After Imbelloni)

further India, in Indonesia, there were early two religions in being—the Brahman system and the Buddhist, here and there allying into and degenerating into a single system. Brahman was the earlier, and its cultural influences the earlier that flowed out into the Islands and the dark continents beyond.

A fine dark confusion of influences must be noted, though it is impossible here to do more than note them. But they prove how valueless is the criticism that the civilization of the antique Maya cannot be wholly Cambodian in origin (which has never been claimed) because it fails to reproduce the Cambodian civilization, art, and architecture in every feature. It might be urged similarly that Cambodian cannot be Indian in origin because of the fact that Cambodia was not a minor India. But, "at the time when the early exponents of Brahmanism advanced to China, Buddhism had also taken

root in their native land, being then considered merely a special variant of the belief in the old gods. Hence, with the transmission of Brahmanism, the seeds of Buddhism were undoubtedly sown in Indo-China. As Buddha himself was received into the cult of Vishnu as being the incarnation of this god, so, during the flourishing period of Brahmanism in Champa and Cambodia, his images were erected and worshipped within the temples dedicated to Siva



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE
ELEPHANT-HEAD DECORA-
TION ON STELA B AT COPAN

(After Maudslay and Elliot Smith.)

and Vishnu. Buddhism advanced to Indo-China by two routes. The first of these lead straight from India and Ceylon to the opposite coast. . . . Subsequently, however, the Northern or Sanscrit developments of Buddhism had advanced to further India by way of Central and Eastern Asia " (46).

Even greater was the intermixture and counter-mixture in Indonesia and Micronesia, their fusion sweeping eastwards before it in a tidal flood even older elements of culture, Persian, Babylonian, Egyptian, till it broke in successive waves on the coasts of the Central Americas.

THE HISTORY OF THE MAYA OLD EMPIRE

i. *The Dated Inscriptions Cease*

IT is now necessary to set down a short summary of all the evidence that bears upon the life and fate of that civilization that came to being in the Central American jungles over a thousand years ago. For this purpose it seems legitimate to abandon the practice of calling in only the evidence of the monuments, and to presume that the records and traditions of the Maya New Empire of Yucatan, as well as those of the Quiché and Kaxchiquel of Guatemala, bear intimately upon at least final phases in Old Empire history. But it is also well to reiterate that the Old Empire itself, in its records that stand imperishable in stone, tells us nothing whatever directly about its history. No Old Empire Herodotus, far less an Old Empire Thucydides, tells of the play of the usual trilogy of battle, murder, and sudden death in the great triangle, or if tells he does on some stela inscriptions, it is in a barbaric utterance to which our ears are still unattuned.

To return to the witness of the ruined cities: if we are to accept the history of each site as beginning and ceasing with first and final dated inscriptions, some fine confused history results. Some of these results have already been noted: others must now be tabulated.

Put briefly, Uaxactun, the oldest site, founded in 8.14.19.13.15., 8 Men 8 Kayab (A.D. 592), was deserted 571 years later in A.D. 1163. Tikal, its Twin City, founded 9.0.10.0.0. (A.D. 709) was deserted 424 years later, in 10.2.0.0.0. (A.D. 1133). Copan was founded in 9.1.0.0.0. and deserted in 9.18.10.0.0. (A.D. 719-1064). Palenque was founded in 9.10.10.0.0. (A.D. 897) and extinguished a little over half a century later, in 9.13.0.0.0. (A.D. 956). Inside the great

triangle the multitude of sites had an exceedingly haphazard longevity according to the evidence of the inscriptions. They need not be pursued in the figures of Maya chronology. Ocosingo was occupied for 260 years, Piedras Negras for 187, Menchè-Yaxchilan, (no inscriptions) 140 years, Quirigua 65 years, Seibal 118 years, Benque Viejo 20 years, Flores 40 years, Quen Santo 5 years.

By 10.4.0.0.0. the area of the Maya Old Empire was apparently completely deserted.

Humanity loves tragic effects in reading of the history of antique peoples. Archaeologists and historians share the common passion. In spite of the fact that they constantly reiterate that there is no very obvious connection between the dates on the monuments and the actual dates when the cities were abandoned, every writer on the subject assumes that, more or less, abandoned they were around the time when the dated inscriptions cease. A good example of this romantic-historical obsession is shown in a paper written some time ago by the present writer :

" In 9.19.0.0.0., Piedras Negras in the north, Uaxactun in the east, and Quirigua in the south, separated by almost the entire surviving stretch of Old Empire territory, the guardians of the surviving triangle, were extinguished. Naranjo went next, in 9.19.10.0.0. Of the whole Empire only Seibal and Tikal were left. . . .

" This list of dates, the hour-strokes for the death of the great pre-Columbian culture, is amplified by no direct historic data whatever. But by 10.2.10.0.0. . . . the entire Old Empire territory had presumably been depopulated " (47).

The present writer then went on to consider the question of why this depopulation took place, coming to the tentative conclusion that there were two distinct races in the Old Empire territory, and that one overthrew the other. He romanticized in good company. Dr. S. G. Morley (20) believes that the

entire Old Empire stretch was abandoned, and left so abandoned, for *eight hundred years*. Dr. T. Gann sees a wholesale exodus of the population, obeying the commands of their priests. Mr. T. A. Joyce (17) is the tentative protagonist of a "Toltec" invasion, driving the Old Empire citizens from their homes. A general assumption of desertion of sites contemporaneous more or less with the cessation of dated inscriptions breaks through the gravest and most cautious statements of the older school of Americanists. This, as has been said, is natural: it has a fine, tenebrous glow, this picture of the hasting exodus of a nation from its antique habitat, driven into the wilds of Yucatan to found the lesser New Empire.

But, as such sites as Copan and Palenque had obviously a long history prior to the earliest dated inscriptions discovered, there is good reason to suppose that some, if not all of the sites had a fairly lengthy history after the inscriptions cease. Graffiti, long post-dating the last inscriptions, on walls at Tikal confirm this. Piedras Negras' florid sculpture suggests it. And, as we shall see, other historic evidences appear to demonstrate the fact that such a site as Copan may have endured, in a minor way, until the coming of the Spaniards to America.

But a consideration of the theories which would explain the romantic abandonment is fruitful, if only as psychological insight on their various authors. Dr. H. J. Spinden is explicit:

"The explanation of the eclipse of all that was finest in the Maya civilization is not far to seek. Any long-continued period of communal brilliance undermines morals and religion, and saps the nerves and muscles of the people as a whole. Extravagance runs before decadence and civil and foreign war frequently hasten the inevitable end" (19).

Professor Konrad Haebler appears to agree with the dread effects wrought by "communal brilliance":

"But prosperity was fatal to the nation. . . . And so it is intelligible that they went down before an

external shock, though it was the shock of an enemy which was by no means of overpowering strength" (46).

Dr. S. G. Morley more cheerfully disagrees with the effects that Drs. Spinden and Haebler see in "communal brilliance":

"While it is undoubtedly true that flamboyancy in decorative motives increases steadily during the Great Period, reaching on the last monuments at the different cities to an almost bewildering ramification of detail, it does not follow that the Maya could not have carried out this extravagance of design even further if they had had more time in which to do so; and, so far as technique, treatment, and the like are concerned, the latest monument in each city is technically the best, showing no loss in skill and proficiency in technical processes to the very end" (20).

While the Spinden-Haebler theories may be dismissed as vague fore-mutters in the dawn of the day which had yet to hear the full-throated bellow of Dr. Oswald Spengler, assiduously devastating the planet with theories of cyclic catastrophe, the belief of Dr. Morley himself on this subject of the desertion of the sites calls for more attention. He believes, as do a large number of students of American history, that the cities of the great triangle were deserted through the failure of the Mayas' agricultural system to feed and support the great populations. Further, the method, probably as primitive and wasteful among the antique Maya as among their modern descendants in Yucatan, gradually exhausted the land surrounding each city. Populations multiplied, and the circles of cultivation grew tough mats of grass and weed impossible for the Maya hoeing-stick to penetrate. Farmers had to push further and further out into the jungle bush, bringing more plantation stretches under cultivation, and in time finding those stretches also grow barren in their hands. Ultimately, huge concentric rings of un-

productive grassland surrounded each city, and civilization broke down on the problem of transporting, without the aid of domestic animals, the produce of the leagues-distant plantations to the teeming centres. The populations therefore abandoned the cities—the oldest sites earliest since these were surrounded by the widest circles of unproductive land—and drifted eastward into Yucatan in search of virgin territory.

There are certain serious drawbacks to the acceptance of this theory. Firstly, we know nothing directly of the methods of agriculture in the Old Empire. Dr. Gann's Maya, with some knowledge of intensive agriculture, seem much more probable inhabitants than the plantation serfs digging with the primitive hoe in the fashion common to later Yucatan. More seriously, the respective ages of the cities are far from supporting the theories of soil exhaustion. Palenque, according to the catastrophic interpretation of the inscriptions, was abandoned after a bare sixty years of occupation, Quirigua after eighty-five, Ixkun after thirty. And, all differences of soil taken into consideration, it is impossible that that surrounding the Uaxactun-Tikal Twin Cities remained productive for four or five hundred years, while that surrounding Benque Viejo became exhausted in twenty.

Dr. Gann once leant to the belief that the Old Empire Maya abandoned their homes and set out on this stupendous eastward and northward exodus at the command of their priests, and in the fulfilment of "ancient prophecies." He cites, as analogous, instances of modern Maya tribes suddenly abandoning prosperous regions for obscure religious motives and also quotes what has long been thought to be the classic New Empire example of the "abandonment-complex"—the desertion of the great metropolis of Uxmal by the Tutuli Xiu, who decamped overnight to the miserable nearby townlet of Mani. But it is safe to assume that no people abandons such habitat as the Old Empire, hallowed as it must have been

with memories of the greatest triumphs, at least for the ruling caste, under such compulsion as "priestly prophecy." The priests themselves, town-dwellers to a man, would have been the first to suffer in such a migration.

The pestilence theory to account for the supposed depopulation of the Old Empire with the cessation of the inscriptions is no longer seriously entertained. It, also, fails to explain why the cities appear to have been neither suddenly nor progressively abandoned, but given up haphazard, without regard to grouping or position. A great pestilence would hardly have taken a hundred and fifty years, from 9.13.0.0.0. onwards, to sweep the country.

Dr. Ellsworth Huntington (48) is the originator of a theory of depopulation which also has found considerable favour among those who see the cities deserted at the same time as the dated inscriptions cease. To give this theory effect it is first necessary to accept the system of correlation of Maya and Gregorian dates favoured by Spinden, Morley, and Gann—a system which places the founding of Uaxactun in A.D. 68 and the abandonment of Tikal in A.D. 609. This assumed, Dr. Huntington's climatic hypotheses bear upon the presumed "abandonment." For he sees, as does Mr. Julian Huxley, solar and sea changes about A.D. 600 beginning to bring an extreme of moisture upon the area of the great triangle. Year by year the rainy season grew longer and the rains descended in greater torrents. Under these conditions of extreme wetness the primitive Maya agricultural system creaked and then collapsed.

This, of course, is a variation of the abandonment for reasons of soil exhaustion—an apparent reversion of the first theory, though really complementary to it. In the first case the soil became too poor, in the second it became too luxuriant in its growth of jungle bush. But, accepting the abandonment, as is done for the purpose in this section, Dr. Huntington is no more convincing than the champions of the first

theory. There is a difference of some 524 years between the Spinden system and the system of correlation adopted throughout this book. The Maya Old Empire appears to have *arisen*, not collapsed, at the time of Dr. Huntington's supposed climatic changes. And if the degree of rainfall now is the same as that in A.D. 600 then the numerous milpas of the present-day inhabitants ought to be impossible agricultural feats; if the degree has reverted to that familiar before the catastrophic climatic change, then the once-fertile Peten site of the great Twin-Cities suffered no more and no less than from present-day disabilities. One might argue, from the parched surroundings of Uaxactun, that an entire failure of the water-supply is more likely than a sudden increase in the rainfall.

Among other causes used by modern enquirers to depopulate the unfortunate area of the Maya Old Empire are earthquakes, in an area singularly free of them. For though the Quiché inhabited a portion of the Cordilleras earthquake belt, the Old Empire Maya appear to have avoided it deliberately. One may assume that the alien culture-bringers from Asia and Indonesia were aware of the effect of earthquake shocks upon colossal architectural schemes, and speedily abandoned, or failed to settle in, regions so affected.

As we shall see, there is no good reason to suppose any abandonment of the Old Empire territory for at least three hundred years after the dated inscriptions had ceased to appear on the monuments. Not only was there not a great lapse of time—Dr. Morley's "800 years"—between the abandonment and reoccupation of the area, but at the utmost only a hundred years or so of degeneration and conflict with external and internal human enemies prior to the coming of the Spaniards.

ii. *War or Peace?*

Early students of the monuments, after their re-discovery in the forests of Chiapas, Guatemala, and Honduras, were fond of stating that the Early Maya was one of the most peaceful of races, and of picturing the Old Empire as secure from warfare and its attendant evils and stimulants. Under the unlimited power of a theocracy—and theocracies are almost always peaceful—the Maya civilization climbed the heights, unique in its progress, carving on its monuments only matters of scientific import, or unarmed rulers, or memorials of such congresses of scientists as were assembled in Copan to alter the great sun-dial there.

Because this statement is still repeated occasionally in a loose manner, it might be well to state that the monuments bear witness to no such peaceful habits. If the weapons carried by the Copanec statues were symbolic, we have no knowledge of the fact. To call them "ceremonial bars" is as adequately explanatory, and about as justified, as to suggest they were primitive cigar-holders. They appear to have been weapons.

In Piedras Negras and Menchè-Yaxchilan especially monuments are to be found of bound and captive warriors—unpleasantly bound and unpleasantly treated. These are northern outposts, and probably mark the occasional raiding and subjugation of un-Mayan enemies. On the other hand, Palenque and Ocosingo, lying further to the north and west, and more open to the attack of enemies emerging through the Tehuantepec neck, bear no such obtrusive marks of delight in battle and conquest as the two central sites.

The belief in the Mayas' un-warlike qualities was bound up with another exploded belief—that they did not indulge in the rite of human sacrifice. As we have seen, both monuments and direct discoveries under altars in the sites completely disprove this.

One of the great Americanist mysteries, indeed, is how even the most simple-minded student, far more the simple-minded archæologist making a direct study, could ever have gathered these humanitarian notions of Maya culture. It was largely a civilization of fear, a fearful civilization, in many respects an aberrant civilization.

The Archaic civilizations of the Old World were for long peaceful civilizations. Organized warfare rose with the rise of powerful groups of nobility inside the framework of the state who came to resent the central power of Sun King and Sun King's priests. Or it rose through contact of the Archaic civilizations with outer fringes of peoples whom they neither subdued nor civilized, but raided and despoiled. In time these outer peoples retaliated by arming themselves with the weapons and methods of the civilized Archaics, and triumphantly invading their territory, as the Celts fell on Archaic ("Neolithic") Europe. Victims in the human sacrifices were infrequently at first captives of war: they were selected and honoured members of each individual community.

To come upon evidences of human sacrifice, therefore, is not to come upon conclusive evidence that the sacrificers were members of a warlike race, capturing and sacrificing slaves. Yet (such being the shrinking of human flesh, antique or modern, from personal pain or agony inflicted on those intimate to one) this sacrifice of slaves or the lowly in place of the semi-divine sun-children was a natural growth. Warfare helped it or caused it.

Which species of sacrifice was employed in the Maya Old Empire?

To begin with, the Maya Old Empire was well beyond the culture of the Archaic horizon, as the new historian applies that term to the Old World. Though of mixed origin, a fusion of many Asiatic and African and Indonesian strains, the civilization that washed against Central American shores in the early part of the sixth Christian

century, and penetrated in search of metals and power into the Central American triangle, was mature and probably blasé in many ways. Warfare was known to the civilizers : gods who delighted in it and in sacrifice (substitute-sacrifice) they had brought with them from Cambodia and Java and the lesser islands. If ever there was an early cohesion, pre-dating the monuments, among the Old Empire cities, it probably fell to pieces very quickly. By the time the theocracy of mixed invader and Maya chiefly-breed was raising the stelæ and altars and decorating the panels and lintels, the period which Dr. John Teeple calls the Period of Independence had set in. Later followed a Period of Unity, and finally, towards the end of the recorded inscriptions, a Period of Revolt.

This suggests that the sacrificed heads under the Uaxactun altars, for instance, were the heads of captives from rival cities, just as it suggests that the captives depicted at Piedras Negras may well have been raided from Palenque or Menché-Yaxchilan. Certainly all such captives are of Maya stock, with the head characteristically deformed. The Tikal altar carved with a design of heads in bowls may have been an altar actually in use for the sacrifice of enemies—perhaps from the Twin-City which apparently founded Tikal.

Even so, a final conclusion eludes us. As we saw, one of the predominant Maya deities was a Mayaized Ganesha, the Elephant-Headed God who in Hindu mythology was the son of Shiva the Destroyer, and who in Cambodia and other of his eastward halts in his journeying half round the earth appears to have acquired many of his father's characteristics. Now, the heads in bowls on the Tikal altar have Ganesha's features, suggesting that the sacrifice was made in honour of that tenebrous God, whose parent in his native home appears represented circled and draped with skulls. But these skulls, in India, further-India or the Islands, were by the sixth century merely

symbolic, and human sacrifice as an actual rite laid by. Apart from the actual pitiful heads excavated from under the Uaxactun altars, a great deal of the sacrificial sculptures may represent merely symbolic acts.

Still, the Maya encountered by the Spaniards in Yucatan used living and concrete symbols and carried out rites bloody and realistic enough. Were these rites and customs, which necessitated the seizure of captives in war, inherited from the Old Empire unchanged, or were they the degeneration, from symbolism into bloody practice, of the religious customs of a people?

Though such question remains perforce unsettled, the weight of evidence seems to conjure up a picture of an Empire in its early phases an Empire only culturally: politically, it was divided into many small states; later still these states may have been united, forcibly united, under some central power, perhaps a league of the Peten cities. Later still, that league fell apart, and political hegemony ceased around the time when the dated inscriptions also ceased to be carved.

iii. *Old Empire Historical Fiction*

Mendacity is not only the child of research, but (to mix the metaphor) the cement of history. The imaginative interpretation of puzzling, dazzling, or inexplicable personalities or epochs in history by poets and story-tellers is both legitimate and useful, as much for the light it throws on the psychology of the artist as for the fresh light his mendacity throws upon history. Early fiction of a historic type, indeed, seems to have been of serious grain and intent: the story-teller either believed implicitly in the child of his imagination, or conceived that this child would add moral or other benefits to the particular community in which he told the story. This may be seen

in the semi-sacred literature of Greece, Egypt, India, Sumer, Samoa, and the Maya New Empire.

Historic fiction with a bearing on the life and history of the Old Empire is practically non-existent. Nothing comes from that area—at least, as yet nothing, though future research among the modern Lacandone and Mopan Indians may alter this. But the barbarous Maya tribes in the highlands of Guatemala, the Quiché, and, to a less extent, the Kaxchi-quel, preserved various legends and traditions which at one point—the mention of the kingdom of Xibalba—may touch upon the Maya Old Empire.

The Quiché were subdued in 1524 by Cortes' lieutenant, Alvarado. They possessed a close kingship, some architectural science, religious practices analogous to those of both their Nahua neighbours and their distant New Empire relations. But they possessed neither the script nor the calendar of the Old and New Empire civilizations. There is therefore warrant for believing that such high elements of culture as they possessed were either a driftage and seepage from the Maya Old Empire, or original elements left in the passage through their country, gold-seeking, of the Asiatic civiliziers who built that Empire.

Shortly after the Spanish Conquest a Quiché Maya wrote in Latin lettering, but in his own language, a collection of legends and traditional histories which he called the *Popol Vuh*—*The Book of the People*. Undergoing various vicissitudes, and, like Landa's *Relacion* for a time lost to the sight of men, the *Popul Vuh* was translated into various European languages and the information contained in it extensively used as a tool to interpret the life and manners of the antique peoples.

The larger part of the earlier portions of the narrative may be passed over here. The creation story, decorated and elaborated, is that creation story common to all the ancient world of the Archaic civilization, with deliberating gods, with wicked or

unsatisfactory humankind, with avenging floods and new creations. At the end of these numerous celestial experimentings, the sun rises at last upon a world which had been in complete darkness. This is, one recognizes, the coming of the culture of the sun-god. Most of the minor details of this creation story can be paralleled the world over, and merely add fresh proof to the evidence already gathered of the common cultural basis of the Old and New Worlds. For these creation legends (almost the same creation legends) were found in antique America from the borders of Chili to the borders of Wisconsin—wherever the antique rites, and with them agriculture, had spread.

But the more interesting portions of the narrative are concerned with the fabulous adventures of two brothers, Hunhunahpu and Vukub Hunahpu, and the former's sons, respectively Hunahpu and Xbalanque.

Hunhunahpu and Vukub are experts at the ball-game presently to be described in another chapter. So are the rulers of the Kingdom of Xibalba. This kingdom is spoken of as a remote and gloomy place, the abode of the dead ; or perhaps only the abode of dread. Those rulers invite the two elder brothers to play a match at the ball-game. The two brothers accept the challenge, set out, and in time come within the gloomy borders of Xibalba.

Here (somewhat surprisingly), once they have entered the dark palace of the Xibalban rulers, they are put to a series of unkind tests which appear to have little relation to the proposed ball-game. But the two brothers are unsurprised. Sport pastimes called for endurance in those days. The Xibalban hosts appear and invite them to be seated. The brothers sit down, apparently on benches, and discover that these are red-hot stones. Surviving this somewhat unsettling reception, they proceed onwards into a further chamber, the Tenebrous Place. Here the Xibalbans follow up their inhospitable reception by seizing the two brothers and slaughtering them, decapitating them, and burying the bodies.

Hunhunahpu's head is depended from the stem of a calabash tree. In that gloomy world of Xibalba one is apt to make visual mistakes. The hanging head resembles a gourd, and the strolling Xibalbans will assemble under it unwitting the dead, but still sentient, Hunhunahpu overhead. At last, some time after the killing of the two brothers, a daughter of one of the Xibalban rulers rests under the tree. Casting its eyes upon the woman, Hunhunahpu's head expectorates in her hand. Expectoration was always one of the favourite pastimes of the Americas.

But the action of the head of Hunhunahpu was not one of contempt. Shortly afterwards the Xibalban woman finds herself pregnant. Death will await her if that interesting physiological state, then as now apparently called her "condition," is discovered. She decides to escape from Xibalba and carries out her escape, emerging from the gloomy kingdom into the bright "land of the living."

Arrived at the home of Hunhunahpu and Vukub, she discovers the mother of the presumptive father of her children still alive. In that home she presently gives birth to twins, Hunahpu (who lacks a syllable of his father's name and is not to be confused with him), and Xbalanque.

The twins grow up, as mischievous and daring as are most heroic children in antique legend. The world is by then afflicted by three earthquake gods, giants, whom Hunahpu and Xbalanque overcome through the force of their superior magic. But one day they hear the story of the end of their father in the Gloomy Land of Xibalba. They also discover some discarded ball-game equipment which had belonged to Hunhunahpu and Vukub, and practise assiduously until they are experts. So qualified, they set out for Xibalba to revenge the deaths of the two elder brothers.

In the entrance hall of the Xibalban palace are seated a variety of figures, some made of wood, some human beings. The Xibalbans are evidently

aware of their coming, and the test is that they must know which figures are alive, and which inanimate. This they discover by despatching an ant which stings each of the figures in succession. Stung, those animate cry out ; those inanimate preserved, presumably, a wooden silence.

Next, they are ordered by the Xibalbans to gather great blossoms protected by heights and thorn-brakes. Again they summon the ants to their aid, leaf-cutting ants which bring them the blossoms. Test number two also has been passed triumphantly. The third is one which jolts the modern imagination. They are each given a cigar, and told they must pass the night in smoking, but in the morning still have the cigar alight.

This difficult feat the twins perform by catching fireflies during the night and attaching them to the ends of their cigars. Seeing the glow, the Xibalbans conclude that the cigars are alight. In the morning, when they come to inspect the results of the test, they find the cigars still satisfactorily unconsumed. They accordingly institute a fourth test : this is for the twins to pass the night in a horrific residence, "The Long House of Bats."

This Longhouse was inhabited by a species of bat of peculiar ferocity. They destroy any human being who enters the portals of the gloomy mansion. The story conveys an eerie enough atmosphere here : it is a macabre gem. At first the twins save themselves by hiding in their blow-pipes—either reducing their size by magic before seeking such refuge, or else by being bearers of extraordinary pipes. But after the long hours of the night, Hunahpu tires of the vigil and pokes out his head from his blowpipe to see if there is any sign of the dawn. Thereat a bat swoops down and slices off his head with a despatch similar to that of the blackbird which assailed so grievously the maid hanging out the clothes in the garden of European fairy-tale.

The consequences were more grievous for Hunahpu.

But the resources of the twins are still unexhausted. Xbalanque secures a tortoise shell, affixes it on his brother's shoulders, thus presumably stopping the blood-flow. Leaving the semi-dead Hunahpu, he goes forth from the Longhouse of Bats to engage the Xibalbans in the ball-game.

But before setting out, we are told that Xbalanque has arranged for a rabbit to assist. Where the rabbit comes from is not mentioned: it was probably the usual conjurer's rabbit. In the ball-court the rabbit conceals itself in a crevice near the far end; Xbalanque strikes the ball in that direction, an amazing blow; for it shoots down to the far end of the court. But this was only in appearance. The scudding dot was the rabbit. The Xibalbans pursue the rabbit, believing it the ball. While they are engaged in this, Xbalanque, again inexplicably, secures the head of Hunahpu which the bats had carried away.

The twins now escape from Xibalba, and project new plans for the destruction of its rulers. They assume the guise of wandering clowns and contortionists, and gain admittance to Xibalba to entertain the rulers. By their magic in the subsequent entertainment, they kill and revive themselves several times. The Xibalbans become intrigued as to how this is done. They allow themselves to be killed on the understanding that they will be revived again. But the twins, after making the slaughter, refuse the revivification.

Ultimately, Hunahpu and Xbalanque ascend to the sky and become the sun and moon.

Even in the simplified version recounted here, several things are obvious. First, the story contains many details of the wandering of the dead soul in the after-life which are paralleled in Hindu mythology; secondly, the story has gathered many accretions upon its original version, possibly Christian accretions as well as others. This is obvious from the fact of Hunahpu and Xbalanque awaiting the

dawn in a period when no dawn is possible, for the sun had not yet been created; and thirdly, the adventures of Xbalanque and Hunahpu are in many ways a re-enactment of the oldest drama in the world, especially the incidents in the ball-court. That drama is the fight for and recovery of the body of Osiris in Egyptian mythology. It was the foundation of all drama. In later ages and other countries the body was dispensed with and a symbol of the head used instead. From this arose all the early ball-games. Xbalanque, though the story does not state so, in recovering his brother's head during the ball-game, *recovered the ball*. High tragedy in the first settlements of the antique Nile was re-enacted five thousand years later in the cities of Central America.

But what, if any, light do the fantastic adventures of the two sets of twins throw upon the history of the Old Empire?

Nunez de la Vega states that the Quiché were in the habit of sending their offspring to the Maya cities to be "knighted." Possibly there was some such system of training the sons of barbaric chiefs in the great sites. If this was so, it is not impossible to see in "Xibalba" either the Old Empire itself, or one of its states. It is fairly obvious from the general context of the story that it is the Kingdom of the Dead only in a symbolical way—it was a terrifying place of great buildings, wonder-working magicians, and giant statues of lifelike proportions and appearance. Here, possibly, the sons of the barbarian chiefs had in their training to pass a species of initiation. Sometimes they failed and sometimes they rebelled; in their own country they returned with stories of their prowess, how they had overcome the terrible Xibalbans in their own mysteries. Barbarian boasting may lie at the root of the tale, but there may yet be a substratum of fact.

In all ages and climes the daughters of ruling castes in civilized countries and cities have upon occasion taken barbarian lovers: all ancient romance

is founded on such happenings. It is possible that Hunhuna'pu's paternity was accomplished in an orthodox manner, and his guilty partner fled the city to the barbarian hinterlands to give birth to actual twins, while the father himself was sacrificed with such rites as were common to the Old Empire area, and his head hung up as a warning.

But a great deal more intensive research in the elements of the *Popul Vuh* is required before we can be sure of its origins and references. And even when these references are historic, one must admit that they throw but little light on the history and fate of the Old Empire, unless we are to take the destruction of the Xibalbans by the twins as the story of a great raid upon some Old Empire city. This seems improbable enough. The Xibalban references, if they apply at all to the Old Empire, throw some little light on its customs, the ball-game for instance, and on the power and terror of its name.

iv. *The Strayings of the "Toltec" Xiu*

Reference has already been made to the so-called *Books of Chilan Balaam*—the *Books of the Tiger Priests*, written in literary Yucatecan (Zuyua), but in Latin characters. These books were apparently, in most cases, translated after the Spanish Conquest of Yucatan from narratives set forth on the papyrus of the *Agave Americana*, and in Maya hieroglyphics. This translation work appears to have been carried out by priests of the old faith who had learned a new, if but little more humane and cultured, one: these converts had command of both scripts, and unfortunately left no account of their methods of translation.

The celebrated *Books* came to light in the course of the nineteenth century, with the general archaeological wakening of interest in the Mayas. They are not a series of books of one place or library, but separate and divided and finely confused accounts

of astronomical datings and tribal history. The one which enshrines the history of that remarkable family of rulers, the "Toltec" Xiu, is the one with which this section is concerned. This is the *Mani Book*.

It opens with the statement that (in the simplified, if not degenerate form of the old Calendar used by the Maya of the New Empire) in Katun 8 Ahau the Tutul Xiu, under the leadership of Holon Chantepeuh, set out from Nonoual, "to the west of Zuiva and in the land of Tulapan."

If we extend Lehmann's correlation to the Katun count, yet take into consideration the numerous factors weighing against anything more than a tentative reliance in the "Katun" datings, we may approximate this date to A.D. 700. In other words, the "Toltec" Xiu set out on their march a little before the first dated inscription was carved at the city of Tikal.

Nonoual, Zuiva, and Tulapan have been identified with various portions of the New World. The Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg would have Nonoual in Oaxaca, Toltec territory, and sees Holon Chantepeuh's exodus as a drifting raid of aliens into Maya territory. Such modern scholars as MM. Genet and Chelbatz substantially agree with their countryman, but place Nonoual in Acallan, west of the Laguna de Terminos. Mr. T. A. Joyce, on the other hand, finds it "at present unidentified, but almost certainly somewhere in the Central Maya area."

The Abbé, believing in a Nahuatl origin for the Xiu, concluded that Tutul meant Toltec. It is certain that long years afterwards the enemies of the Xiu, the Cocomes and Itzas, in the happy days of the New Empire with which we have yet to deal, were in the habit of dubbing the Xiu "strangers" in the sense of the Greek "barbaroi." Also, the later Xiu notabilities themselves seem to have religiously eschewed the "Tutul" from their personal names, e.g. Nachelxiu.

But this may no more than refer to the fact that

the Xius came from the northern portion of the Old Empire territory. They may have been exiles driven forth when the early Period of Independence came to an end in the northern Old Empire. In the New Empire, as we shall see, the term "Toltec" was a natural term of abuse to apply to an enemy: it was what Toltecs and enemies were for.

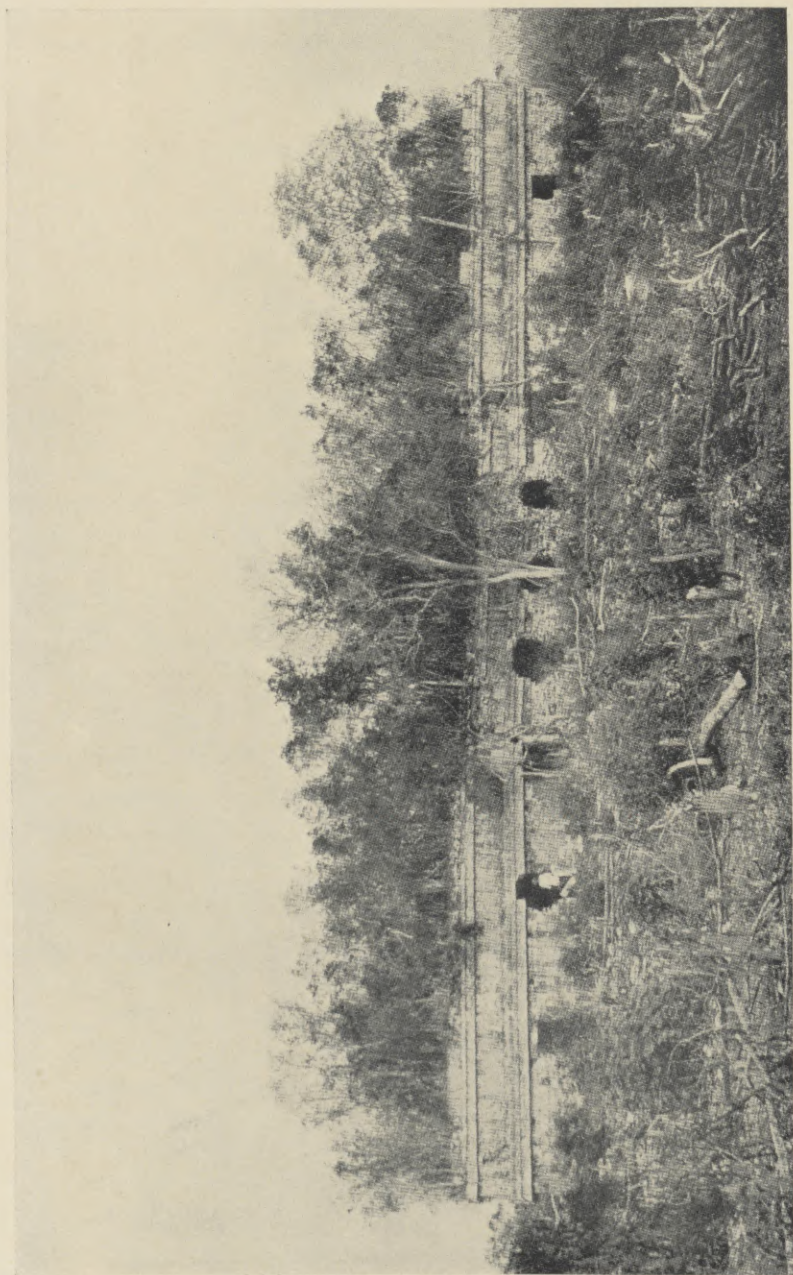
About eighty years after setting out from Nonoual they settled in Chacnouitan.

Where was Nonoual, in the light of such re-orientation of Maya history as this outline has attempted? It was probably some northern city, Comalcalco, Palenque, Ocosingo. As we have seen, the inscribed datings appear to bear little relation to the actual date of a city's founding, and Palenque—say—may have been founded long before A.D. 897. Then a Period of Unity set in throughout the Old Empire—political, perhaps, as well as artistic. If the Xiu were a group driven forth, or voluntarily going forth from Palenque, it is safe to presume that they would have found little lodgment in Maya territory; and the Chacnouitan in which they settled was possibly one of the new Maya cleruchies beginning to dot the Rio Hondo and its confluent. Possibly it was Tzibanchè.

Two hundred years or so after its foundation, the Tutul Xiu abandoned Chacnouitan. Possibly the Period of Disunity was returning, and the datings of inscriptions already ceasing—again a reflex of political change. Of these things the Tutul Xiu records say nothing. They bring their protagonists out of the darkness of another 197 years or so with the laconic statement that the Tutul Xiu "discovered [and presumably settled in] Zian Caan"—another name for Bakhahal in southern Yucatan.

They then retire the Xiu into darkness again with a morose brevity. Still marching morosely, we shall encounter them in the New Empire.

This, if it shines at all on Old Maya history, shines with a feeble glimmer indeed. But it suggests the



RUINS OF A MAYA "COLLEGE"—THE AKAT 'CIB AT CHICHEN ITZA
(New Empire)

By permission of the trustees of the British Museum

Old Empire, if not in the travail of catastrophe, at least sending out new colonizing expeditions. It suggests, as we have hinted, some connection between the exodus of the Tutul Xiu and the new period of Disunity which arose in the calendrical datings in the cities. Also, that system of dating was nearing its end. Dating by the short count, the Katun count, was coming into Maya life.

Further, one gathers the picture of Holon Chantepeuh as a warrior, a leader of men, the captain of his tribe. This is no priestly attribute. Did the exodus of the Xiu, from whatever part of the ancient Maya territory they came, mark the period of civil warfare?

Or did possessors of the secular and theocratic power reign side by side throughout the Old Empire, the theocrats having full power in decoration of temples and the like, and so leaving modern investigators with a notion of an all-powerful priesthood, which may, indeed, have been never all-powerful, but severely under the control of a kingly or noble class?

v. *The End of the Maya Old Empire*

Any account of Mayan history and civilization divides itself naturally into an Old Empire and a New Empire section. Until lately the terms "Old" and "New" were believed to have direct bearing on the respective ages of the two "Empires" (for the New Empire at least was an Empire only culturally, and the Old Empire a political Empire for possibly only a short period in its history). It was believed that the Maya civilization arose originally inside the great triangle. There it blossomed and grew and developed its culture. Then catastrophe smote it. By 10.4.0.0.0. all the ancient sites were deserted. The inhabitants, or the survivors of the great Old Empire civilization, fled east and west, the greater body fleeing into the barren peninsula of Yucatan, as was proved by dates at Chichen Itza and

Tulum in the middle of the third Katun of Baktun ten. Some refugees founded the site of Quen Santo, remotely in the west, where they lived a precarious life of five years, until their city was extinguished in 10.2.10.9.0. (A.D. 1143).

The reasons once given for the precipitate flight of



THE SO-CALLED MAYA
"DEATH-GOD"

(From the Dresden Codex.)

the precipitate flight of a nation from its early habitat are, as we saw in a former section, entirely inadequate. There is no evidence to the effect that either the agricultural system failed, the land was overtaken by seasons of singular wetness, depopulating epidemics raged, or that the Maya choked to death of a surfeit of their own imaginings, as Dr. Spinden would have them do. There is no evidence of a heart-broken trek into the wilds of Yucatan, bearing their gods and goods and leaving the great triangle to the prowling jaguar for a romantic "eight hundred years." The Old Empire Maya merely

ceased to erect dated monuments.

For it is not by any means clear that they ever ceased to record the dates of the hotun-endings. These may have been inscribed on the temple walls in a subject more perishable than stone: Maya painting has almost entirely vanished from the buildings, except in cracks and crevices. Those great

blank wall-spaces on the exterior of the Maya temples may well have recorded the passing of many a time-period in a manner less arduous, if still as useful or useless calendrically.

But even this seems largely an unnecessary supposition from what we now know of New Empire history. Excavation has made short work of the hypothesis that the New Empire long post-dated the Old Empire in antiquity. At Ichpaatun in Chetemal Bay is a stela dated 9.8.0.0.0. (A.D. 857). Cobà in the north of Yucatan was founded about the same time. Both were anterior to such Old Empire sites of shining fame as either Palenque or Piedras Negras. The peninsula of Yucatan was not during the Old Empire's heyday a barren waste: it was probably as thickly peopled as the great triangle. From stylistic evidences the eastern section around Cobà, Tu'uum, Chichen Itza, was in close cultural relations with the great Peten cities.

Now, these Yucatecan sites also ceased to date their monuments about the beginning of the twelfth century. But the theory cannot be entertained that because this happened the inhabitants of Yucatan loaded themselves with their goods and creeds, and, led by their priests in the fulfilment of ancient prophecies, fled precipitately from the land (into the sea, perhaps), leaving Yucatan a desolate waste where only the cry of the *moan*-bird was to be heard at night in the great temples, and snakes laired where priests had pondered. For when the Spaniards arrived in the country in 1517 they found it thickly peopled, especially around such sites as Tuluum, Chichen Itza, and Cobà.

Old and New Empire appear to have been almost contemporaneous, with perhaps the Old Empire's sites in the Peten region possessing the claim to the greater antiquity. And almost simultaneously (or rather, in a simultaneous haphazard fashion, the fashion spreading spasmodically from site to site), the Maya cities from Copan to Cobà ceased to erect dated monuments.

Mr. T. A. Joyce explains succinctly: "A feature of the Old Empire, as remarked above, was the Long-Count system of recording dates. A distinguishing feature of the New Empire is the Katun Count. The latter was a simplification of the former, and the transition from one system to the other, though apparently abrupt, was not clean-cut. Clear signs of dating by the terminal day of the current Katun make their appearance upon the later monuments of the Old Empire, and the Long-Count system survived into the New Empire" (11).

But the most striking feature about this change over in calendar computation in the New Empire was the fact that with the short Katun count few dated monuments were erected. It is a degenerate method of time computation when compared with the great mathematical feats of the Long Count. But it is just as likely to have become the widespread method of time computation in the Old Empire as in the New, especially with the evidence that late monuments bear of its coming. There was no flight of a distraught populace: they merely changed their calendars.

Nor, as the New Empire was almost contemporaneous in founding with the Old Empire, does that Old Empire appear to have been extinguished long centuries before the New. It probably survived (some of its cities) for almost three centuries after it ceased to date its monuments. It is probable that it joined its cities together to resist vigorously, and with considerable success, the invasion of the great Toltec general Axcitl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, whom we have yet to encounter in the outline of New Empire civilization. Copan has direct mention in the history of the Spanish Conquest. The region was subdued by Alvarado round about the year 1524. Six years later the Maya revolted, led by a ruler Copan Calé, of the city of Copan. Hernandez de Chaves was sent against him, besieged Copan, and took it, scattering the Maya army. Doubt has been thrown on this fragment of

history by the assertion that Copan had been deserted long before the coming of the Spaniards, and that Chaves's Copan must have been another and inferior settlement ; further, that the Indians who led Cortes on his famous march from Mexico to Honduras must have passed close to the city and yet make no mention of it. It seems improbable that they would ; and all Spanish history of the occupation of the region of the great triangle is fragmentary and elusive. The Spaniards had none of the feelings of wonder and curiosity that assail us in looking on these antique remains. They were in search of treasure of another kind.

So we close with a picture, tenebrous still, as of a country and a long historic epoch barely glimpsed, yet continuous : afflicted perhaps with such epidemics as scourged the New Empire : knowing periods of unity, knowing wars, the rise and fall of dynasties, secular-priestly conflicts ; knowing, perhaps, a gradual decay of astronomical and mathematical ability, as the abandonment of the Long Count suggests : but living on side by side and in fairly constant communication with that region of Maya history we call the New Empire. /

LIFE IN A CITY OF THE ANCIENT MAYA

i. *Footnotes to Caution*

BEFORE turning to the New Empire's cities and civilization, its stormy years of history, and its final subjugation by the "scum from the sea," one may pause to seek an answer for the question which backgrounds like a continuous refrain all research in the histories of antique time: "What did it feel like to be alive in those days?"

W. H. Prescott declared that such speculations are outside the historian's province. They impair his dignity, or the dignity of his task. But indeed, they are his one authentic warrant. How did men and women live then and die then? How did they eat and fear and hope and hate, what did they laugh over, what did they wear, did a Mayan high priest hold his jaw and swear in the agonies of toothache or dance with rage when he dropped a mallet upon his toes? Was there fun in the conceiving and begetting of children, and did the local guard at the local long-house ever kiss the cook at the back-door?

Now, to ask these questions is not by any means to pose unjustifiably and flippantly contemporary figures and queries against an alien background. The older school of historians would indeed have considered it unjustifiable. Mr. H. G. Wells (49), one of their most characteristic representatives in the popularizing class, puts their case succinctly, though in another instance than dealing with the history of other times:

"I have no strong feeling for the horrors and discomforts . . . sensibilities can be hardened to endure the life led by the *Romans* in Dartmoor jail a hundred years ago, or softened to detect the crumpled rose-leaf. . . . My 'inferiors,' judged by the common social standards, seem indeed intellectually more limited than I and with a narrower outlook; they are often dirtier and more driven, more under the

stress of hunger and animal appetites ; but, on the other hand, have they not more vigorous sensations than I, and, through sheer coarsening and hardening of fibre, the power to do more toilsome things and sustain intenser sensations than I could endure ? ”

In other words, there is no norm of human sensitivity and behaviour. The Maya of history were indeed members of the species *Homo Sapiens* : but their thoughts, their endurances, their delights were not ours. They are figures on a painted frieze, figures we need neither enjoy nor pity.

It is curious how this shallowest of all forms of reasoning has held the minds of historians during the last hundred and fifty years. But the rise of the *historical school* of historians has put an end to these sham-scientific theorizings. No student who has investigated the innumerable travellers' accounts of life among the primitives who still survive on this planet, or survived until recently (29), can fail to be struck by the fact that these descendants of ancient peoples, living still the life led by our own remote fathers twenty thousand years ago, are singularly and intimately akin to us in their norm of behaviour. There is the same standard of love and hate, things hurtful and un-hurtful, a blow still a blow, pain still pain, beauty in love, subjective, and beauty in love, objective. For six thousand years the greater mass of the human race has dreamed and adventured in the mazes of civilization, and garnered intellectual wisdom and much of experience and belief and disbelief. But we are still the essential primitives. The sacrificers who ripped the hearts from the victims on the Tikal altars or the legionaries who drove the nails through the hands and feet of the Spartacist slaves by the Appian Way are not remote and freakish aliens, beasts and strange monsters normal to their day, doing normal acts, abnormalities we have passed beyond. They were merely, as we are, primitives enlightened, darkened, upraised or bedevilled by the codes and circumstances of a civilization.

The Mayan in an ancient Mayan city was in essentials the clerk, the labourer, the architect, the merchant, the clergyman of a modern American or European city. But from birth to death he was under the wash of influences and circumstances differing from those that we and our contemporaries endure.

Before we seek to build up from these references in sculpture and script some image of the life that an Ancient Mayan led, it is interesting to note the fundamental divergences in material culture between that possessed by the Mayan of the year A.D. 1000, and that possessed by ourselves. Firstly, there was no supply of milk from domestic animals. This bore upon the Mayan, as, indeed, upon all the peoples of the American continent and all primitives who have failed to domesticate cattle, very intimately in his early life. Apart from breast-nourishment, the child had no other milk. He passed in early stages direct to the normal food of adults—generally a hard and unsoothing food. As a consequence, infant mortality was probably enormously high. There is no other lack in Mayan civilization that is so impressive. To bridge that gap between early mammalian feeding and the food of an adult was the first feat a young Mayan was called upon to perform—a rigorous test that neither the child of a slave nor the child of a noble might evade. Or, if evade it they did, it led to such curious anomalies (as among the Keshwas in the Andes), of children being suckled until the age of five or six, with consequent curious reactions upon the health of the mother and the psychology of the child.

The Mayan had no wheeled vehicles, he had no beasts of burden. All loads were carried by slaves or servitors or other lowly inferiors. As a consequence, except when waterways could be called to help, all journeys were long and toilsome, all matters of transport of building material or harvest supplies a crushing burden upon the economic life of a com-

munity. To picture the slaves bringing in the grain to such centres as Tikal is to picture a continuous and ant-like crawl in the harvesting months.

He had no corpus of medical knowledge in which to seek refuge or sustenance in times of stress, bodily or mental. This aspect of life in ancient times is very generally lost sight of in the presumption, inherited from the older school of historians, that peoples of those times were in some fashion "different," they endured pain better, or they had not those pains to endure. But indeed that is the purest fantasy. The Mayan, as recovered skulls and skeletons show, suffered severely from caries and rickets. Toothache, what of the staple in his diet—maize ground in soft-stone mortars with a resultant spray of grit—must have haunted his life. There was no relief from it. A thorn entered his foot, and sank too far in to be recovered by elementary manipulations. The foot swelled and blood-poisoning set in. There was no relief, no possibility of operation, no knowledge that an operation was necessary. So with a multitude of the accidental injuries inevitable in human life. And to suppose the Mayan, like other imaginary ancient, free of diseases to a great measure is again to enter the kingdom of fantasy: as we shall see in our survey of New Empire History, at least one great epidemic swept Yucatan disastrously. Indeed, one may say that epidemics were inevitable, for, allied to a complete lack of knowledge of surgery or medicine, was a lack of knowledge of even elementary sanitation.

These three essential lacks postulate innumerable others. But these three were essential: they are warning footnotes below the feathery splendour of the priests who parade the stuccos of Palenque.

ii. *Morning*

From tower and roof-comb of dazzling stucco, from painted ku and painted pyramid, the sunlight

dances ceaselessly. Here and there, high against the sky, rises the smoke from the undying sacrificial fires, thin pencil-tracings in the windless dawn. It is the year equating in Christian chronology with A.D. 1000, the Old Empire is still a political as well as a cultural hegemony, and the city is Palenque, or Tikal, Copan or Cobà, Chichen or Piedras Negras. Over all that wide triangle and the adjacent peninsula, the morning has come, a flame and flow over the irregularly forested lowlands and the bleak-hilled peninsula, a morning waking the Maya cities to another day of life.

Round the central complex of palaces and temples, long-houses and granaries, built of stone and carved and sculptured, radiate in long, narrow streets the flat-roofed huts of artisans and slaves, peasants and lesser folk of the city. Further off still, under the coming of the sun, plantations of maize, cacao, and cotton stretch mile-deep to the edges of the forests. The city lies defenceless, unwalled; only one city in the whole of the Empire is walled. And now, with the coming of the sun, from high up on a temple-pyramid there breaks a monotonous beating on turtle carapaces, the beginning of the services of the Gods.

Soon the remote ways shine black with helots moving out towards the plantations. They are men and boys, drifting, chattering gangs, descendants of the folk who crossed the thin land-bridges of the Behring Straits ten thousand years before. Now, after a thousand years of civilization, they pass by, with that thousand years impressed on their faces.

And they are monstrous faces, the heads sloped and deformed so that the brow is in a straight line with the nose, the hair shaved or burned off, but for a scalp-lock, the faces of the men beardless, for they are of a race that has little facial hair, and when it appears is scalded off with hot cloths. Some are yawning, widely and profoundly, some are bright, these the young, and some, the old, plod on dusty

brown feet with tired shoulders, and peering eyes, the immemorial attitude and plod of the peasant. And some, the drunkards from the night before, walk blearily and with splitting headaches.

Each of the men wears a loin-cloth, the ends passing and knotting between the legs, and no other garment at all. For one thing, it is a land where more clothes are impossible, especially in the morning and the month of the heats. For another, those folk wakened to life a moment on the painted frieze of history, are the serfs and helots. Not for them the feathered head-dresses of the Masters, the Real Men, now wakening back there in the long-houses, but under no compulsion, except the sacrificers, to fare out into the early chill of the morning.

Remote in the plantations, the maize heads fling a copper radiance into the sky.

The men have gone. The women in the huts are pounding maize and suckling their children. The hut is a single-roofed, earth-floored erection. In this one a child, three days of age, is about to be initiated to the first canons of his culture—the creation of that type of beauty beloved of his civilization. His mother is laying him face downwards in a lattice-work basket, and he weeps faintly, like a kitten. So lying, a board is tied to his forehead, another to the back of his head, and the two lashed tightly together. The child begins to scream. It hurts. The mother soothes it, turning it, and plods on with the work of the day. That screaming will be almost unceasing for many months, while the head of the child changes contour and shape, growing upwards in the prized sugar-loaf shape. The air in the hut is a thick fug, the woman and the child smell stalely.

Here is a girl, nearly twelve years old, to-day an exciting day for her. It is baptism day for herself and a two-score more, girls and boys, the day when they enter manhood and womanhood. Her eyes gleam brightly under her deformed head as she sets out to the chultune that provides the water-supply

of her section, jar on her head, her body naked but for one curious adornment. This is a large, open shell in front of her sexual organs, the ceremonial shell worn from the age of three until this day shall be over. After that——

She is nearing the chultune, the underground water-reservoir, her heels raising a little shower of dust in the roadway. In front towers the Lesser Ku, crowned with its temple. Behind that temple rises now a loud whining and snarling : one of the chac-priests is feeding the dogs of the Godmen. The girl comes to the chultune, descends its steps, fills her jar, and re-ascends. Then, being young, and this her special day, she loiters, peering towards the Great Houses at the town centre.

The day warmth is already stifling. The heat waves dance against the pyramid stair of the Temple of the Sun. Part of it is still in the process of completion, that new rebuilding of a wing which the Godmen ordered five years before. The girl can see the brown bodies of the gangs of labourers strung out like spiders on the topmost steps as they heave at the great ropes attached to a gigantic block of stone in the plaza below. That plaza is rapidly thronging with men and women in this hasting coming of the sun.

Hunters, armed with flint-tipped spears, pass out towards the eastward forest, some singly, with nets flung over their shoulders, and going at a steady trot, others under the command of a headman. Burdened porters are already trooping in from the plantations, bringing the day's provisions to the long-houses of the nobles, the house colleges of the Godmen. Loads of maize and aloe-roots, fruit, and cacao, are borne in coarse sacks of cotton or packs of deer-hide. Two of the porters pass the girl. One winks and pointedly regards her shell-shield, then glances up at the sun. He knows her and knows of to-day's ceremony. She giggles. Her hands grow a little warm in the palms, looking after him.

Shouting and straining, a party of slaves drags a great block of stone from the quarries across the plaza to the uncompleted portion of the Sun Pyramid. They are thin and under-nourished, the slaves, some of them elderly war-captives, too mean to sacrifice, some of them Mayas whose creditors have sold them into temple-slavery. The great stone block is propelled forward on rollers formed by tree-trunks placed in the path of the block—rollers continually moved and replaced by the more agile of the slaves. Two Godmen accompany the gang, armed with long whips of deer-hide. An elderly slave, with an undeformed, outland head, sprawls as he tugs and strains, and a whip raises a fine blue weal on his skin with a snick and a crack in the warm air.

The girl's skin crawls in sympathy.

A merchant is making his way towards the plaza, accompanied by his two sons and two slaves. They have come from far, they are dusty and ragged, with the bales of their merchandise on their shoulders. Not a man of the city, the merchant, a foreigner you can tell by his funny tattooing and the whine of his voice as he swears at one of the slaves who has allowed the content of his bale to draggle in the dust. The girl giggles again. The merchant scowls at her. But suddenly life around and in the plaza almost ceases.

The merchant and his slaves prostrate themselves. So do the hunters. The girl, caught, tries to shrink back into the chultune entrance. Too late. She goes down flat in the roadway, her shell tinkling. Only the tugging, panting slaves at the rollers pay no heed as the sound of the flutes and drums breaks out and the morning procession of the sacrificing Godmen, nacons and chacs, marches from the low-roofed college at the other side of the plaza and climbs the steps of sixty-foot pyramid of the Sun Temple.

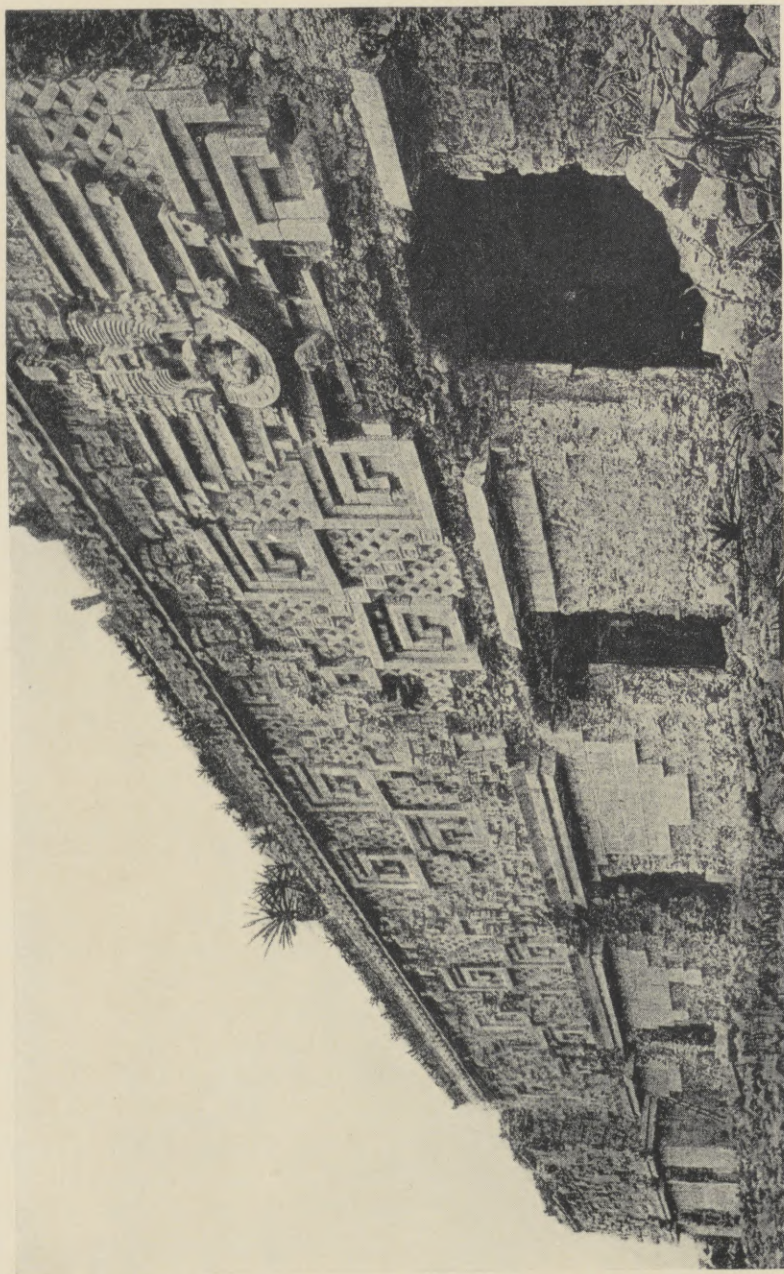
The girl peers at them through her hands. They are lovely and terrible, the Godmen, painted and gilded till they seem like moving Gods. They wear

masks and garments artificially bloated ; from the hair of the chacs, never washed, is wafted the holy odour of decay, the excrement of the Gods. Some of the Godmen beat or blow on instruments, others chant on a high note that verges rhythmically on a ceremonial hysteria. In front of the procession plods the Nacon. Ceremonially drunk on balché the night before, the Godman leader of the Militia, his eyes and his steps are uncertain. His body is painted black, his hands hold the sacrificial knife of flaked chert : he is facing muzzily the lower steps now. The girl giggles in the dust. If he missed his footing and rolled off ! . . . Behind him two of the Godmen are leading a dog, bloated, waddling, hairless, for sacrifice to the God. Dog is very good eating, but the Gods have said that only the Masters and Godmen may eat of it, except at the great sacrifices.

Nice to be a Godman.

The sunlight on the painted temples and colleges is quite blinding. The girl has gone back to her mother, now spinning in the hut. Below the steps of the Sun Pyramid a group of idlers and sight-seers loiter, sons of the Real Men, out of the long-house, the bachelors' college of the nobles, haughty young men, laughing and splendid, in fine-cotton loin-cloths and sandals, their heads crowned with panaches. They are supposed to be immersed in their studies at this hour, training for the militia or the service of the Gods. But instead they frolic about and raise the devil all over the city.

One trips up a passing slave. He sprawls in the dust, then gets up, patiently, and resumes his burden. The young men cackle shrilly, then turn their attention to the waddling procession now reaching the top of the Sun Temple steps. Time there was a new Nacon, not that old fool : he has never taken the field in his life, never taken a single captive. The young men are tired and bored with the long days of their lives, and a storm is brewing against the cities of the south. Why pay tribute to the Real Men at



FRONT OF THE SO-CALLED HOUSE OF THE GOVERNOR, UXMAL

Note geometrical motifs of façade-decoration

(New Empire)

the Capital? The city is ours, the sons of the Real Men who first broke the power of the Godmen who had ruled the country since the coming of the Sun Children. . . .

All around the top of the pyramid-platform is a bustle of activity in the hot weather. Sometimes a sweating mason stops and wipes his face and glances across the flicker of the sunshine to the plantations. The roughly-squared oblongs of stone, dragged up the stairs the previous day, are now being flaked, polished, and shaped for setting in the entablature of the walls. Before other blocks, already set in those walls, stand or squat absorbed sculptors or painters, wielding the tools of their craft: knives of exquisitely hard obsidian, chisels of stone, flint borers, wooden mallets, and here and there one of the new, unchancy bronze instruments that have come down from the North. These men are members of the Guilds of Artificers, neither helots, slaves, nor Godmen; their power and presumption has been growing for years. A chac-priest passes through their midst and is greeted with a scowl and a laugh. Stinking little butcher.

A mason blinks and curses as his mallet descends on his thumb. Too much of that pulque in the feast-drinking last night.

One of the Guildsmen is carving in stucco a scene depicting the Head of the Godmen, the Ahkin Mai, seated on his ocelot-couch, in full regalia, his mouth opened in speech, his hand extended in the immemorial gesture of benediction. It is a portrait, and the sculptor treats it with care, he is white-coated with dust from his work, he is very absorbed. So, there he sits, the great Godman. Terrible. Godmen are terrible, though you laugh at the chacs. Now for the glyphs.

Pegged to the wall beside the Guildsman is a painting on agave-leaf of those glyphs and how he must carve them. He scowls at the painting in deep thought. That glyph he has often done before, and that one, and that. Not the next. He has only a

hazy notion of their meanings. The Godmen demand that these things be carved, even as the Gods, the Fathers, demand that you put a left arm here where it should be a right. Terrible, the Gods, as all men agree, except that fool, the painter over to the right, who says that the Godmen invented Gods for their own purposes.

But that is only because his daughter had such a red end in the Skinning Time last month.

The harvest had looked bad then, rain so scarce. The Godmen had called for four virgin sacrifices—one from the nobles and one from the helots and one from the slaves and one from the Guildsmen. The Real Man's daughter should have been one, but was not. They dressed up a slave to look like her. The others could get no substitutes, and the daughter of the painter was the choice as the Guildsmen's sacrifice. Gods, how she screamed, as the chacs held her down and the Nacon's knives ripped down her sides to take the skin off. A little Godman had worn the skin for a week after that: the painter had been sick every time he saw him, with the hands and feet of his daughter still hanging on the shrivelling skin and flapping from the Godman's shoulders. But such were the ways of the Gods: the world would end if sacrifices were refused them.

Remote from the altar inside the temple comes an increase in the ceremonial wailing. The dog whines loudly and then howls, and then is silent as it is sacrificed and the blood smeared on the face of the idol. The Nacon yawns. The head chilan, the interpreter of the Gods, stares in the idol's face and murmurs the words of sacrifice. He is a tall and thin figure, with an impassive face, crowned with the great basket-work head-dress, the loin-cloth in his case a gay garment reaching to his throat and down to his knees, with buskins on his feet and a little decorated axe in his hands. Turning round from the altar, he makes his way down the stairs and passes across the plaza to the College of the Inscriptions.

He has to climb a wide flight of painted steps before he gains the college frontage, set with innumerable doorways over which hang great sun-curtains raised and lowered by means of ropes passing through slits in the walls. The floor he treads is of smooth mortar. Entering one of the doors, the chilan finds himself in a small chamber, walls painted red and yellow, its air heavy with a drifting incense from adjacent rooms, the incense of copal gum. In this room are three others of his caste and rank, seated, squatted on small stools or the floor, bending to work on frames wherein are clamped sheets of the agave paper. The chilan squats down by a fourth easel. He has arrived at his office desk.

From a box he brings out three small pots, filled with different-coloured paints. A wooden stylus, a stone scraper, a handful of brushes of human and deer hair are at hand. He makes selections and turns towards his easel with a sigh. Gods, how bored he is, how bored! How bored with the temple mummery, the smearing of blood and the half-witted chants. Quite definitely, he makes up his mind as he stares at the blanks of parchment, he will throw in his lot with the plots of the young Real Men, for disunion from the Confederation. That will mean War, perhaps. And perhaps it may mean a new Ahkin Mai.

He is a Godman astronomer, a Recorder of the Skies, one of the several keepers of time-count in the city. He had been engaged half the previous night in observation of the moon and Venus from the city star-tower. Now he has come to record the results of those observations: another sheet of the endless record which a slave will presently sew to its fellows and bind in great volumes with wooden covers for storage in the library of the College.

Squatting and painting, left elbow on knee, right wrist in the grasp of his left hand, he is at once author and illustrator. The involved symbolism of the heavenly system demands the record of his observation to display Venus and the moon as anthropomorphic

deities on the march, at the halt, in gesticulating attitudes. Accompanying these pictures stream the lines of glyphs, the writing: horned snout and stooping helot, closing fist and distorted face, dot and bar and flowing cartouche, phallic symbols and vaginal symbols, snake and beast and crowing bird.



A GOD

Possibly a war-god.

(From the Dresden Codex.)

The art of the rebus is beginning to displace the plain pictographs of antique time. The chilans are hampered by lack of a dictionary, or anything equivalent to it, though he is unaware of the lack. Apart from the simple learning-glyphs used by the priest-teachers, textbooks of the glyphs do not exist. When in doubt, or unaware of the shape of the requisite symbol, the penman constructs a new one on his own initiative—a “polysyllable” glyph decipherable only to the highly initiated, and that after a complex process of deduction and elucidation.

These elucidations are among the highest intellectual exercises of the literati,—these, and conning the scripts of the Godmen of antique time, who themselves saw the Gods descend from the Sun.

The chilans work. A continual sniffing whine comes from beyond the Sun temple. Those damned dogs.

Yells from the ball-court beyond the college. Here two schools of the sons of the Real Men, under the guidance of two chilans who have their instruction and care in hand, are exercising their pupils in the ball-game. The pupils pant and sweat. The court is a hundred yards long and twenty wide, high-walled. High in the middle of each of the side walls are set two rings in stone. The pupils are divided into two teams, in the middle of the court is placed a ball, and the task of the opposing teams is to send the hard indiarubber sphere as often as possible through one or other of the wall-rings. This is where skill is needed, for neither the hands must propel the ball, nor yet the feet. The players have boards strapped on their hips and as the ball bounces towards one he half-swivels about, exposes an inviting posterior to the ball, meets its rise by leaping in the air and sends the ball high up towards the ancient stone ring. It is the head of the god, this ball. Next month they must play this game with solemnity, at the great feast. Now they are practising, laughing, and cursing, while the chilans watch and gossip.

Through! One of the pupils has flung it through the ring. The Godmen, *sotto voce*, start to bet on the matter. They are both notorious gamblers in a race of gamblers.

A vulture sails overhead.

The twelve-year old girl has met a friend, the daughter of a helot, like herself. They creep away from the urgencies of hut and work, weaving and maize-grinding, and slip round the edge of the plaza, two dusty, nude figures. Midway the plaza a post is fixed in the ground, a post six feet or so in height, with thongs set in staples. It is curiously covered with red stains, blood stains, and scraps of hair and skin. The two girls eye it and giggle.

He *had* looked funny, that man last week at the time of the Sacrifice. He had been taken in a skirmish against the north Cities by the militia, and brought back in time for the feast. How he had wriggled

when he was tied to the post and the militia danced round in a circle, with bows and spear-throwers! Then the nacons and holpop had begun to beat the drums and each of the soldiers loosed an arrow at the circle painted on the breast of the sacrifice. You grew excited, wondering if they would hit, though the grown-up folk were moaning and singing, not enjoying it at all, there was nothing enjoyable in it, it was a sacrifice to the Gods. But he had taken very long to die, and round about, on the crowded stairs, the helots as well as the Real Men had begun to bet on whether the sun would be down before he died. It had just gone down when he did.

Round this corner, so. No guards about. Under the wall by the College of Inscriptions are the cages for the sacrifices. There are only four victims in them—three men and a woman, being fattened on maize for the sacrifice next month. One is prowling to and fro the wicker-work walls of his cage: he is getting very fat. The girls giggle as his lack-lustre eyes turn on them. The woman lies prostrate: she also is fat: the chilans will keep her hands and feet at the sacrifice, they always keep the best bits.

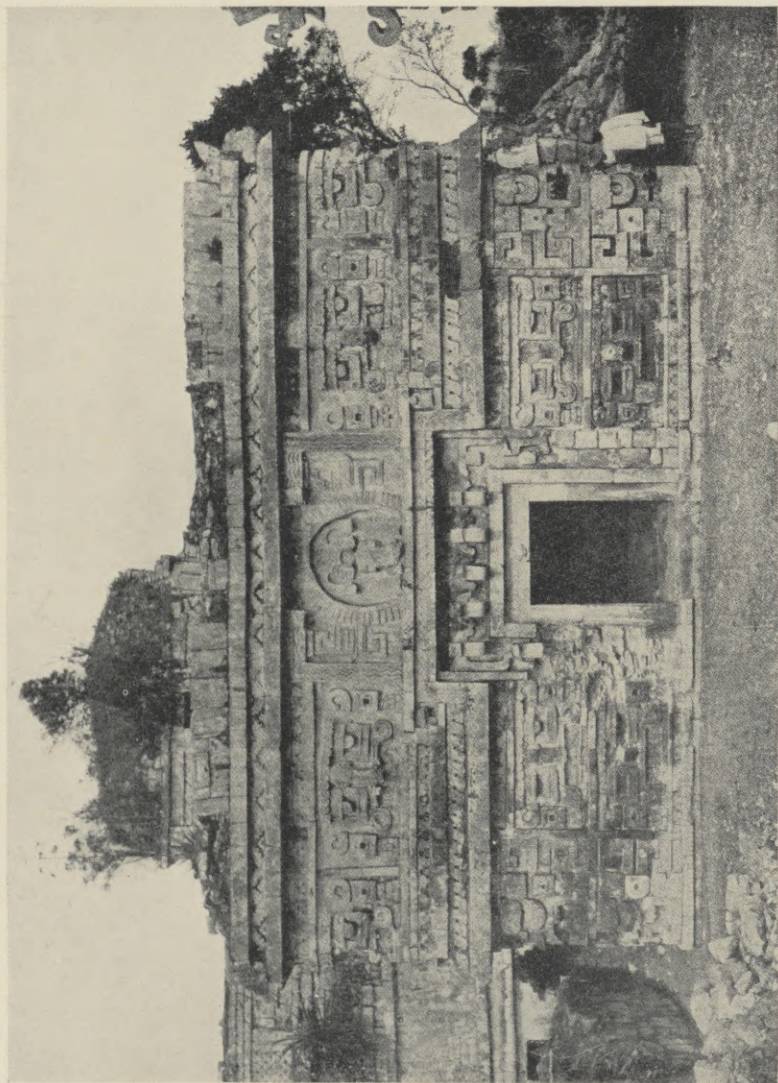
One of the girls pokes the woman with a stick through the slats of the cage. She gives a groan. The girls giggle, a little frightened. They must bring some others to try this game.

The second girl has a clay bead hung in front of her eyes, depending from a band round her head. She has had the bead for years, to induce a squint. The squint has come, in both eyes, a special mark of beauty, and the first girl regards it enviously.

They glance upwards, and scurry home. It is nearly noon. The sun stands almost overhead.

iii. *Evening*

The ceremony of the rebirth is finished, the mothers have removed the shells from the bodies of the girls, the Godmen have cut the squinting stones depending



INNER DOORWAY OF THE GREAT BALL COURT, CHICHEN ITZA
(New Empire)

By permission of the trustees of the British Museum

from the foreheads of the boys. They are now men and women, the girls free to be given to a man and the care of his hut, the helot boys plantation hands from to-morrow. The girl who had gone to the chultune in the early dawn trips through the dust of evening again, in pik and huipil now, going slowly, at the chultune leaning over to watch herself in the water. It is close to sunset.

Behind the courtyard of the Sun Temple the dogs are whining again in expectation of a meal, or in fright over the noises at the rear of their hut. For behind it is the Temple of Sacrifices, a small building, and to-day was the Sacrifice of the Old Men. Round the temple courtyard, row on row they had gathered, the old men of the city, Real Men and nacons and chilans, even some Guildsmen, with sloping heads and aged limbs, and decayed teeth, in their finest loincloths, to watch the sacrifice for rejuvenation. Presently the courtyard had begun to reek of blood and excrement from the caterwauling beasts led up in front of the image of the God and there despatched. Pumas and ocelots had been led in, even one jaguar, snarling, its head bound with ropes. Squabbling turkeys had fluttered and chirawked and added to the din, while the old men sat and watched the blood of the vigorous fauna of the forest offered up to stave off human decay and death.

The chilan descends from the College and climbs to the Temple of Inscriptions, where the records are kept. On the way he stops and looks at one of the ancient stelæ, set up and carved three hundred years before. Its crudity is showing under its fresh coat of paint. It is time it was broken up and added to the base of the new round temple, the Caracol of the city. He reads the brief inscription on the crude outlines of the glyphic writing, glances indifferently at the carved face of the God or Godman—the stelæ do not say which—which decorates the front of the stela, and ascends to the Records Temple.

The boredom of the morning has not subsided. He

knows much of gods and cares little for any: the Sun God, malignant and toothless, or his bearded rival, Kinich Ahau, with filed teeth and scalp-lock gathered in grotesque knots; Ah Puch, the Death God, the black Captain, a crouching skeleton with tattered fragments of flesh; the Monkey-God, the God of revelry and mirth, mysteriously also the God of the North Star; Great Chac, the God of the Rains, most antique of Gods, whom the Sun-Men brought; Yum Kaax, the Maize-God; Exchuah, the Guardian of travellers who heeds to the exile in lost lands; Ixtubtin, Goddess of weaving and pottery and the domestic hearth; Ixchel, Goddess of the Rainbow, Goddess of childbirth, Goddess of suicides. She is much worshipped, and with reason, Ixchel.

He ascends the ancient, narrow, three-storied tower. Round towers, the Phallic Towers, are taking their place in many cities, and soon in this, in the likeness of the organ of generation and fresh vigour. A slave helping him, the chilan climbs the winding stair to the roof of the tower, there to take his evening observations. Below him, hazy in evening smoke from the cooking fires, lies the city. Venus has not yet risen, and he lays aside the forked wand he has brought and looks down on the City of the Snake.

The air is filled with the cou-cou-cou of pigeons returning to their cotes. Dim blue figures move against the distant plantation stretches, and the straw roofs of the far off store-houses shine golden. To the right, high on its pyramid, in front of the uncompleted Sun Temple, glows the altar fire. The evening sacrifice is in progress, the priests facing westward in ancient ceremonial gesture, lamenting the death of the God, even as to-morrow they will hymn his resurrection.

The city-roads on the outskirts are black with returning helots, sweating, begrimed, tramping in on naked feet from the labour of the day, each to his hut, the elders, the young to the common long-house. Hunters have come in as well, the keepers of bees,



SCULPTURED MONOLITHS OF THE SO-CALLED TEMPLE OF THE TABLES, CHICHEN ITZA
(New Empire)

many scores of keepers of bees, and the shepherds of the great deer-herds kept in the valley on the forest fringe, so apt and handy in providing fresh meat for the service of the Gods and the Real Men.

The night is coming very swiftly.

The chilan faces about, to the east, and sees the winding flow of the river that drives away into other lands and the foreign cities the merchants tell of, to the Great City itself, where the tribute goes. There are paintings and tales of those cities: the great Twin Cities of the Peten lands, eternally in alliance, eternally at war; Quiriguà, where the Monster lairs in stone and the Stones are carved with the messages of antique time and the faces of ancestors of all Godmen; Palenque, where the Godmen, the chilans of the Godmen, alone rule; Copan of the great Sundial, the great City of the South, where a nacon went from each city many years ago to the rectification of Pop, to setting the calendar in order. . . . Many cities, a weariness of cities repeated one upon the other to the edge of the barbarian lands whence come the Nam slaves, the barbaroi.

The chilan turns to the sunset glow. Amidst that glow Venus has arisen. He heeds to his slow calculations, bending his bird-like face over the antique instruments. It is now quite dark.

Far off and below in the quarters of the Guildsmen, the mourners, silent all day according to law, now keen for their dead with the coming of the night. A cooking fire gives the only light to the hut where the two children and the brother and wife and mother of the dead man wail. They have fasted three days, covered with soot. Under the floor of the hut the dead man lies with his mouth stuffed with maize, and a dog bought from the temple lying by his side, and a calabash of food and a broken spear to help him in reaching the abode of dead, Metnal, there to wander long ages in a tenebrous half-life.

The mourners wail ceremonially, all but the wife of the dead man.

The temple sacrifices being fattened on maize are newly fed. They move eagerly, with the custom grown upon them, to the food flung in. They do not know how many days it will be before they are taken out, stripped of their clothing, and painted blue by the hands of the chacs; before in the sight of the waiting throng of helots they are urged up the steps of the Sun Temple to the altar where the Nacon stands with the sacrificial knife, the chilans beside him to read the portents, the curved block of limestone waiting; before they are stretched out and held on the block, and the knife comes down and the rest of it they will never know, though they know it often enough now in dreams, or unsleeping through the nights—the heart torn out of the chest and flung in a dish to beat, smeared on the idol's face, as a man smears sweat from a sweating face, then the body rolled down the steps of the pyramid to a surge and rush of the waiting helots, each to hack off a slice of the flesh with a flint, and take home to cook and eat. . . .

They eat in the dark and forget.

His observations completed, the chilan descends into the city darkness. The tower walls are a-crawl with strange, moving candles, the fireflies. The fires of the temples on the great kus now flame as skyey islands in the darkness; through the half-curtained doorways in the houses of the Real Men surrounding the plazas comes a flicker of light from lamp and candle; but in the huts of the helots and slaves out towards the plantations is complete darkness, for the fields will call awake all that sleeping labour early enough on the morrow.

The guests are assembling in the house of the Nacon, in the light of small torches. No women are present, and the light falls on the faces of a throng of Godmen and slaves. One or two of the nobles, the Real Men, have also dropped in: they are all much of one caste now, Real Men and Godmen, though crude illiterates, most of the Real

Men, forever talking of wars and land-rights and gaming away their women when drunk.

In the light the chilán from the tower shows up as 5 feet 6 inches in height, with a nightmare face, foreheadless and chinless. From the brow ridges, whence the hair has been burned, the head slants back in a level line to the crown. As a result, the nose, curved and slightly hooked, juts out like the beak of a bird. In this mask-like face the eyes show very dark and unemotional. The septum of the nose is pierced with a thin, jadeite plug. In his ears, greatly distended and low-hanging almost to his shoulders, are affixed plugs of painted wood. His body is covered with a complicated tatu in green ink, adding to his bird-like appearance, transforming him in the light of the lamps to the likeness of a faintly-glowing macaw.

The feasters are mostly occupied in discussing the suicide of a chilán—the third to die by his own hand that month. The chorus of praise over his act is conventional, but sincere. To all of them the gods of life are evil, and to break their power and escape into death, not under the hand of either Ah Puch, God of violent extinction, or Hin Ahau, deity of slow decay, is a cunning and meritorious act.

Course succeeds course—messes of venison, turkey, maize, and cacao, maize mixed with the white of eggs, and pulque, the national intoxicant. The food is brought in on wide leaves from which the guests help themselves with their hands. All are much of the appearance of the chilán. Outside, the night is silent about the painted walls of the interior city. A beast is baying far off on the edge of the forest.

The drinking continues far into the night. Ceremonial pipes are passed from lip to lip among the guests, for smoking has religious sanctions. Dancers come to entertain. Dignity is slowly mislaid by the painted, bird-like men who stare from their tortured masks of faces. Far up on the *ku* of the Sun Temple

a priest frowns down at the noise that comes on the wind.

Long after midnight the chilan-astronomer, swaying uncertainly out of the guest-room into the street, finds his wife and slaves awaiting him. They have awaited him for several hours. Laid in a litter, he is carried to his home nearby, the feet of slaves stirring up the dust in the darkness as he passes from sight.

Behind his departure the wearied slaves of the host put out the torches, leaving darkness ; and the sun comes up a thousand years later, with the trees sprouting through the walls of college and long-house, the Sun Temple mantled with bush, and all that they did and believed and endured a dim and uncertain tale.

RISE OF THE MAYA NEW EMPIRE

i. *Origins*

THE first encounter of the Spaniards with the Mayas was in 1517, on the coast of the Peninsula of Yucatan. In this peninsula, lying to the north-east of the great inverted triangle where rose the cultural glories of the so-called "Old Empire," the "New Empire" of the Mayas had come into being. There is no good reason for supposing that the founding of its principal sites greatly post-dated those of the Old Empire. But, unlike the Old Empire, it possesses histories of a sort regarding its own origins.

None of these histories survive to the present day in native scripts which can be translated and transliterated: they are legends and half-tales and suppositions transmitted to the priests of the Spanish Conquest: they have the muzzy unreliability of the scrawlings on the town-walls of ancient Pompeii, except that they lack the cheerful *bonhomie* of the latter. One may choose half a dozen different avenues of narrative in which fall dim lights on the origins of the Maya civilization in Yucatan. But all are ruined, bush-grown tracks, with side-paths that lead nowhither.

Yucatan is of comparatively recent geological formation, formed of limestone, a great porous plain thrust up from the sea. It is a different land, a bleaker and a less kindly land than that of the great triangle, without rivers, for its hills as watersheds are ineffective, rising only a few hundred feet above sea-level. Owing to the porous nature of the limestone most of the water seeps underground: Yucatan by nature is elaborately drained by underground channels. The soil is poor in the great central stretches of the country; there also is the ubiquitous forest, probably much more widely spread now than in ancient times. There are no lakes or rivers, but

numerous great sunk-holes, stagnant, semi-stagnant, or "spring-fed," supplying the only open drinking-places in the country. These are the cenotes that figure much in Maya tale and religion: near and about the ancient sites the cenotes were generally enlarged and faced with stone and made into the artificial chultunes, where young men and women were sacrificially drowned to propitiate the rain-gods.

Along the northern shores of the Peninsula runs a scattering of islands and sand-banks, where fishermen in the antique times apparently rested, or exiles fled, for there are inadequate ruins in stone that tell of their presence and activities. On the north-east coast is the first island where the Spaniards and the Mayas made contact—the Island of Women where Bernal Diaz (59) and his companions looked with some disgust on the painted images of women, great numbers of images, in the unexpected temples. South of it is Cozumel Island, the misty island of the gods, a great place of pilgrimage in ancient days, pilgrims coming remote from Central Mexico and Honduras to worship in its shrines. It was under the control of a priestly clan, the Cumux, a kind of Mayan Rome with a papal court. South-west of Cozumel, in rocky and dangerous seas, is Soliman Bay, where the first attempt at conquering Yucatan by the Spaniards was set on foot; inland, across the ancient territory of Chectemal, is the lake country of Bakhhalal, Zian Caan, "the edge of the heavens," in ancient Maya story. Round its western shores the Peninsula swoops unislanded till it comes to the slow play of breakers in the Laguna de Terminos, a great salt-water lagoon.

Into this territory, as early as the seventh or eighth Christian centuries, colonists and explorers from the Old Empire region had come by at least two distinct routes. We shall meet them in attempting to disentangle their history in a later section. The first of the eastern comings of the colonizers may have been

by sea, and the question has been much debated as to whether the "Maya" found the Peninsula inhabited or not at the time of their coming. But with the reconstruction of Maya history that we have already viewed, that question is irrelevant. The people of an Archaic culture who seem, judging by their remains in caverns and the like, to have inhabited Yucatan in very remote times, were no doubt, like their successors, Mayas—Mayas of purer stock than the later colonizers from the Old Empire region who were probably of mixed and half-Maya blood, descended, their leaders and priests at least, from the alien explorers of Asia or Oceania.

Here they halted and builded and set up their city-states.

ii. *The Sites*

The great city of Tulum is almost unique in Maya history. It stands upon the sea, unlike practically all of the architectural complexes reared by the great civiliziers of the Central Americas. From the sea it shows up now as a line of ruined walls, dazzling in hot sunshine, backgrounded by the brown-green Yucatecan smother of landscape. And possibly it is the first city of the Mayas ever seen by the eyes of white men, the unfortunate Spanish sailors who were "wrecked in Ekab" in 1511.

Most of its buildings long post-date the single stela in the city, a monolith bearing the Long-Count date 9.6.10.0.0., A.D. 828. This stela stands in a small temple—it seems the temple was erected to house the stela, either because the event recorded on it was regarded as of great importance, or because the inhabitants of Tulum, in years long after the art and practice of carving stelæ was lost, came to regard the stone with reverence. Under the crumbling walls of Tulum are frescoes from a time long after the city's founding; and it is here that one of the very few actual idols of the Maya period still stands. But it

belongs to a degenerate art and time: indeed, Tuluum is a degenerate city of the Mayas.

Again, in another particular, it differs from all the great sites in its possession of a stone wall completely encircling the central "city." It was provided, this wall, in the days of the city's habitation, with sally-ports and watch-towers, and the possibility is that it was erected as defence against the raiding of the Caribs. Tuluum has a drab enough and degenerate look in its ruins, but the early Spaniards thought it "as fine as Seville" (59).

West of Tuluum are groupings of sites, separated by a few miles, and of an evident antiquity contemporaneous with Tuluum. Probably the newcomers from the sea founded them shortly after founding Tuluum. Cobà is the most important of these sites, with its finely carved stelæ (it dates from about A.D. 877) and its oriented temples. The architecture is of all periods—the Uaxactun corbelled arch, a peculiar development, the wall-surfaces of Lubaantun, and the later superimpositions of the Toltec times. Cobà probably was occupied extensively from the years of its founding until the time of the coming of the Spaniards. Some time during this seven hundred years of history its rulers commenced the building of the great stone roadway, the one great stone roadway of the Maya era, which drives through the country in the direction of Chichen Itza. It loses itself before it arrives at Chichen Itza, but there is no good reason to suppose that some extension of it, of beaten earth or the like, did not once carry to the great Metropolis of Yucatan.

It has long been one of the puzzles of Maya history, this road, built by a people who, as we have seen, had neither beasts of burden nor wheeled vehicles necessitating a hard and unyielding road surface. To suppose it a road for ceremonial reasons, a *via sacra*, does not carry the explanation much further. Why from Cobà, a comparatively small site? Why not from Mayapan, Itzamal, Akè towards the sacred city

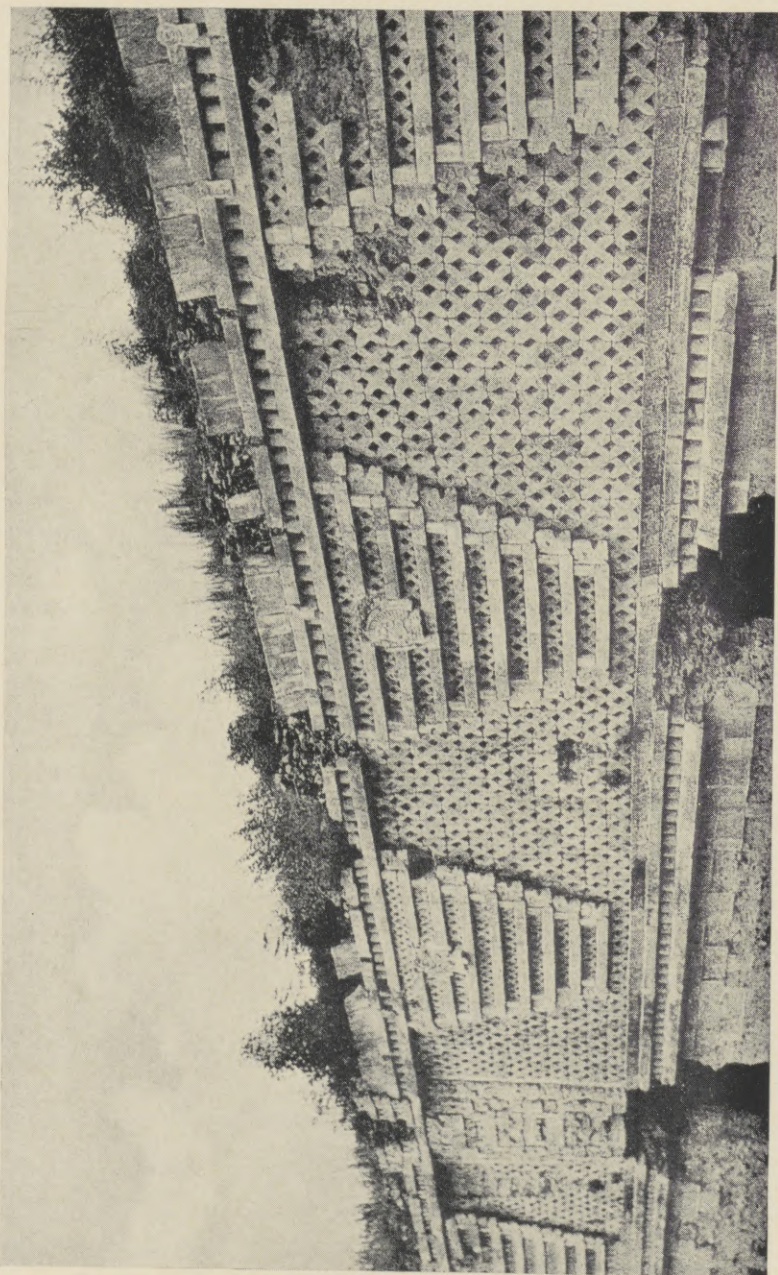
of Chichen Itza? The probable explanation of this is that Cobà was no more than a halting-place of pilgrims *en route* from the holy wells of Chichen to the holy island of Cozumel. It is probable that remains of the roadway, connecting Cobà with the seashore opposite Cozumel, will yet be unearthed.

The *via sacra* inland terminates in the best-known of all the Yucatecan sites. The single dated inscription in the Initial Series is 10.3.0.0.0., but there is little doubt that Chichen Itza was occupied before this, probably founded by the same colonizers as landed at Tulum and spread out through the country by way of Cobà. One section of the *Chilan-Balaam* books records that it was founded in a 6 Ahau, which has been equated with various dates anterior to the Initial Inscription date. But the Katun counts of the *Chilan-Balaam* adventures are, as we have seen, too unreliable to deserve serious attention.

Chichen Itza, the Wells of the Itza, was so called from its possession of three great cenotes, or rather, chultunes. It is the least difficult of all the great sites from the point of view of the modern traveller—Dzitas, the nearest railway station, is a little less than twenty miles distant, and he comes to ruins as impressive as anything in the Old Empire area, and apparently with a far more varied history. They cover, those stone ruins, an area of two square miles or so, temples and long-houses on their pyramidal sub-structures, the forts that came later in time, the round tower that came to the Maya lands with an alien worship. Here is the Akat-Tzib, the House of the Writings, so-called, with the impress of the red hand on its interior walls. Here is the compact temple, the Foloc, with its branching Ganesha-heads. The Caracol, the famous round tower, stands at a little distance, a peculiar structure that will call for further comment. The Castillo, the so-called fort, rises up bare and bushless now on its pyramid, for it has been recently restored by the Mexican government, as has a minor temple, the Temple of the Warriors, by an American

expedition. The great ball court, with its stone rings on either wall, stands near the Castle, its walls 274 feet long, 30 feet high, and 120 feet apart. The temples of the Tables, the Tigers, and such long-houses as the House of Nuns also litter the ground they no doubt once dominated in painted majesty—paint still survives at Chichen, though inside the buildings, not outside. The two larger cenotes are both sunk-holes fed by subterranean streams. The largest, 350 feet in length by 150 wide, has sides 70 feet high. This was the famous Cenote of Sacrifice.

This great complex of buildings, of all architectural styles and periods in the Central Americas, evidently once constituted the principal city of the eastern peninsula. For multitude and diversity of ruins it is barely equalled by Uxmal, to the south-west of Chichen, once the capital of the bitter enemies of the Chichen rulers. There some of the ruins also are finely preserved, some deeply embushed and rapidly fading with the years. The principal building, the House of the Magician, crowns a great pyramid, and from its ledges all Uxmal comes in view, a matted desolation. The great House of the Nuns lies near, a quadrangle formed of four large rectangular structures, and enclosing a wide plaza. Here the building is done with great beauty and skill, as well as the characteristic Yucatecan pains in lay-out, little practised in the Old Empire area. The ubiquitous Ganesha-heads project from the cornices of buildings in every state of decay and preservation, far-travelled symbols from their Indian home. Uxmal, like Chichen, has the ruins of a large ball-court, and numerous other temples and long-houses and colleges. The bush interweaves through the ruins, and sprouts earth and moss along and over the finest façades, the lovely lattice-work decoration of the House of the Nuns, and the columned splendour of the House of the Turtles. The façade decoration in the House of the Governor contains some of the finest formal



FAÇADE OF THE SO-CALLED HOUSE OF THE NUNS, UXMAL
The lattice-work decorative motif was imported via Mexico from Transpacific sources
(New Empire)

sculptural work in Yucatan, irrespective of age or cultural period.

Labnà and Kabah are smaller sites to the south of Uxmal, Labnà with the usual architectural assemblage, but the finest arch of any Maya building, showing what the cantilever could achieve in one place, at least. Of Mayapan, the third of the great cities of Yucatan in the New Empire's heyday, little or nothing is left. At Izamal are the ruins of a great mausoleum, where reputedly Itzamna, the leader of a migration, is laid. The modern Merida stands on the site of one-time Ti-hoo and has devoured both its site and presumably its building-stone. Sayil, another minor city, has temples that actually attain grace and the appearance of storied height, though no true storied building was ever achieved in the New Empire area.

Chacmultun, Kewich, Macanxoc are minor sites—minor in the sense of less size and less mention in history, but notable enough in some of their architectural and sculptural details. New sites are constantly coming to light, to show how thickly peopled once was the country—or to show the Maya habit of building a city and then deserting it after the passage of a long or short period of years. But this latter supposition now seems little warranted: Tulum and Cobà and Chichen Itza were inhabited for some seven or eight hundred years on end, and it is probable that most of the ruined sites now discovered were occupied at the time of the coming of the Spaniards, or had been inhabited just prior to their arrival.

Except in the case of such calamitous sites as Mayapan, victim to the fury of the great civil war, the cities of the New Empire were probably proud and prosperous enough till the coming of a completely alien culture to change and dispossess them of their antique canons and beauties.

In general, they lack that fine, tenebrous impressiveness of the Old Empire sites—even such a site as

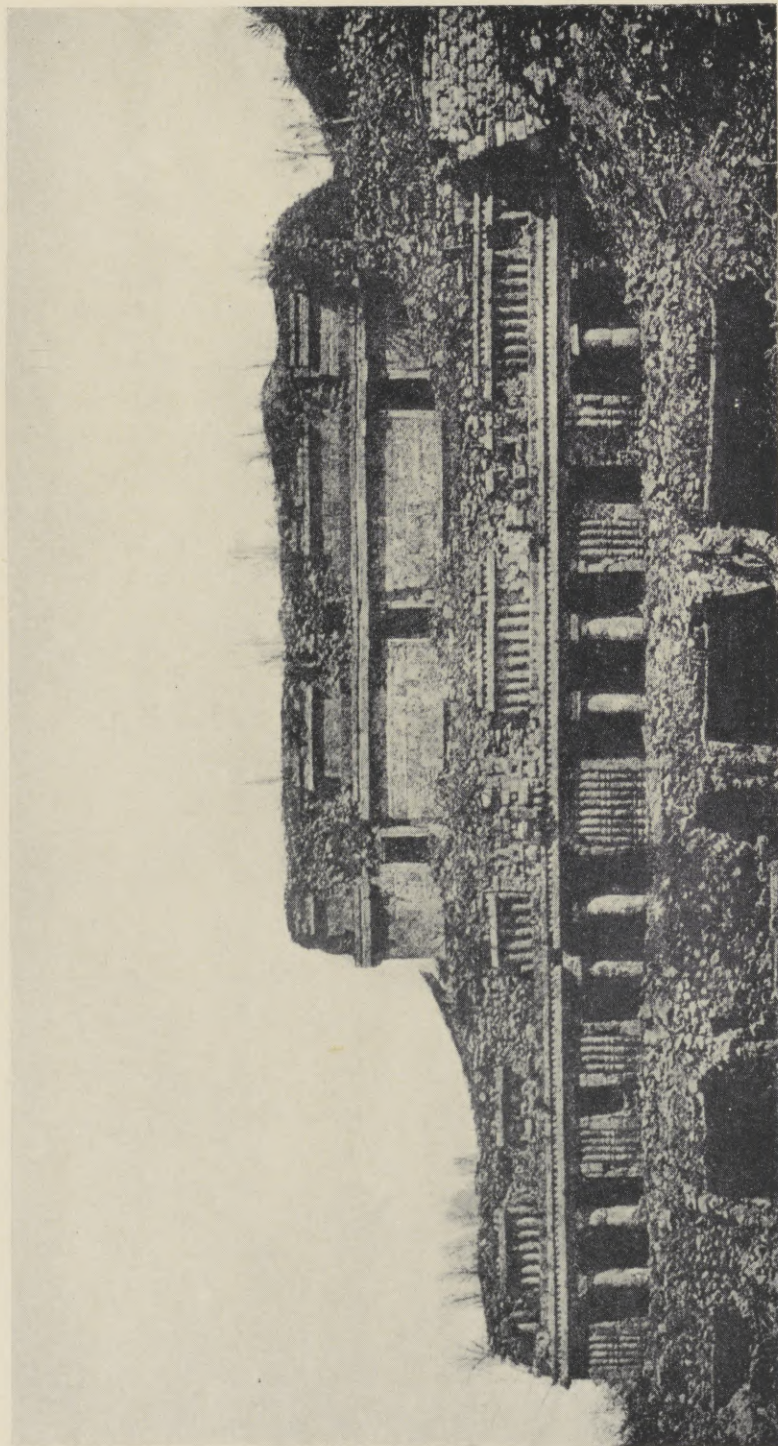
Chichen, striking enough at evening and morning, in the painted glories of the Yucatecan sunset and sunrise. Little inferior in antiquity to the Old Empire cities, they came under alien influences, mostly Mexican, which passed the south-western area by. History swept up through the Gulf of Mexico and brought new ideas of grouping and placing in sacred architecture, new plans of long-houses and colleges, even perhaps new tools and a geometry more practically applied.

It is probable that not even in very early times all the inventions in architecture or the like originated from the Peten region or the Usamacintla, but played backward and forward between the two divisions of the Maya civilization. From the New Empire cities of Yucatan it was that the custom spread of ceasing to erect dated monuments. Only a few of the Yucatecan sites are dated and Chichen Itza contains one of those last dates in the whole Maya area.

iii. *Art and Architecture*

Originally and essentially the Old Empire and the New Empire architect and sculptor drew from a common cultural well. The temple-substructure is almost everywhere the pyramid; the common roofings for the sacred buildings are the corbelled or cantilever arch. Thereafter there set in multitudes of divergences. But it is a mistake to think of these divergences of New Empire art and architecture as a later efflorescence of the Maya genius. It is obvious that a great deal of it was quite contemporary to the older methods of building and decoration still practised in the Peten or Usamacintla areas.

Sites in the Peninsula rated as comparatively modern by the older school of historians include such centres as Xcalumkin, with its Initial Series inscription and its stelæ, Sayil with its stelæ and characteristic Old Empire decoration of the stela-figures, Kabah with its Menchè-like lintel carvings. Yet



APPARENT BUILDING IN STOREYS (THE "PALACE," LAYIL)

This effect was procured by recessing the upper floors on a solid substructure
(New Empire)

Sayil carries the most obtrusive marks of the imposition of un-Mayan sculptural and building motifs—not because it is a site of great antiquity, and the un-Mayan motifs came late, but probably because both could exist side by side or within a few years one of the other.

These divergences from the Old Empire norm belong to a lengthy history of art, but some of them may be noted here with brevity. Buildings become wider and fuller. Columns appear—true columns; façade ornamentation breaks out in stone mosaics of geometrical or conventional designs, never attaining the beauty and simplicity of the Mitla builders and decorators. Few stelæ are erected. There is a greater disposition to “scamp” difficult architectural moments. And then a considerable vigorous new force came into Northern Yucatan, and transformed such sites as Chichen Itza.

The Castillo is an example, as un-Mayan, from the Old Empire standard, as it well could be. So is the ball-court, the columns, and more especially the atlantean supports of altars and low roofings. At Uxmal the same changes are obtrusive. The round tower, or Caracol, was no successor of the Tower of Palenque; it was an innovation. So were the making of chacmools, the humanized idols of the Rain-god with the once-characteristic elephant-snout and head mislaid. So particularly were the great columns up-built of stone serpents resting upon their heads, the body forming the main mass, the tail curled in stone upon the roofs. Something new and vigorous had come into Mayan architecture.

So with the sculpture. Carving in the round or in high relief is almost unknown. But monotony has gone from temple-fronts and beauty taken its place in such buildings as the temple at Kewich, with its round columns and fine, lozenge-panels interweaving. Sayil and Labnà approximate more and more in façade decoration to Zapotecan sites such as Mitla.

With this incursion of a fresh wind of building and

sculpturing in the sites, there came exquisite carvings in low relief at such sites as Chichen Itza. Armed warriors of an alien kind parade in stone: they are armed and armoured differently from either the ruling or the helot caste portrayed on the walls of the Old Empire cities. They are evidently of a different stock, with undeformed heads, and the technique of carving and representation is unsubtly different. It is curious to note this, especially in such structures as the so-called Temple of the Tigers at Chichen Itza, where Augustus le Plongeon fifty years ago was troubled over the Carthaginian-like appearance of many of the heads of the strutting, parading, threatening figures painted inside the temple walls, very beautifully, in red, yellow, blue, and brown.

The serpent columns, the ball-courts, and the atlanteans are almost certainly of foreign inspiration—and by foreign is to be understood Mexican. And that admitted, a further inference is inevitable. Open-work decoration on the top of temple-walls is not only characteristic of Mexican architecture, but is certainly Asiatic in origin. So certainly are the Atlantean supports, from Cambodia and Indonesia. Again there seems to have been a play of cultural influences, late into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, from Asia across the Pacific. These missed the area of the Old Empire, not because that area was deserted, but because they struck further north and took root there. And from that original seeding-place on the American Continent there can be little doubt but that these new influences were carried by sea or the Western Yucatecan land route to enrich the buildings and art of the New Empire, while leaving the Old Empire (except perhaps Palenque) untouched.

iv. *The Sciences*

The ground-work of the New Empire economy was essentially that of the Old Empire. But, just as there were incursions or inventions of fresh tech-



A TEMPLE AT CHACMUL
Note the columns as a decorative panel motif
(New Empire)

nique in the arts, so apparently in what may be called the sciences. Of agriculture it is unnecessary to speak here, the conclusions in a previous section on the practice of Old Empire agriculture being largely drawn from the practice around the Yucatecan cities. It was a primitive and slovenly science, perhaps a degenerate one from that practised—at least originally—around the Old Empire towns.

Little gold-work has ever been recovered from New Empire sites, except from the great sacrificial cenote at Chichen Itza. Apart from a bell from Palenque, none at all has been recovered from the Old Empire. This has led some students to the conclusion that gold was "unknown" in the Old Empire and very scarce, at least, in the New. The first part of the statement may be disregarded: it is evident from the monuments that many of the decorations of the great figures on the panels and stelæ are gold. Gold strewed the country-side about the ancient sites, hardly buried at all. Gold was the great magnet that drew the Asiatic immigrants. But this leaves the fact unaltered that gold-worked ornaments are scarce in the great triangle as well as in the Yucatecan peninsula. For the first, no ready explanation can be given. Did Asia not only send emigrants into the Americas, but receive tributes from there? Was there an early period when voyagers both crossed and recrossed the Pacific? It is not improbable. Gold was a sacred, a religious metal. It was possibly carried away or buried with the members of the ruling caste; finally, in the period of the half-Spanish invasions which helped to depopulate the Old Empire, some at least must have been seized, though never such quantities as in Mexico. Gold may even have passed from the Old Empire in great quantities in tribute or loot with the "Toltec" invasions of Topiltzin Axcitl Quetzalcoatl.

In Yucatan it is certain that gold was not mined; but it was probably worked, especially under the days of the "Toltec" influence. It was melted down in

braziers with charcoal fuel, the artisan blowing through a tube of cane or copper to induce a steady, even heat for the operation. Thereafter at least two methods of gold-working were in use, casting and hammering. In the latter method a remarkable technique was developed, beautifully thin plates of gold produced for covering spear-handles and the like; fine sheetings were even applied to the surface of beads. Casting, a complicated process of building up moulds of clay, gum, and wax and running molten metal into them through a copper or clay or wax pipette, produced works of great beauty, like the hawk-bell from Palenque.

Raw copper was probably brought into Yucatan from the region of Oaxaca, and worked in much the same way as gold, largely for ornament, but not entirely. Copper adzes and chisels were made, especially when the alloy of tin produced a fairly strong "accidental" bronze. Mostly these implements appear to have been hammered, but many of the ornaments are obvious castings. Iron was of course unknown; or, to adopt a caution hitherto seldom displayed in the matter, no trace of it has yet been found (it moulders away easily in the ground), and no mention of it is made by the Spanish fathers.

Medicine as a science was probably almost non-existent. The religious life supplied all medical aids, apart from a few herbs common to most times and cultures. But there was a remarkable development of one branch of surgery—dental surgery, though whether from ceremonial reasons or reasons of solid toothache is unknown. The two central incisors of the upper jaw were very frequently filed or chipped to fine points. More than this, however, both incisors and other teeth were frequently bored on the outer surface, and filled with discs of gold, jadeite, obsidian or what not. This was not the barbaric practising of a barbaric art entirely. These operations appear to have been carried out with great care, the dentist sometimes by a narrow margin

avoiding allowing his drill to impinge on the shrieking nerve of the patient suffering for the sake of caries or the glory of God.

Finally, leaving aside the intricate mosaic-work and inlaying brought to great perfection in some of the New Empire sites, particularly Chichen and Tulum, some mention may be made in this outline of the making of the feather-work mantles and head-dresses—both a science and an art. Old Empire design and portrait-sculpture show the importance of the feather-motif, especially in depicting the feather head-dress which had travelled far across the continents and millennia since the days of its invention in early dynastic Egypt. Feather-cloaks were made by drawing designs on cotton, backed by bark, and applying the feathers with paste. These garments were things of great beauty, and required great technical skill in their execution. The mixing of colours and plumes, the gorgeous plumes of quetzal and such-like birds, produced not only beauty, but for the wearer, doubtlessly a garment light, of great comfort, and adding, like the feathered hat, to his dignity, lay or priestly, in the ceremonial life of the New Empire cities.

v. *The Katun Count and the Ritual Calendar*

Reference has already been made to the modified form of time reckoning, the "Katun count" which the Maya civilization developed obtrusively in Yucatan, and probably in the Old Empire triangle as well. It was a degenerate form of the old Long Count. For ordinary purposes of computation—computation inside a period of 256 years or so—it served well, and apparently either the desire or the ceremonial need to reckon precisely with all the cumbrous, but admirable, machinery of the Long Count, had left the ruling caste. With the coming of the Katun Count the dating of monuments practically ceased; and so, so far as European chronology

goes, did the means to correlate with any exactitude Mayan and Christian dates.

The Katun Count dropped the Baktun, and time was reckoned by the Katun alone, each identified among its fellows by its concluding day. Every Katun ended on a day Ahau, but every Ahau had a different numeral. The Katun-period consists of 7200 days, divisible by 13 with 11 over. In consequence, successive Katuns terminate with the day-sign Ahau accompanied by a numeral less by two than that which accompanied the preceding Ahau. Thus: Katun 1 Ahau, Katun 12 Ahau, Katun 10 Ahau, and so forth. Thirteen Katuns passed, and Katun 1 Ahau recurred.

This method of time-computation was the standard method in later Yucatan, from the beginning of the twelfth Christian century until the time of the coming of the Spaniards. There is no good reason to believe that it was the early method of time-reckoning in any part of the peninsula. There, as in the Old Empire, the Long Count must long have held sway. But with its passing, it is possible that Maya attainments in mathematics so degenerated that they lost the ability to read their own calendrical inscriptions.

The Books of Chilán Balaam, already referred to, are in the short-Katun Count—are indeed fringes and tag-ends of narrative attached to Katun numbers. Assembled, the Katuns in the *Chilán Balaam Books* give an apparent history of 1700 years. But there are excellent reasons for believing that this sum might well be reduced by half. The Katuns have been built up by later Mayan historians, with great and unbridgeable lacunæ in the accompanying history; the historical items are ludicrously sprayed out in the early periods of the Katun computations. For example, the Tutul Xiu reside for three hundred years or so at Champoton: without a single recorded incident of history. There is no reason to suppose they resided there half that time. The early Katun

stretches are quite valueless, in the attempt to equate them with Christian chronology.

When the Spaniards arrived in Yucatan they found an immense number of gods being worshipped, including at least two deities that appear to have been unknown to the Old Empire—not because the Old Empire was earlier in time than the New, but because one of those deities, Itzamna, was evidently a deified Yucatecan, and the other, Kukulcan, a deified Mexican. With their history we shall deal later. The attributes of the other gods of the pantheon have already been touched on briefly: essentially, the great god was the Rain-God, Chac, the migrated and transformed Ganesha of the Hindu systems. With him marched Indra as Maize God, and around and upon these two deities arose a vast number of minor divinities, earth gods, rainbow goddesses, and what not. It is curious to note a modern habit of presuming the earth gods the oldest and the most important, and even the presumption that the Mayas, if left untouched by European invasion, would have gradually evolved towards a monotheism. There is no evidence whatever of such an inclination: quite the reverse is shown. This multiplying of gods and goddesses was the inevitable theological evolution in all civilizations founded—as all were founded—on the Archaic culture. The gods increased, they did not diminish.

From its beginning to its end, the Maya civilization, in the New Empire as well as in the Old, remained, as did all the American civilizations with the exception of that of the Inka, a civilization curiously rooted and static in the beliefs and notions of the Archaic cult, though equipped beyond the Archaic cult in many ways. It never evolved to the consciousness of a racial culture, never attained to manhood, it was always an adolescent with an unassimilated philosophy. It is possible that into its cultural ferment came not only great driftages of ideas and beliefs from orthodox Hinduism and Brahmanism, but

from Buddhism as well—as in the original complex Quetzalcoatl-Kukulcan cult. But, like the Mexicans, the Maya, at their Archaic economic level, with all its economic lacks in convenience and cultural lacks in the machinery of ideas-transmission, remained incapable of either developing or assimilating any adult



THE SO-CALLED "SUN-GOD"

(Probably derived from the Gorgon of Mediterranean myth.)

(From the *Dresden Codex*.)

system of conduct, any philosophy of life, Brahmanist or Buddhist. These alien importations were covered over speedily and at once with the rituals of the seasons, "life-giving," the fertilization of the earth and crops.

As we saw in a previous section, dealing with the script and calendar in the Old Empire sites, there were eighteen period "months" in the Haab, the solar year of the Mayas. In Yucatan each of these months had its appropriate feasts and ceremonies, largely connected with agri-

culture, in which every stratum of the populace appears to have taken part in rotation. The Maya New Year fell at the beginning of the month Pop, and 1 Pop, the first day, took to itself one of four day-signs—Kan, Muluc, Ix, and Cauac in the New Empire after the end of Baktun 10 at least. Ix and Cauac were unlucky days for the year to start on, Kan and Muluc were lucky. The latter could look after themselves, but to ward off plagues and famines

and droughts brought in by Ix and Cauac marching with 1 Pop, elaborate and unpleasant ceremonial fastings and mutilations took place.

On 1 Pop itself a general and violent spring-cleaning took place in the Maya city, as it did on New Year's day all over the old Old World. Old garments were burnt, houses and temple idols repainted, and the temple fires kindled anew. The castes assembled at the temple and incensed the gods, and drank great quantities of balchè wine after the sacred fires had been rekindled.

In Pop the priests prophesied the general state of the weather and the agricultural prospects for the coming year.

In Uo those prophecies were read aloud or declaimed to the populace at a special ceremonial dance.

In Zip was the dance of the hunters, to ensure a good hunting year by sympathetic magic. Much balchè-drinking.

In Zotz the fishers feasted. Dancing, singing. Balchè.

In Tzec was the feast of the Bee-keepers. Balchè *ad lib.*, for honey was an important ingredient in this ceremonial wine.

In Xul was the great feast of the year, the feast of the God Kukulcan (variously identified by modern students with the Buddha, with a deified Mexican general, with the "air"-god—and probably composed of all three). In Yucatan the citizens of other centres gathered at Mayapan for the celebration of this feast until Mayapan was overthrown and destroyed. Then they gathered at Mani, the sacred capital of the Xius. Green feathered banners were carried in procession by the representatives of the cities. The feast lasted for five days, and it is unlikely that the balchè was spared.

Yaxkin came in while the Feast of Kukulcan was concluding.

In Mol was a feast for the entire Mayan pantheon. Everything was painted the sacred colour, blue, in-

cluding the children. It is to be hoped that the painting was done before the balchè-drinking began. In the same " month " new idols were made both for the temples and for private devotions.

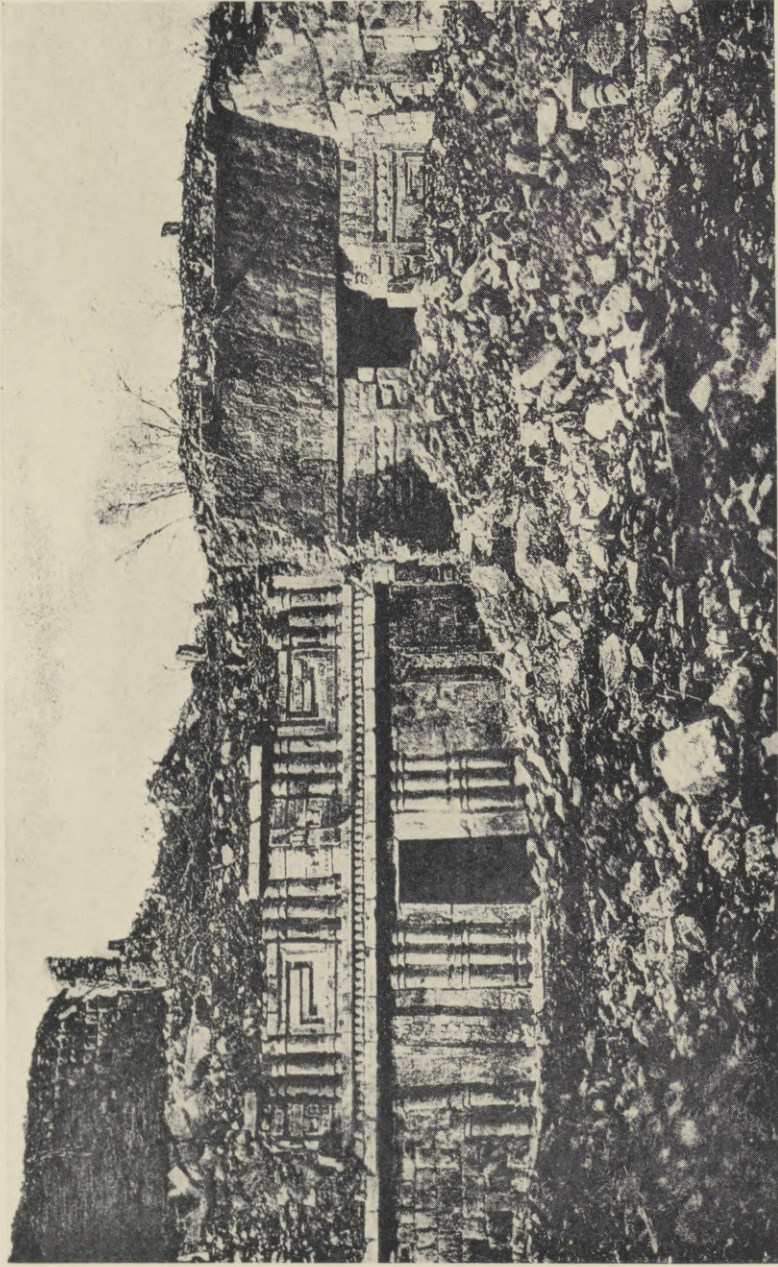
In Mac was the feast of the earth-gods. Animals were gutted, and their hearts and entrails thrown into a fire, and the fire put out by throwing water upon it, symbolizing the rains laying the spectre of drought. More balchè.

So the feasts and fasts might be continued through the " months " of the antique Haab. One looks back on an existence curiously oppressed and also curiously lightened. The horrendous gods hemmed life in closely enough, but for fasts were the compensations of feasts, the most unendurable of ceremonies ended in the drinking of balchè. What to the modern mind is strangest is the unvarying routine, year upon year. Year upon year those sacrifices were made, this life endured, without change or apparent progression, until the time of the coming of the Toltec in Yucatan. And with their passing, and the passing of the breath from the larger life of Mexico and beyond the Pacific, the same dark old cult of soil propitiation went on, propitiation of the dead sun-god to return to life in order that life might go on.

More clearly than from any other source we glimpse in these temple-mysteries of feast and fast and ceremonial blessing and ceremonial revilement, how much the Maya culture, by its place in time and space, was a lost expedition of civilization, twisting and deforming the human mind as it twisted and deformed the human head. For a thousand years it was the strangest litter of the discarded expedients and beliefs of the greater cults of the world.

vi. *Social Grades and the Economic Life*

It is doubtful if the all-powerful theocracy of the Old Empire whose existence has been postulated by various speculative writers ever existed. Certainly in



A FINELY-PILLARED TEMPLE AT LABNÀ
(New Empire)

the New Empire, with whose history and cults chance has made us better acquainted, the priest was subordinate to the nobility. In most cases he was of the nobility, a younger son or the like, heeding to the temple services the while his elder brother heeded to civil matters of war and jurisdiction. Over all others ruled the "Real Men," the paramount chiefs of such centres as Chichen Itza, Mayapan, and Uxmal. Below them were the *batabs* of the lesser cities, *batabs* possibly of Tulum and Acanceh and Labná, vaguely subsidiary to the larger cities in the periods of disunity, definitely so for the space of Kukulcan's reign, and for the time of the League of Mayapan little more than officials of the civil power. How those *batabs* delegated *their* power is uncertain. No doubt they exercised it largely through the medium of the *holcones*, the militia.

The Maya states knew no other type of army. Warfare was exceedingly common in the Maya New Empire—more common, perhaps (though this is not by any means certain), than in the Old. The characteristic weapon of the militia was the flint-tipped spear, hurled with great force and accuracy by means of a spear-thrower. This weapon was common to both Empires. Strangely, the Maya were at first unacquainted with the bow and arrow, though not with the blowgun, though the latter weapon was used only in hunting. Boomerangs also were used, though not extensively: the boomerang was probably pre-Mayan in its American origin. For hand-to-hand fighting the militia-men of noble rank carried clubs, the sides set with blades of obsidian: these clubs were sometimes thrown, and, wielded by a strong arm, were capable of inflicting terrible wounds, as the Spaniards and their horses were to find. A curious weapon in use was a kind of dart with a string attached: the dart-thrower held the string and threw, and then tugged. What happened after that is uncertain: probably the dart-thrower did not survive to tell.

The Mayas would hurl hornets' nests into besieged houses and cities, primitive bombs, but no doubt very effective. They carried round and square shields into battle, wicker frames covered with deerskin or rush plaiting. Like the Mexicans, they also possessed a kind of body-armour of quilted cotton. Sometimes the quilts were packed with salt. Warriors in flight, with the salt streaming from their quilts, must have been a disconcerting sight.

These are the weapons and armour with which the militia and occasional bandits and mercenaries are to fight and murder and adventure throughout the section devoted to New Empire history. Copper daggers, and perhaps axes, came into use in the twelfth and subsequent centuries. Marching into battle, the Maya cheered themselves and attempted to demoralize their enemies by shouts, yells, and the blowing of conch-shells. Doubtlessly the enemy retaliated in kind. One may doubt if great damage was always done in warfare. A warrior was rated according to the numbers of prisoners he captured, not the number of the enemy he slew. This curious custom is sufficient evidence of the ceremonial origin of Central American and Mexican wars. Captured, prisoners were driven back to Akè or Mayapan or Chichen or Uxmal, whatever the conquering city, caged, and sacrificed with the usual insanitary rites.

The holcones were under command of the nobles, the nobles themselves presumably children, cousins, uncles, and general hangers-on of the batabs and Real Men. There seem to have been two commanders, at least in the larger cities—a permanent soldier commander, and an elected general, the Nacon, corresponding vaguely to a civil administrator of military affairs. This Nacon was clipped around by severe rules and restraints, he might not eat meat, he was not allowed to drink balchè, and he was forbidden sexual intercourse. The consequent orgy he probably organized at the end of his term of office is an interesting subject of speculation.

This Nacon is not to be confused with a minor rank of the priesthood. At the head of the sacerdotal order in each city the chief priest appears to have been the ahkin mai: it is possible that the Sun Snake, the Ahau Can, lorded it over the other high-priests from Mayapan or Chichen in the days of the Federal Republic of the Yucatecan states. His office was to see to the more important religious ceremonies, see to the management of the long-houses where the sons of the nobility were taught and the colleges where aspirants and novices to the priesthood were initiated into the reading and writing of glyphs, the calculating of the periods of the calendar, divination, and the like esoteric sciences.

Doubtlessly the priests in those colleges were priests of the chilán rank only. These were lower in rank only than the ahkin mai himself. It may be said that Maya civilization was built on the lives and work of the chiláns, just as Maya existence was built on the lives and work of the helot peasantry. It was they who carried out the interpretation of the wishes of the gods: they who were the astronomers, mathematicians, architects, and no doubt the inspirers of the sculptors and painters and the like guildsmen. They formed a kind of upper civil service, though their duties were inextricably linked with the priesthood. They were, to the modern mind, the most sympathetic of all the castes in that antique civilization.

Below the chiláns were the nacons, whose office, whose sole office, was to officiate as sacrificers. They sacrificed animals and men, cutting open the breast and tearing out the heart. They were as horrific a priesthood as the world ever knew and in the bright air and dazzling sunshine of the Central Americas, in the great building complexes, painted and amazing, it is little wonder that sight of them chilled the hearts of the Spaniards with disgust and hate. They wore their hair long, we are told, and matted with the blood of the victims. At the Skinning Sacrifices it was a

nacon who donned the skin of the flayed woman and danced the ceremonial dance. They went clad in long cotton robes, blood-stained sacrificially, and their mental life is a thing as remote from modern concept as the mental life of the dinosaur.

Below the nacons came the lay-priests, the chacs, who held the victims in position while the nacons sacrificed, and performed various minor offices about the temples. Below the chacs were the holpop, who sang the temple hymns and dirges, possibly with a popping labial fervour suitable to their name.

There were also vestals of a sort, who swept the courts and tended the sacred fires, the immemorial duty of vestals from Rome to Peru, and Peru to Uxmal. They were recruited from the ranks of the nobility, but were under no such penalties and in possession of no such privileges as those of Rome or Peru. It was a smaller and a meaner life in Chichen or Mayapan or Uxmal than in those great states, and sound economic reasons forbade the upkeep of large unfertile harems of the chaste. So the vestals wedded as they could and went back to the life of the laity unhindered.

In Mexico there were crafts of Guildsmen in the civilization of the Toltecs that presently sprang up ; it is less certain that such crafts prevailed in the New Empire. But they are a likely feature of the hierarchy. Some constant tradition of skill and technique one must postulate to account for the perfection of carving and embellishment and painting of temple and tower and long-house. Allied to the artisan Guildsmen, and their existence certain enough, were the Yucatecan merchants, also banded in guilds, and wearing a fan as a badge. These probably traded far and wide not only through the New Empire, but the Old, southwards into Honduras and San Salvador, and northwards through the Tehuantepec neck. The seeds of Maya civilization were no doubt carried far and wide by the merchants, if only as objects of trade : it needs no great stretch of imagination to see

the famous Tuxtla statuette, which has given rise to so many fantastic theories, as an object of trade sold or mislaid by some wandering Maya merchant from the Peten region.

Some of these merchants were slavers, marching or transporting by sea small gangs of human merchandise to Mexico. Gold from Honduras and Costa Rica was imported raw into the New Empire area and worked into fine objects for export and home consumption. The New Empire also exported great quantities of embroidered mantles and the like, and possibly also cacao and honey. Cacao in quills was the common currency of Central America and of Mexico. Gold had still an almost purely religious value: to the end of the antique American civilizations it was regarded not as wealth but as a magical giver of life.

Possibly within the uncertain fringes of their shadowy middle class must be included the various types of artificers. Equally possibly, many of those, goldsmiths, masons, and so forth, were skilled slaves and no more. But the whole cumbrous superstructure rested upon the shoulders of the peasantry, whose status is doubtful. To denominate them helots, as has been done throughout this history, seems the least unwarrantable. They were at the mercy, mentally and physically, of the priests and the nobles, and their labours supported such richness and elegance as there was in the lives of their betters. They bent their deformed heads in awe, doubtlessly, of chilán and batab, and dread of nacon and chac, and had their moments of hatred of these rulers, and possibly their moments of revolt. But no tale comes to us of the rise of a Maya Spartacus, just as the status of the actual slave in Yucatan is uncertain. Men might be sold into slavery for crime, or, in poverty, might sell themselves. Prisoners of war were occasionally kept as slaves, more frequently sacrificed on the altars of the thirsting gods.

Under other sections the staple of their economic

life—maize—and its cultivation have already been described. But in the New Empire, or some sections of it, and probably arising late in history, the peasants seem to have passed into a communal method of tilling the ground. Each family possessed a stretch of four hundred square yards and grew their produce on this.

This information we have on the authority of Bishop Diego de Landa, and his statement has been considered of doubtful value, if the Maya of pre-Conquest times actually farmed in the slovenly manner of their modern descendants, or even of the folk whom the Spaniards came upon. But possibly, after the great pestilence and civil war which preceded the Spaniards' coming, agricultural science declined. At the least it is certain that the wasteful methods credited to them would never have produced for a "family," tribute-paying, existence on a field, a "kan," four hundred yards square. Again, some form of intensive cultivation of the land seems the only explanation.

These were the cities, the arts, the sciences, the gods, and castes and classes of the New Empire civilization. Probably they were largely paralleled in the contemporary Old Empire. But it is to and fro on the territory of the New Empire alone that history, legendary history, presently commences to march and halt and lay siege, and raise up pæans of triumph and despair, and across which ebb the final cultural streams from the Old World beyond the Pacific.

INTERLUDE IN ANCIENT MEXICO

ANCIENT Mexico in the popular mind remains synonymous with Montezuma, treasure, and the late Rider Haggard. Even those who have passed beyond the naïveties of this view have seldom progressed further than W. H. Prescott, and still envisage his genteel Aztecs as the *fons et origo* of all things Mexican.

The latter view, so far as the historian is concerned, is roughly sixty years and three research stages out of date. By 1889 Mr. W. J. Payne was summing up the common opinion of his generation of historians, who had arrived at the second stage:

“To the Toltecs, among the early peoples of the New World, the first place no less indisputably belongs than to the Greeks in the Old” (50).

The Aztecs had been deposed. But backgrounding the newly-elected Toltecs were already the uneasy ghosts of the builders of the ancient cities in the great Central-American triangle, and the more well-known builders of Chichen Itza, Uxmal, and Tulum. The historian already quoted dealt sternly with these upstart Mayas:

“An opinion has even been entertained that the Maya possessed an indigenous culture, independent of, though parallel to, that of the Nahuatlacâ [Toltecs,] to which the latter was substantially indebted for some of its principal features. We are compelled to regard this view as erroneous.”

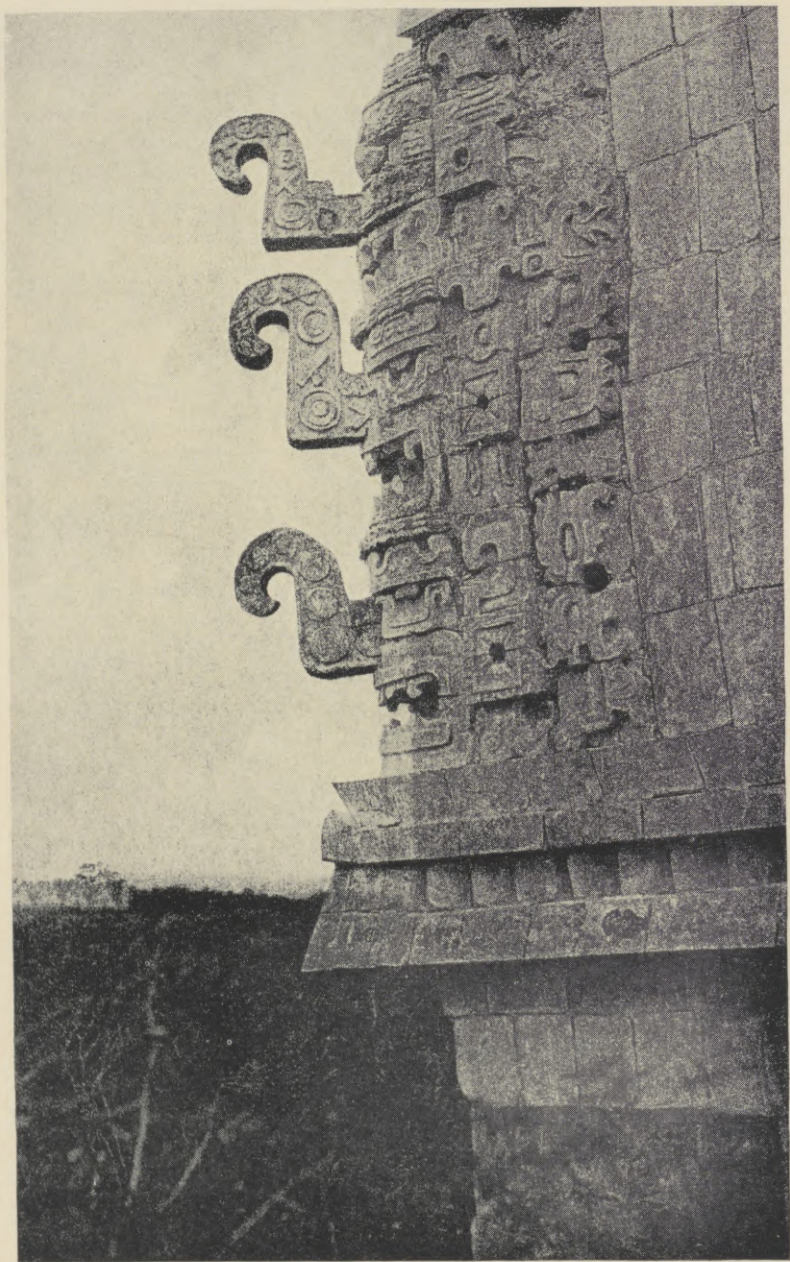
Nevertheless, the Mayan ghosts refused to be laid. From the point of view of antiquity, the Toltecs wilt into insignificance in the light cast upon the antique American scene from that cumbrous lamp of calendrical attainment which was the great glory of the Maya Old Empire. It is now generally accepted that such semi-civilizations as rose to being in Ancient Mexico were heritors of the culture of Central America; the Toltec is seen as no originator, but one gifted with a mere barbarian imitativeness.

The irreverent might speculate that the process is unending, and prophesy that in another twenty years the Maya themselves may stand convicted as the merest *nouveaux riches*. Nor is either the irreverence or the speculation unwarranted. That apart, and as the following brief sketch of their elements will seek to show, a single origin is as little traceable in the diversity of Mexico's culture as—in the confused obscurity of their history—is a single ancestor for its tenebrous tribes.

The calculiform glyphic inscriptions of the Maya cities supply us with approximate datings. But in Mexico proper, beyond that Tehuantepecan Isthmus, there are no such aids. Cultural comparisons and the careful dissection of legend must suffice until the Aztec manuscripts open in the middle of the thirteenth century. And both Archaic cultural remains and Archaic legends lie, actually or metaphorically, in strata disrupted again and again, by this or that upheaval, to fantastic unintelligibility.

To make brief and arbitrary selection, however, the Mexico contemporaneous with the Old Empire's beginnings appears still in the culture of the "Archaic Horizon." Dotting the curvature of the Gulf and the length and breadth of the main plateau were occasional settled sites. Maize and the aloe were cultivated around these sites—maize cultivation had already extended as far northwards as the Panuco Valley. A crude pottery was manufactured, some archaic experimentings in textiles prove the domestication of the cotton plant; and there is a complete absence of signs of metal-working. It was still largely a land of the nomad and hunter, the settled site an exception rather than the rule.

This "Horizon culture" is ascribed (*a*) to no definitive inventive focus, and to have evolved and progressed through some two thousand years or more; (*b*) to an origin completely intrusive, an alien importation from Central America, barely antedating the first Christian millennium.



HEADS OF THE RAIN-GOD (TOLTECIZED INDRA—GANESHA) ON THE
SO-CALLED HOUSE OF THE NUNS, UXMAL
(New Empire)

Selectivity balks between these diametrically-opposed conclusions and turns to the "Archaic Horizon" peoples themselves. Of these, settled or nomadic, enjoying or disregarding the archaic culture, two can be identified definitely, three or four tentatively. In the vicinity of modern Vera Cruz were the Totonacâ, whose speech some six hundred years later was discovered to have Mayance affinities. Further north along the Gulf in Huaxtlan, the Tamarind Land, were the Huaxtecâ, a people possessing close ethnical affinities with the Maya. (As previously noted, it is possible that all the "autochthonous autochthones" from the Panuco Valley to Copan were once Maya or proto-Maya, though none of them originators of the Old Empire civilization.) Still remoter in the north were the Mazahua and Mixe, with unidentified origins and affinities. The dim folk of the central plateau and the Pacific slope are nameless. In Oaxaca the racial groupings of Zapotec and Mixtec had perhaps already differentiated. All were peoples on the verge of history, and on that verge, for the next thousand years or so, they remained.

Circa A.D. 500, disturbing the ancient serenity of centuries, the Otomi appear to have descended on the central plateau from the mists and mountains of the north. Hunters to whom agricultural methods had penetrated in the unknown lands of their origin, they marched south in search of more fertile tracts, probably warring with the ancient inhabitants and probably carrying the first seeds of organized warfare into Mexico.

In later days, when the possession of Nahuatl blood in Mexico was as important as Norman in England, these Otomi were to claim kinship with the Toltecs and Aztecs. But they "appear by their monosyllabic language and some other peculiarities to have been isolated ethnically" (51), and to have preceded all other invaders. If their placing here is correct, they were but the forerunners of a far more

important migration. From the remote north, after lengthy journeyings since leaving that unidentified Huehuetlapallan—the Great Colourful Place—descended that social class, cluster of cultural excellence, or definite tribal group to which with some reason were ascribed most of the subsequent glories of Mexico: these were the Toltecs, the “Master-Builders.”

Of the various dates ascribed to their arrival at the site of their ultimate capital, Tollan, A.D. 770 is the more probable. But they did not attain to that capital immediately on entering Mexico. Under their reputed leader, Great Hand (Huemactzin), they had journeyed down the Pacific coast for many years. Some of these journeyings had been by sea. Definitely within the borders of modern Mexico they had first halted and built Tlachicatzin—identified with a dozen partially-excavated sites, including Colima on the Pacific slopes. Mysteriously evicted from that settlement, they took to their wanderings again, apparently wheeled eastwards across the central plateau, and founded Tollantzinco. Fifty or a hundred years thenceafterwards they penetrated northwards up into the heart of what was then Otomi territory and in a place renowned for the basket-making qualities of its reeds (*tollin*) laid the foundations of that city that long haunted the memories of the Mexican tribes.

They were “men of peace,” noteworthy cultivators and architects. White-robed, portly, with hair cut short to the occiput (52), their feet shod in henequen-fibre sandals, the elders and leaders in each settlement superintended the plantation-cultivation of maize, pulse, pepper, cotton, and the *pulque* aloe. They used stone tools, but also “wrought gold and silver and copper into such shapes as they pleased” (53); they built at Tollan great *storied* buildings, temples and palaces and pyramids. “They had necromancers, sorcerers, magicians, astronomers, poets, philosophers, and orators: they knew everything, good

and bad " (54), according to one venerable enthusiast. They worshipped at first One God—in his solar manifestation. Later came the rise of the " young god," Tezcatlipoca, and with his advent human sacrifice. Their fame spread north and south. A divine being, Quetzalcoatl, descended to earth, revived ancient ways of life and brought new secrets of power. It was the Golden Age of Anahuac.

Its foster-child, before the unpleasing advent of the scientific historian, was at least an age of golden romancings. Yet modern excavation and research, though they dim the picture's colours, do not deny the outlines. These " men of peace " appear to have called themselves Toltecs no more than the Hellenes called themselves Greeks. They rejoiced in the designation Aculhuaquê—" Strong Men." And the " young god," Tezcatlipoca, was the horrendous war-deity whom they transmitted to their successors, the Aztecs. These are neither the characteristics nor the gods of a peaceful people. But it may be that the immigrants were in small numbers, subduing the native inhabitants by force of military superiority, and inaugurating thereafter a long era of peace till the pressure of fresh northwards immigrants revived war-cult and war-god.

Modern research generally designates them, as it does the Maya, a Stone Age people, to be judged by Stone Age standards. But it is doubtful if the term—in America, at least, where chipped tools, polished tools, copper tools, and the so-called " accidental bronzes " were all used indifferently in the same periods in the same areas—has any just meaning. Chalcolithic—those who employed stone when metal was unavailable—would appear to approximate more closely to the facts of legend and excavation.

Of their storied buildings, palaces, and temples, no trace now exists in Mexico proper, though the pyramids of Cholula and Teotihuacan still stand. They brought new things into New World architecture—the pilaster, the atlantean support, façade decoration

in the form of intricate formal mask panels, the ball-court. It was an art as dull in imaginative concept as it was energetic in achievement—the art, one would judge, of an uninventive people.

So with their sculpture—either of the human figure, in low relief, or the giant sculptured mosaics that still obtrude from the pyramidal bases at Teotihuacan. Technique is as adequate as artistic flair is absent. In pottery, among a mass of unremarkable household utensils, they made beautiful vases, slip-painted in the primary colours.

“Necromancers, sorcerers, and magicians,” they may well have had; and no doubt even the difficulties of an agglutinative language were no bar to oratory. Of their astronomy we have no direct knowledge. It was probably as inferior to that of the Old Empire Maya as their calendar—a borrowed product—was inferior.

In the worship of a single solar god (probably in the main an agricultural deity) whose subsequent lustre was somewhat dimmed by the rise of a war god, the Toltecs pay remarkable tribute to the conclusions of the modern school of historians, and hardly merit the severe and unconsciously humorous strictures of an early pseudo-savant—that “animalism seems to circumscribe their whole religious bent.”

To summarize briefly the views of four modern schools of historians, the entire Toltecan semi-civilization was (a) brought by the Toltecs from their original home, Huehuetlapallan; (b) evolved in the districts surrounding Tollan; (c) derived from the Maya Old Empire in Central America; (d) imported from across the Pacific.

The first school lacks a definite geographical focus. If in British Columbia or in California the Great Colourful Place is to be identified—as it may well be in either—the lack in these regions of the most obtrusive elements in Toltec culture is remarkable. If in the Mound-Builder region of the Mississippi, then the Toltecs, fully equipped as to culture,

achieved the remarkable feat of deserting their remote home and migrating into Mexico before the radiations from their own Mexican cultural adventure had made possible the growth and existence of the Mound-Builder communities. One may suspect that even the Abbé Brasseur's necromancers would have balked at this miracle.

The second theory, championed by those who see all civilizations as separate ferments in hermetically-sealed containers, has now few supporters. Least of all had it support among the Toltecs themselves, who consistently referred their advancement to the work of alien culture-bringers.

The third hypothesis is based on the greater antiquity of the Maya Old Empire, and the undisputable certainty that the Toltecs absorbed various cultural elements from the great Central Americans. The fourth, championed in various fashions and in various ages by the Spanish conquerors, Humboldt, and—to some extent—the modern historical school, deduces a direct cultural relationship between Eastern Asia and Mexico.

Although the mass of conservative opinion undoubtedly gravitates to support of the third school, that opinion has all too frequently been formed from the study of exclusively American subjects. To test the claims to paternity of either Mayan or Asiatic it is necessary to move southward a moment from the scene of the Toltecs' hasting activity in rearing Tollan.

Before any overwhelmingly affective drift of culture from the Mayan Old Empire could have ebbed up into Mexico it must, presuming a land route, have passed through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Inside the Mexican region, a little north of the Isthmus, lie the ruins of Mitla and Monte Alban. Their construction is consistently ascribed to the tribes in occupation of the region at the time of the coming of the Spaniards. These were the Zapotecs and Mixtecs. No certain datings can be applied to

these two test sites. And this is important. For if, in the view of the Mayoid school, their remote antiquity is assumed, then they were built by the immigrant wash of culture from the Central American debacle; if dated late in pre-Columbian history, it was a reflex flow of culture from the Mayan-inspired Toltecs.

Both sites are show-places of the ancient American scene. Monte Alban, in the process of excavation, appears to be yielding such stores of "treasure" as are likely to retrieve the reputation of Mexico in the eyes of the romantic novelist; Mitla has long been as fruitful of popular theorizing and even more barren of satisfactory evidence than Tiawanako of the Peruvian Andes. Amid heaps of rubble and great vegetal mounds stand its much-discussed "palace-complex"—quadrangular buildings, the walls reared with extraordinary skill and symmetry. For ornamentation these walls are severely patterned in grecques and the like variations on world-known geometric elements. World-known—but not elsewhere in America north of Panama. "The sculptural decoration of the buildings at Mitla is unique in Central America" (55).

Humboldt, in whose day Mitla appears in a much better state of repair, noted the palace's "arabesques," its caryatids, its general appearance of having "striking analogies to Lower Italy" (44). But he added, with his usual caution, that analogies of this kind are very limited proof of the ancient communication of nations. Charnay spoke of it as "a bewildering maze of courts and buildings, with facings ornamented with mosaics in relief, of the purest design; but under its projections are found traces of paintings, wholly primitive in style, in which the right line is not even respected" (56).

Charnay's abominable painters were undoubtedly Toltec, and Toltec art, therefore, a late superimposition. And there is no trace of Mayan datings; no characteristic Mayan sculptures (the "grecque" is

as un-Mayan as it well might be); the palace columns are quite definitely columns, not carved wall-section roof-supports as in the Maya area.

The claim that Mitla stands as the "half-way house" between Mayan and Toltec art is therefore proved to have little foundation. Other origins must be sought for the basic elements of Toltec culture, as they must be sought for Zapotecan.

The question returns to the battle-fields of an earlier controversy—"local development" as against extra-American inheritance. As has been stated, the only survivals of Toltec architecture in Mexico proper are pyramidal. We have noted how the orthodox Americanist draws a severe line of demarcation between the American and the Asiatic pyramid both as to shape and function. "The American pyramid, built in terraces, had but faint resemblance even in outline with the Nilotic monuments, and was never chambered, but a solid structure."

Humboldt (44) records, however, that in cutting the road from Pueblo to Mexico a large portion of the Cholula pyramid was cut adrift from the main mass and laid bare a tomb built of stone slabs and sustained by beams of cypress. Two skeletons reposed there, some basalt statuettes, and a number of pieces of glazed pottery. One can account for this heterodox conduct on the part of the Cholula pyramid-builders only by supposing that they were no true native Americans at all, but aliens, impolitely or ignorantly flouting the Monroe doctrine in archæology.

Indeed, it now seems fairly obvious that Toltec and Zapotec, in their different areas, were the recipients of such trans-Pacific culture waves as built up the Maya Empires. But they were different waves, from slightly different sources and the cultural streams that dried up so far as the Mayas were concerned continued for a considerable time to play actively on the Mexican coast. A glance at the map will show good reasons for this.

This origin and connection was denied *in toto* by

the older school of historians, ascribing in the case of the Mexicans, as of the Mayas, all resemblances to Old-World civilizations to "the narrow and limited bournes within which the human mind and the human hand can function." They ascribed to the human mind, in fact, a narrowness and an assiduous inventive silliness entirely incompatible one with the other.

Enhanced by natural development from within, and by stray fragments of Maya culture from the south, the Toltec civilization appears to have reached its zenith about the end of the eleventh Christian century. It then became menaced by the arrival of new war-like tribes from the north—the ferocious Chichemacâ. And, under these historical stresses, it prepared to fling into the Mayan drama of history a number of protagonists who were vitally to colour and affect that drama.

VIII

THE HISTORY OF THE MAYA NEW EMPIRE

i. *The Great Descent*

THE New Empire, according to the legends collected by Lizana (13) and others, suffered or benefited throughout its history from three invasions—the Great Descent, the earliest; the Little Descent, the second in dating but the least in importance; and the coming of Kukulcan (the Toltec invasion).

It is difficult to connect either of the first two invasions with the dated cities of Tulum, Cobà, Chichen. But, on the whole, the scanty evidence seems to point to the fact that the invaders of the Great Descent came from the north-western section of the Old Empire, and probably in the eighth or ninth Christian centuries. It is probable that the country was inhabited before their coming, and it is equally probable that the story of the Great Descent is no more than the story of the coming of the alien culture-bringers (or their half-breed descendants), who had prospected up through the Old Empire area from their landing-place on the Pacific shore.

They were led by a God Itzamna, and his wife (and sister) Ixchel, the Rainbow Goddess; they were led, in fact, by typical Children of the Sun, people of the divine caste. Later historians have been apt to identify them with the sun in his progress, as Itzamna was also a God of the Mayas. But there is no reason to doubt the actual humanity of either Itzamna or his consort. And it seems to have been as common for the Maya to bear the names of their gods as it was for the Spanish Jesu-Marias to wear plate-armour and rape Amerindian women.

To the present writer the legend of the Great Descent enshrines the first authentic-sounding note in Maya history. It seems a legend of the autochthonous Maya themselves—not of the culture-

bringers. The Maya of the horizon culture, the Archaic civilization, stared out their wonder upon the strangers, strangely armed and gifted, who came marching from the north-west into their country, settling here and there, bringing new gods and cults—Itzamna, we are told, brought the art of maize-growing and also of the script. It is very possible that indeed he brought improvements upon the primitive technique of maize-cultivation, and if a member of the hybrid ruling-caste of the Old Empire it is likely that he brought with him the newly-fashioned script. His features and those of Ixchel are dim enough to our eyes, but his story strikes a fine plangent note in that distant land, bright with sunshine, this lost Oceanic or Indonesian or half-breed, remote from the possibility of his native land and its cults; or perhaps a child of the Americas, remembering back through several generations dim traditions of his alien ancestors. But doubtlessly, as did all the Sun Children, (the most remarkable blood-caste which ever appeared on the earth and which wandered with civilization from Egypt to the ends of the earth,) he was conscious of his own divinity, as his followers were and soon the Yucatecan natives as well.

Itzamna laid the foundations of Champoton and probably Kimpech and then pressed deeper up towards the peak of the Peninsula. Kabah and Sayil may have been founded by him in this march, and finally, Izamal. There Itzamna died and was buried in a great pyramid—the Itzamatul, long a place of pilgrimage for the Western Yucatecans.

This eruption of civilization among the Mayas it was which probably reared the somewhat florid and yet unimaginative architecture of north-western Yucatan. Probably Itzamna and his following, though they brought the script, either lacked or discarded the cumbrous mathematical calculations of the calendar fashioned by their fathers in the Old Empire. Possibly its fashioning had not yet been

completed. At least, despite the apparent antiquity of many of the sites, they stand undated in their bush, and lead to a natural supposition that it was here that the Katun Count was first used, from here and not from any catastrophic overthrow of the Old Empire that the new system of dating originated.

ii. *The Little Descent*

The coming of the Little Descent may be identified (and with some certainty) with the wanderings of that remarkable family, the Tutul Xiu, whom we have already encountered erupting through the stagnant peace (or at least silence) of Old Empire history. After abandoning Chacnouitan, according to the family chronicle, they settled at Bakhalal. Two hundred years later they "discovered Chichen-Itza," settled there, and "were accepted as lords of the land."

Did their coming precede that of the Great Descent; and, coming to Chichen, did they find the city already settled?

As has already been stated, no reliance can be placed in the contradictory datings of the *Books of Chilán Balaam*. The probability is that the Tutul Xiu arrived in the region of Chichen Itza towards the close of the tenth century. Long prior to that, as the datings show, eastern Yucatan had been settled—to judge by its architecture settled from the Peten region—and Chichen Itza, Cobà, and Tulum built. When the Tutul Xiu arrived on the scene it was probably through a flourishing land, citted and peopled. The inhabitants one must postulate as necessary figures for accepting the Xiu as "lords of the land."

Probably the inhabitants were the usual Maya, Chol Maya, with the usual organization, and the Xiu by this time a war-like tribal grouping. But it seems that the Western Yucatecans, the Holy People, Itzamna's people, who had grown by this time into something of the likeness of a nation, had

extended their sway over Chichen Itza. Indeed, the very name of the city means the Mouth of the Wells of the Itzas—The Mouth of the Holy Wells. It is probable that the Xiu forcibly captured the city and laid the surrounding country under tribute, laid, indeed, the Itzas under tribute. From this arose the beginnings of that remarkable triangular leaguings and conflict that was to dominate New Empire history to the end.

After the arrival of the Little Descent the history of Yucatan dims. The *Books* interweave their meaningless dates, confusing Itzas and Xiu very unhelpfully and hopelessly, from the point of view of most modern historians. The confusion, however, seems largely unnecessary. A remarkable statement illumines the shadows, the statement that the Tutul Xiu, no doubt in order to conciliate the surrounding Itzas, "called themselves Itzas."

The re-christening appears to have availed them little. After a lapse of some years—a hundred and twenty in the Xiu chronicles, but this is manifestly merely dragging in a sacred calendar number—the surrounding Itzas appear to have arisen and driven out the Tutul Xiu. The latter decamped, wandered across the Peninsula, and seized the town of Champoton.

Champoton was the first port where Yucatan's next alien invaders were to land.

iii. *The Golden Age of Itza*

The rulers of Izamal during the time when the Toltec Xiu occupied Chichen Itza appear to have been the Cocomes. Possibly these Cocomes, true Itzas, were mainly instrumental in sending forth the Xiu on their unwilling exodus through the wastes of Yucatan to Champoton. At least, relieved of the hated "Strangers," as the Xiu were called, it would seem that a large portion of Yucatan submitted to Cocomes rule. Indeed, a great *Pax Itzana* may have

been instituted, missing out Champoton with its rebel Xiu. This at least is a more probable re-setting of the broken mosaic than that blur of senile exoduses and marchings which some modern historians foist upon the Maya scene—the Itzas themselves fled to Champoton, the Xiuis apparently vanished into the ground, and the rest of the inconvenient details of Yucatecan history of the time dismissed as “euhe-merized sun-myth.”

It was probably during the era of early Cocomé rule that, to the south, in darkness for us, but not necessarily for the Yucatecans, the Old Empire was attaining its apogee. Habits and customs, rumours and hostilities, we may suppose, flowed to and fro the Old and New Empire areas. A great rectification of the calendar—the putting of Pop in order—took place at Copan, and for that rectification it seems likely, from the representation of seated astronomers each with a primitive instrument in his hand, carved on an altar at Copan, that representatives from many Maya cities attended, New Empire as well as Old Empire. There are vagaries of dress in the squatting priests, and, to judge from the glyphs, vagaries of names and towns. One priest, in turban and ornaments, looks as though he had newly stepped ashore from Indonesia. Yucatecan tradition duly records, what has been verified from the altered gnomons of the great sun-dial of Copan, that “Pop was put in order,” i.e., Mayan ceremonial time was brought into line with solar time.

In this period it is probable that the great sacred road from Cobà to Chichen Itza, and perhaps from Cobà to the sea-coast opposite the Holy Island of Cozumel, was built. Both Chichen and Cozumel were sacred places, Cozumel the Iona of Yucatan, an island of temples and the grisly rites of the Mayan faith. And probably it was in this age that the Three Brothers of Bishop Landa’s tale ruled. Their history casts some light on the dark scene, even if it is a light almost wholly fictitious.

They appear to have been the sons of the ruler of Chichen Itza, the sons of the Cocome. When their father died the three were left to rule jointly, an oddly depressing trio, as we view them. Probably they seemed equally depressing to the Itzas. So far from embarking on the usual dynastic squabbles, they were inseparable, the three brothers, living together, together worshipping the gods. They kept the traditional laws strictly, or amended them in the interests of a secure morality. They kept the feasts and fasts scrupulously, and spent long hours in the temple ceremonies. They appealed very much to Bishop Landa when he heard of them five centuries later, though we may imagine that the helots of the fields, the fishermen in their canoes, the artisans scraping the temple-walls with their stone tools, moiled and toiled on through the long hot days of the summers or the days of rain and torturing insect-clouds, and were but little concerned.

No rift appeared in the fraternal lute until news of some kind summoned one of the brothers to Bakhahalal: this seems to warrant the idea that Bakhahalal was part of the Itza state. No sooner had he gone than his brothers threw off the guise of piety and moral strictness, and proceeded, as no doubt they themselves and their admirers called it, to make whoopee. New taxes were levied and collected. Banquets and all-night feastings became the rule. Women were raided from their homes to satiate the lust of the Two Brothers. Chichen (presuming that city was their capital) became an Amerindian Milan under the rule of a mad Sforza.

It was too much at last even for the patient Mayan spirit, and the populace presently rose in revolt. The Two Brothers were captured and executed for "oppressing the republic."

What happened to the Third Brother at Bakhahalal is not told. It is to be hoped that he shared the fate of the other two. More probably, like a later Cocome whose family was exterminated, he returned to con-

tinue the dynasty which was shortly to face the invasion of a non-Mayan enemy.

iv. *The Coming of Kukulcan*

This has brought us up to a period of Yucatecan history still uncertain in its dating. But from both Mexican and Yucatecan traditional history it is safe to assign the period now under review towards the middle of the twelfth century, *circa* A.D. 1100 or A.D. 1150.

About this time it appears that the great Toltec city of Tula or Tollan was captured by barbarians, the Chichemacâ, and its inhabitants scattered. Some of them stayed on in Mexico, little pockets of civilization in the flooding seas of barbarism, but of the main body of the Toltec people a great southwards migration took place. That the Toltecs realized the condition of Central America and were aware of the civilization of the Mayas there can be little doubt. Probably Toltec merchants had already traded widely in Yucatan, Toltec pilgrims visited Cozumel. The odd belief that each American civilization lived in complete ignorance of its neighbour has been dissipated by the facts of modern research.

The ruler of Tollan at the time of its capture by the Chichemacâ was an old man, Huemac, whom the invaders hunted down and murdered. Thereafter the leadership of the migrating Toltecs passed into the hands of one of the most remarkable men in American history: the Lord Axcitl Quetzalcoatl—Axcitl the Humming-bird Snake, whose name the Mayas were to translate as Kukulcan.

In the legendary history of the Toltecs there appear to have been at least three Quetzalcoats. The first was that missionary-explorer-reformer who arrived in Toltec territory probably towards the close of the ninth century, bringing the arts and crafts, the methods of weaving and star-calculation—bringing, in fact, the elements of advanced Asiatic culture into

the life of an Archaic Culture people. He appears to have dominated the Toltec mind not only during his life, but for long after his death. His attitude towards the native Amerindian pantheons is curiously reminiscent of the attitude of the Buddha and the Buddhist missionaries, as the present writer has shown elsewhere (57). He was horrified at the thought of human sacrifice, but approved of such sacrifices as those shown on various Maya sculptures—the drawing of blood from the tongue and genitals by thorns, and so forth. Then he died and passed from the Toltec scene.

Dead or departed, he appears to have been identified with the Toltec Sun God, or placed in control of many of the functions of that luminary. In the years that followed a curious anomaly grew up. Quetzalcoatl was worshipped with all the sanguinary rites of the other gods of the Amerindian pantheons, the while his reputation as a gentle reformer, one who hated human sacrifice, still lived on. In fact, he was a late and alien god who never became fully naturalized. It is an interesting speculation, which cannot be followed out here in any detail, whether the first Quetzalcoatl ever had a human life in the Mexican plain and mountains, whether indeed he may not be simply the tale of the Buddha, the Brahmanized Buddha of Indonesia, translated into Toltec terms and transplanted to Toltec territory. If so, it was a strange enough avatar of the great Sakya Muni which took place in ancient America.

The third Quetzalcoatl, the Toltec warrior whose conquests and adventurings were so greatly to affect the fortunes of the New Empire Maya, was probably the cacique of some priestly Toltec house specially and specifically concerned with the Quetzalcoatl worship. He was named after the god, as Itzamna of the Great Descent may have been named after the common sun god of the Maya Old Empire. Of his likeness or appearance there is no possibility of disentangling a certain portrait. His features are

blurred in those of the earlier Quetzalcoatl, the missionary-stranger, pale-skinned, long-robed, black-bearded. The American Indians grow a thin and unchancy crop of face-hair, but some castes appear to have cultivated ceremonial beards. Perhaps Axcitl Quetzalcoatl was bearded, and largely in the traditional likeness of the god whose name he bore.

The refugees appear to have drifted through the Tehuantepec neck and into Acallan by sea and land. What happened in that vague territory is uncertain. Probably the Toltecs conquered and settled those debatable regions. Probably they came into actual conflict with the Maya Old Empire. At this period that Old Empire appears in the throes, as we have noted, of a fresh Period of Disunity. Did the presence of the Toltec migrants to the north of its territory add to that disunity, cause it, or take advantage of it? There is a dim and unreliable tradition of Quetzalcoatl sailing up the Usamacintla and conquering various cities along its course—Menché-Yaxchilan, and perhaps Piedras Negras. But this is very doubtful. There is nothing whatever in Old Empire sculpture which suggests Toltec influences: the Old Empire remains in the darkness from which it is improbable it will ever be excavated, and we follow the Toltecs on another venture.

This was the invasion of Yucatan.

Possibly news of the dissensions in the Peninsula following the death of the Two Unjust Brothers influenced the Toltec invaders. Possibly it was a kind of blind drive towards an admittedly weaker section of the Maya territory. For, in darkness though it is, one apprehends the Old Empire as strong as it is tenebrous. And perhaps the Toltecs were aware of the country surrounding Champoton, held by the Tutul Xiu, as a land hostile to the rest of the Peninsula, more easy to attack.

The invasion appears to have taken place by the sea, and to have touched Yucatecan soil first at Champoton. There is no account of the landing and

battle which must have taken place, but the issue could never have been greatly in doubt. The Toltecs were probably the much better armed and led of the two forces. Against them were doubtlessly opposed the usual Maya militia, and militia then, as now, were probably hopeless troops to set against professional warriors. Further, the Maya were still unacquainted with the bow. One creates a fanciful picture of this decimation of the Maya ranks by the Toltec bowmen. The city was probably captured with ease.

Now, though the legends are confused and unreliable enough, it appears very likely that it was this invasion of the Toltecs which led to the eviction of the Tutul Xiu from Champoton. They fled into the interior of the Peninsula, probably a great hijra of men, women, children, from the advance of the triumphing Toltecs. For once the Mani chronicle almost breaks into loquacity. The Xiu endured great hardships, "wandering under the forest trees, living upon roots." The story has the authentic ring of a people violently dispossessed of their homes.

Quetzalcoatl apparently lingered but a short while in the captured sea-town of the Mayas. He marched into the interior, and thereafter the route of his conquest is a matter of supposition. One may imagine Kimpech and Sayil falling into his hands, Itzamal, where the great tomb of the Itzamatul may have surprised the conquerors with its likeness to their own great pyramids at Teotihuacan, now in the hands of the barbarous Chichemacâ. Chacmultun and Xul, with their great temples and colleges and inscriptions, no doubt were entered by the Toltec forces, but there is no story of whether they resisted or surrendered. One has the impression, nevertheless, of a singularly feeble defence, and may speculate as to how the Cocom rulers of the Itzas behaved. Did the Real Man of Chichen Itza organize a heroic army and great battles devastate the scene on the road to Chichen Itza? Were the Mayas as ferocious opponents to

the Mexican strangers as they were later to prove to the Spanish? Or was that later resistance the result of the infusion of Toltec blood, not to speak of Toltec military science?

Of these things there is no record. Probably the terrible bow proved as effective a weapon in the campaign as the needle-gun of the Prussians was to prove in 1870. The conquering Toltecs, the Strong Men who had been unable to withstand the Chichemacâ, dominated with comparative ease the tribes of Maya peasants and priests and ineffective nobles. One may pause and wonder what the peasants thought as the invaders tramped through their plantations, whether they greatly resented their coming, or had the unpatriotic outlook of all sweated land-serfs. And what did the Toltecs think of the land and its gods, and its men with the mis-shapen heads?—the Toltecs themselves went undeformed.

Chichen Itza was captured. The rulers of the Itzas submitted. Cozumel Island, the Holy Island, was either taken or the priestly caste who ruled there, the Cumux, made diplomatic peace with the invaders. Quetzalcoatl and his Toltecs were in possession of the New Empire.

v. *The Reign of Kukulcan*

With Yucatan so subdued, a design of considerable ambition seems to have fructified in the mind of the Toltec leader. This was to build a federal capital which would rule, through the Toltec power, all the cities and settlements of the Itza.

Chichen Itza was an impossible capital, probably because the Itza still looked upon the Toltecs as interlopers who had defiled their sacred city. Further, the mass of occupied Maya cities in those days appears to have lain to the north-west. Nor would Izamal, under its giant mausoleum, have proved a better centre, already wedded to a local cult and with a long history of its own. Quetzalcoatl therefore

resolved to found a completely new city, situated in the midst of the most populous region.

His plannings probably received considerable impetus from news of the latest move of the Tutul Xiu. Evicted from Champoton, as we have seen, into that vast stretch of Yucatecan territory then nameless, but afterwards to be called after the city of Mani, the Xiu appear to have built up considerable political or military power in a comparatively short time. The Katun dates would extend this period to a hundred years or more, but they may be disregarded. It is more probable that, under the leadership of a vigorous "Governor," Ahzuitok Tutulxiu, the Xius in a few years or even a few months, welded themselves into a strong power—the only power in the Peninsula not subdued by the invaders. They advanced northwards, and, almost contemporaneous with the plannings of Quetzalcoatl, commenced to build the city of Uxmal.

We may project Ahzuitok and Quetzalcoatl as the protagonists in a dim Yucatecan drama. The end of it is certain, though how that end was attained, by force or diplomacy, is uncertain. However that be, the Xiu entered the federal league imposed by the Toltecs, and probably aided in the building of the new capital, Mayapan.

Various fantastic etymologies explain this name. It was said to have been detestable to the Maya, who suspected a Toltec sneer. The invaders were said to translate the word as *Maya*—"not virile," and *pan*, "a banner." This would make of Mayapan the Woman's Banner, the Eunuch's Flag. The conquered Maya, as proud of their reproductive powers as most peoples, probably credited their conquerors with an unusual subtlety. It seems certain, nevertheless, that after the departure of the Toltecs the Maya called the city by many fresh names: Tancah, the Middle of the Earth, Ichpa, the Fortress, and many others. Mayapan outlasted them all, however. It was a last legacy of rude Toltec vigour.

Quetzalcoatl instituted a league of three principal powers, which, in turn, were to be responsible for the governance of the lesser cities under their sway. These three powers seem to have been the Eastern Yucatecans, under the rule of a nameless family in Chichen Itza ; the Western Itza, under the rule of a branch of the Cocomes at Izamal ; and Central and Southern Yucatan, under the rule of the much-travelled Tutul Xiu at their new city of Uxmal. The Cocomes themselves were installed in the federal capital, Mayapan.

The League appears to have been equipped with an elaborate constitution. Two bureaux were to rule under the Toltec overlord or his viceroys, the Cocomes. One, the political, was to have the Cocomes as president, the other, the religious, was under a high priest who also resided at Mayapan. To strengthen the central authority, the members of the League and their subordinate cities were required to deliver up hostages to reside in Mayapan and there receive such training and culture as the central authority considered meet.

Apparently Quetzalcoatl was not only a conquering warrior and a statesman of considerable foresight and skill, but also a propagandist of his religion—the Quetzalcoatl worship, the honouring of that divinity whose name the Maya translated as Kukulcan. To the beginning of the League period we may confidently assign the coming of Toltec influence in New Empire sculpture. In Chichen, Izamal, Mayapan began to rise Toltec temples and phallic towers, decorated with the giant serpents, the grinning monster-heads and the marching warriors beloved of Toltec art. Toltec altars upheld by squat atlanteans, Toltec palaces with serpent-pillars, Toltec ball-courts, large and elaborate, overhung and overshadowed the products of the native civilization. It was an art and an architecture with a certain aridness, without much imaginative scope. On the other hand, it has to modern eyes a clean grace and naïve intimacy which

no true Maya art possesses. It is nearer the human norm than the twisted heads and fuss of insane ornamentation beloved of the unsubdued cities of the Old Empire.

Oddly enough, and the inevitable ball-courts apart, the cities under the rule of the Xius show the least mark of Toltec influence. One may imagine from this that the strength of the Xius was still considerable, that the "Strangers," in fact, were the only patriotic Maya of the New Empire not completely subdued.

How long this most interesting of Yucatecan statesmen, Quetzalcoatl-Kukulcan, remained in the New Empire is uncertain. (As indeed is the authenticity of much of his activities.) Legend, however, despatches him to Tabasco to make new conquests to add to his empire. Possibly he led his all-conquering Toltec army back into Mexico against the flooding Chichemacâ. Of where he went and how he fared there appear to have arisen great cloudings of rumour and surmise. His disappearance led to his speedy incorporation with the Quetzalcoatl-Kukulcan worship—he was made one with the sun-god, who possibly himself had been some Asiatic missionary, who himself may have preached some Buddha-avатар of the Brahmins.

The turn and play of the historic forces have introduced many a strange cultural complication—the Buddha a saint in the Christian calendar, and the same Buddha probably worshipped with rites of human sacrifice in the temples of Chichen Itza and Mayapan.

vi. *The League of Mayapan*

For over two hundred years, from about the beginning of the thirteenth Christian century until the end of the fourteenth, the League of Mayapan endured. It is a time almost without history, an era of peace in the New Empire, almost as voiceless and nameless

as the entire history of that Old Empire which probably still endured in the country to the south and west, or only now was decaying.

It would be easy to construct from the known elements an imaginative picture of that time, providing we remembered it imaginative, not historical: religion static in essentials, but the temple-rites growing ever the more drearily complicated. There were endless sacrifices and prayings, fastings and feastings and mutilations. The spirit-denizens of forest, mountain, cenote, and sea increased till it would seem the very bacilli of death were apprehended and worshipped. Architecture, transformed through the Toltec influences, soon lost initiative in the design of new forms, and indulged in repetition on repetition of earlier forms. Pottery and jewel-work evolved a beauty and polish before unknown, and then, in a kind of bored desperation, strayed into the ultra-fantastic in shape and design. Sculpture, portrait sculpture, became unknown. . . . Indeed, it needs little imaginative vision to see a kind of cultural leprosy thick-dusting the peace and prosperity of the era of the League, which so many modern historians have postulated as one of peace and contentment.

The peace was more of sleep than of content and the result of statesmanship, we need hardly doubt. The peasants toiled as immemorially they had toiled, in the hot Yucatecan weather, for two hundred years, seed-times and harvests, expecting little, and being undisappointed, for, if League social customs at all resembled those prevalent at the time of the coming of the Spaniards, they received little. No doubt among the middle classes—the Guildsmen, the chilan priests—an individual might now and again arise who was *different*, who did or carved or said unconventional and unexpected things, who raised a building with slimmer pillars, widened the corbelled arch, resurrected some of the antique skill in astronomical measurements, experimented with the casting

of metals. But of those imaginative, though not imaginary folk (for of them the real stuff of history is made), the records are dumb amidst the shouting of the captains and the kings.

But throughout that two hundred years of Yucatecan history even the kings are strangely muted of voice. The first Cocome established in Mayapan was succeeded by his legitimate descendants, and these seem to have behaved with considerable statesmanship. They remained the League's overlords, but no more. Some of them built city houses in Mayapan to attract to the capital the country *batabs* and governors during certain seasons, we are told. Mayapan was the scene of the great Kukulcan festival, for five days every year, and no doubt the roads that led to the capital had pictures bright and barbaric and colourful enough in those days of pilgrimage when the delegations from the various Yucatecan cities marched to the capital, with their banners of green feathers, clad in ceremonial costumes, passing through the villages of the helots, the rulers carried in litters, surrounded by guardsmen bearing bright flint-edged spears and clubs. No doubt life for the nobles in Mayapan, as in their home cities, was no mere solemn cyclical celebration of solemn temple ritual. Rape played, no doubt, as great a part in Maya life and romance as it did elsewhere, in spite of the contention of some modern writers that the ancient Maya were a singularly sex-cold race. The phallic *picotes* of Uxmal and Chichen Itza, suggest otherwise. Phallicism was a lively cult in Mexico, and apparently in the New Empire as well—this pitiful worship of the emblems of fertility by a culture relatively non-producing.

No doubt Cozumel steadily increased in fame and fortune throughout the era of the League, and the great Cobà-Chichen highway was often enough crowded with pilgrims come from far and near through Central America and Mexico. The Holy

Island, like the rest of Yucatan, had accepted the Kukulcan rite of the Toltecs—the now-vanished Toltecs, racially and culturally vanished, little more than a name in the home of their origin. The Kukulcan was incorporated in the Maya pantheon, a Mexicanized Indra-Buddha cheek by jowl with such deities as the Mayaized Indra-Ganesha-Chac. The Xiu in their capital Uxmal appear to have become especially enamoured of the Kukulcan cult. Bishop Landa records that just prior to the coming of the Spanish conquerors, the whole “month” of Xul was devoted to the “Kukulcan” festival at Mani. Landa, however, makes the Xiu the heroes of his history and the Cocomes the villains, and would naturally associate the least repulsive of the Mayan deities with his heroes.

During the period of the League the Xiu built their political capital, Mani, at a short distance from their ceremonial capital, Uxmal. In many respects, as we have noted previously, the Maya civilization never emerged from the Archaic culture stage of the whole ancient world, with its dual organization and dual villages. Tikal and Uaxactun were probably examples of this, and later Uxmal and Mani. But Mani was also built near the greatest flint quarry in Yucatan. Fortune favoured the Xius and their new town became the principal weapon-making centre in the Peninsula, for in Yucatan flint held much the same position in the economic life as iron did in contemporary Europe.

And then abruptly, round about the year A.D. 1400, plantation and temple alike awoke from the peaceful life of two hundred years to see the fires of war kindle and kindle from city to city until the glare of them was over all the lands of the League.

vii. *The End of the League*

At the time when the conflict broke out the Halach Uinic of the League, the Real Man, was Hunac Ceel ;

Ulil was the Governor of Izamal; and Chac-Xib-Chac the Governor of Chichen Itza. The name of the Xiu governor of Uxmal is unknown. The Xius at the beginning of the conflict kept warily in the background, perhaps from their privileged position in Mani supplying the combatants on all sides with weapons from their great flint-quarries.

Probably disaffection with the power of the Cocomes in Mayapan first rose to open revolt under the reign of Hunac Ceel, who seems to have had few of the pleasant traits and most of the unpleasant. His type is such as we should expect from a long generation of rulers regarded as semi-divine, yet forced in no way to keep their divinity burnished. His reign appears to have been marked with fresh taxes and extortions on the League cities. Finally, he learned that Ulil of Izamal was plotting his overthrow in company with Chac-Xib-Chac.

There is an alternative reading to the story which makes Hunac Ceel and numerous other nobles descend on Chichen to celebrate the wedding of the Red Man. During the wedding feast most of the guests, in the usual Maya fashion, drank themselves speechless and powerless—all but the wily Hunac Ceel. Preserving his sobriety not for moral, but strictly immoral reasons, he abducted the bride—a squint-eyed, deformed-headed Paris with a Helen whose name is not even mentioned. Considering the facets of his character later turned on history, the more romantic version of the story does not seem improbable. Grave historians reject the story of the abduction of Chac-Xib-Chac's bride, and ascribe the outbreak of war to Hunac Ceel's political ambitions, just as they burn the topless towers of Ilium for commercial reasons rather than the face that launched a thousand ships. But commercial wars belong more to the era of developed capitalism than to that of a barbaric league of cities.

Whether the cause was abduction, or Izamal and Chichen the aggressors, war broke out.

At first success appears to have gone with Chac-Xib-Chac. But the fortune of battle changed, Hunac Ceel captured Chichen Itza and drove out the Red Man. The fate of Ulil is uncertain. Probably he also was driven from Izamal. Hunac Ceel, so far from being the overlord of a federation, was now the ruler of a compact kingdom—but for the Man territory under the old hereditary enemies of the Cocomes, the Tutul Xiu.

Hostilities for a little appear to have hung fire, the Xiu diplomatic and wary. Then Hunac Ceel had a mercenary army brought from Mexico, from Xicalanco or the neighbourhood of Tlascalala. These new-comers were descendants of the tribes which had broken up the Toltec republic, and kin to the Aztecs who were now rising into prominence in the Valley.

Ahtzinteyut-chan, Tzuntecum, Taxcal, Pantemit, Xuchucuet, Itzuat, and Kakaltecat were the leaders of this Mexican horde, and the seven sweet symphonies boom menacingly, if a trifle meaninglessly, across the history of those days. Hunac Ceel seems to have made no immediate use of these allies. He settled them in Chichen Itza, which suggests that Chichen had become depopulated. Probably its population had migrated southwards.

This was a bad tactical move on the part of the Mayapan tyrant. The Maya regarded Chichen Itza as a sacred city, and the Nahua bowmen with the seven captains as defiling foreigners. War again broke out, this time with the Xiu leading the confederate forces. The Cocomes, beaten in the field, took refuge in Mayapan fortress. Apparently their Mexican allies were laggard in coming to their aid.

Hunac Ceel appears to have been dead by this time. His successor, with his Nahua allies at length in Mayapan, was dismayed to find these allies singularly insubordinate. He fled from the city and took refuge in the state of Kimpech. The allies took Mayapan and instantly fell to bitter quarrelling over who

should control it. It appears that the Xiu had been enticed to take the field on the promise that they would be given Mayapan when the Cocomes were overthrown. But now the confederate governors refused to acknowledge the supremacy of the Tutul Xiu, and the various parts of the Maya army broke up and scattered back to their homes.

From Kimpech it is told that the Cocome despatched another embassy to Mexico, asking for a further army of mercenaries. Some historians see this embassy at the court of the Aztecs. More probably, it gathered men in Tabasco. One version, at least, brings over an army of Tenochcas and Xicalanques under the command of a captain, Kanul, who was subsequently to give his name to a Maya state. With this army to back him, the Cocome advanced on his ancient capital of Mayapan, brushed aside what little opposition there was, and entered it in triumph.

Bourbon-like, however, the Cocomes seem to have been incapable of either learning or forgetting. They commenced to pay off old scores. Hunac Ceel's successor died, and his son, Nacotcome, appears to have been moulded in his grandfather's image. His oppressions became too bitter for the populace to endure. Again they rose in rebellion, and again, after much urging, the Tutul Xiu of Uxmal placed themselves at the head of the rebel forces.

This was the year 1451, one of the few certain dates in Maya history, a remarkable and fateful year. The rebel confederates besieged Mayapan, the Mexican mercenaries being again strangely missing from the scene. Confident in the walls of the Fortress, Nacotcome behaved with some prudence. But the insurgents conspired with a priest inside Mayapan, one Ahchel, who opened the gates to them.

Mayapan was looted and a terrible massacre of the Cocomes set in. They were hunted down in the rooms and corridors of the Mayapan palace, run to earth in its remotest corners, and slaughtered, or

raped and slaughtered, without mercy. Not a soul of the Cocomé family-group in Mayapan remained alive, the only regret of the triumphant confederates being that a younger son of Nacotcocomé, despatched on a mission to Bakhalal, escaped their vengeance.

The Xiu again laid claim to rule Mayapan in the place of the Cocomés, and, as before, their allies instantly became their enemies, and vigorously denied them the right. It even appears that the Xiu again besieged Mayapan, this time defended by their erstwhile comrades-in-arms. The Xiu blood was up. They captured the city a second time, set it on fire, levelled its walls with the ground, and retired to Uxmal.

With their retirement, the last symbol of unity on the New Empire had fallen.

viii. *The Period of Disunity*

With the break-up of the League the New Empire in Yucatan appears to have assumed much the same tribal groupings as the Spaniards found on their arrival seventy years later. The central and most powerful state was Mani, ruled by the Tutul Xiu from their two capitals of Uxmal and Mani. Apart from these solid foundations of power, the Xiu also laid claim to the ruins of Mayapan and yearly the Governor of Uxmal appears to have marched his militia into the ruins to reiterate the claim. Then, like the men of the Duke of York in the ballad, he marched them home again.

South of Mani, and bordering on the cities of the Old Empire, lay the territory of Peten Itza. How definite were its city groupings there is no record. It may even have been ruled from Tikal and Uaxactun. West, along the inland Mani border, lay in northwards journey Peten-ekte, of which we know little, Tixchel, of which we know less, and Potonchon, centred round its capital of Champoton, where the Mexicans under Quetzalcoatl-Kukulcan

had landed, where the Xiu had resided during their exile from Northern Yucatan, and where now, in the period of disunity, a warrior family, the family-group of the Covoh, dominated the scene. This family was to provide a general of some skill and unlimited ferocity to oppose the (as yet) inapparent Spaniards.

North of Potonchan lay Kimpech, a state ruled apparently by a minor branch of the Cocomes, and north of it Chakan, in whose territory stood the city of Sayil, then, perhaps, a minor Athens, as to-day it is a minor but intriguing show-place for the traveller in Yucatan.

North of Chakan lay Kanul, apparently settled by the mercenary army brought by the Cocomes to subdue their subjects. The Maya treated the invaders with great leniency, either through policy or a clemency little to be looked for. The story goes that they were allowed to settle the sea-coast tract, which they named after their leader, on the understanding that they should not inter-marry with the Maya populace of surrounding territories. They were a lesser breed without the law, but probably, in spite of the prohibition of the victorious confederates, soon became thoroughly Mayaized in blood and culture. Kanul included the great religious site of Ti-hoo, where the present-day Merida is built. Technically, Mayapan was also in its territory, but this seems to have been no bar to the annual excursion and games of the haughty Xius from Mani.

Cepech was a little corner state on the sea-border, of which nothing is told. It was sandwiched in between Kanul and Ahkinchel, the latter, the tradition goes, founded by the same priest, Ahchel, as had opened the gates of Mayapan to the besieging confederates. His people, the Chels, dominated the sea-coast for long, second in power only to the Xius of Mani.

Between Mani territory and Ahkinchel there presently sprang up a new Cocomes state. This was Zotuta, founded by the sole survivor of the slaughter

of the Cocomes, that Cocome who had been absent on a mission in Bakhahal. It contained the two cities of Zotuta and Tibullon, and, characteristically Cocome, remained on very bitter terms with both Mani and Ahkinchel in spite of the fact that Tibullon was supposed to signify "We have been judged"—an allusion to the fate of the Cocomes of Mayapan. No family in Mayan history appears to have deserved its judgment so thoroughly, and one cannot but sympathize with Landa in his sympathies for the Xius who had helped to bring their fate upon the Cocomes, and were twice cheated of their reward. Indeed, the Xius are the most sane and understandable of all the warring little tribes that endured in Yucatan. Their history was one of dogged independence and resolution. Only time and circumstances defeated their attempt to establish a hegemony over all the other states of the Peninsula.

In the north-eastern corner of the Peninsula there were three states at least—Tizimin, Calotmul, and Kupul. Calotmul appears to have been little more than a narrow belt of country surrounding that much-harassed city, Chichen Itza. Tizimin is merely a name. Of Kupul, the largest of the three, we also know little.

Opposite the shore of Kupul lay the Holy Island, Cozumel, where the priests of the Cumux family probably carried on their rites and sacrifices undisturbed by the rage of events in the Peninsula, and looked out from their towers at a sea unflecked with alien sails.

South of Kupul lay the states of Ekab and Cochuah, Ekab with apparently Tuluum as its capital—a Tuluum probably raided and settled by the "cannibals from the sea." The ruling family here was the Exbox. Cochuah, a large and indefinite territory stretching into the even larger and more indefinite Bakhahal and Chectemal, was reputed to have over a million inhabitants at the time of the

Conquest, and was ruled by a family group with the generic name of May.

This cataloguing of uneuphonious names suggests a wild confusion and disintegration of the New Empire. Yet this disintegration appears, at first, to have been political only. And that political collapse, the legends tell, was productive of nothing but good. For a time peace descended on the ruins of the Empire. Men came back from bush and forest and exile to ruined plantations and deserted city-sites, and set to the tilling of the maize-plantations, the hunting of deer and peccary. Again the forest clearings were set with long villages of huts, the grass-grown Sacred Road was cleared, and pilgrims, comparatively undisturbed, might make their way through Yucatan to the City of the Holy Wells and the Holy Island beyond.

As if in alliance with these tardy blossomings of political peace, the weather for six years was such as no man could remember in Yucatan. Rain fell heavily at the seasons of planting. Suns came full and strong, ripening, but not destroying. The very seas and rivers swarmed with fish.

It was the Indian Summer of the Mayas.

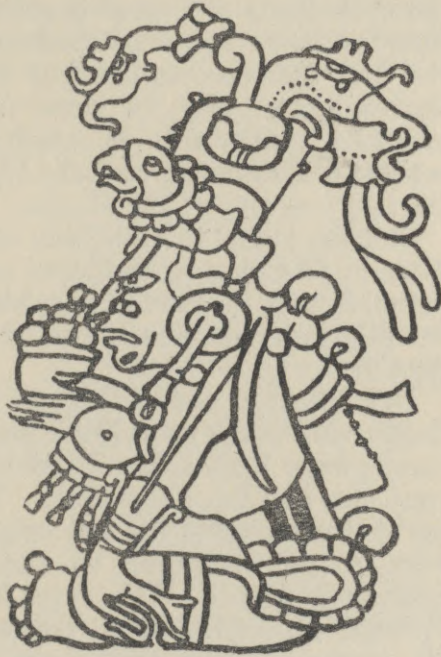
ix. *The Great Hurricane*

But one winter morning of the year 1465, when the sleepy temple-guardians at Cozumel were tending the early fires, they saw gather in the south-east a terrible shape of clouds. The air became filled with flying spume and a hot oppressiveness. Then in front of that hasting mass they saw the racing waters of a great tidal-wave, and presently the buildings were rocking under a terrible hurricane which tore the roofs from the thatched dwelling-houses and the corbelled arches from the temples. Nor did the hurricane stay at Cozumel. Leaving a train of wrecked villages, it poured inland and burst on the interior country like a thunderclap. Temples and long-houses and colleges

were levelled with the ground. Houses, wrapped in straw against the unusual cold of that winter, were overthrown or swept away; in whole districts the straw, catching fire, lighted up the cities and the ruins left by the hurricane in conflagration.

Still westwards, uprooting forests and settlements alike, roared the wind. Amidst the packed populations of Zotuta, Mani, and Ahkinchel it played the part of a destroying fiend, till, under a louing canopy of cloud, the sun was presently extinguished.

Far into the night the devastated Peninsula heard the seaward howling of the God Hurakan, who gave his name to this wind, and gives it to ours. By morning it had gone, across the Gulf of Mexico, and a dazed nation came crawling out to view its littered path.



THE SO-CALLED MAIZE-GOD

(From the *Dresden Codex*.)

x. *Pestilence and War*

Out into the Gulf, and out of history, that wind bore more than material wreckage. It bore the peace of the Indian Summer that had succeeded the break-up of the League. In the state of Mani Uxmal appears to have been abandoned during this time,

perhaps through the damage wrought by the hurricane, more probably from the damage wrought by a calamity following hard on the heels of that gale. The Tutul Xiu moved to their civil capital, Mani, leaving the splendours of Uxmal desolate. About the same time the Maya-Toltec of Chichen Itza, descendants of the first mercenaries brought over by Hunac Ceel, deserted their city for some unknown reason and marched southwards in exodus. These were the settlers of Peten Itza on Lake Flores, which remained the last free city of the Mayas.

Chichen seems to have been colonized again immediately, probably from Kukul or Tizimin. It was a valuable site, its rulers flourishing on the tributes of the pilgrim-trains and the reputation of the Wells of Sacrifice.

But Yucatan had not finished with calamity with the passing of the great hurricane. A great pestilence came on the Peninsula. Those who touched the dead were also in a few hours dead. The pestilence spread far and wide, afflicting not only the Maya but their very crops, according to the tradition that the Spaniards found. The very fruit mottled with a strange, fungoid mildew, poisonous and burning to the taste. Amidst streets and fields dead and unburied bodies, hideously swollen, burst open, displaying the intestines filled with maggots. No doubt, wherever the plague touched on temple altar or temple cess-pool, in that land without sanitation and with hideous blood-rites, the plague was kindled afresh.

The peace of thirty years vanished with the coming of the plague. There is, indeed, in the historian's eyes, a fine tragic intensity in those last years of the Lost Expedition's madness. Banked-up hatreds were released and old wrongs remembered. Much though the Cocomes of Tibullon and Zotuta hated the Tutul Xiu and all that they had done to overthrow the power of Mayapan, their detestation for the Chels, the renegades who had split the Maya state, was equalled only by the detestation in which the Chels

held the inhabitants of Zotuta. Possibly the thirty years of peace had done no more than nurse to warmth their mutual wrath. Even in that period a kind of economic warfare was waged between the two states. The Chels, lords of seaports that in after years were to retreat far inland, refused the passage of fish and salt into Zotuta; Zotuta retaliated, somewhat ineffectively, by boycotting the export of fruit and game into Ahkinchel. With the plague there came on the Cocomes either a fresh upstirring of hate—or else an overmastering desire for fresh fish. War began.

The Cocomes raided up into Chel territory. While so engaged, the news was brought to them that Zotuta had been invaded by the terrible Tutul Xiu, the Lacadæmonians of Yucatan. The

Cocomes hastened back, and they and the Xiu armies vanish into incoherent years and campaigns from which it is hardly possible to disentangle any clear view of the fortune of the war. The whole Peninsula, or at least the northern states in it, seem to have been drawn into the conflict with extraordinary rapidity.

The plague had gone, but the New Empire Mayas scarcely noted its passing. Possibly it depopulated large centres, possibly it may have decimated and



A VARIANT OF GOD CHAC

(Indra-Ganesha.)

(From the *Dresden Codex*.)

scattered those tribes, voiceless in history, who up to that time at least had still remained in possession of the Maya Old Empire. In Yucatan itself, the country-side echoed to the din and screams of the passing and re-passing of bodies of painted warriors, the sacking of temples and colleges. Wholesale massacre became the order of the day in the treatment of a conqueror towards his conquered.

For sixteen years the war raged. Over a hundred and fifty thousand of the Maya perished. Towards the end of the war, petering out in exhaustion, some priest on the watch-towers of Cozumel, drowsing in the sun, may have raised his head and seen, far out to sea, the passing across the horizon of vast sea-houses gleaming in the sun.

It was the year 1493. Those were the ships of the Spaniards.

IX

THE CONQUEST OF THE MAYA

i. *Preludes and Prophecies*

ON October 12th, 1492, Christopher Columbus, with one small ship and two caravels, having crossed the Atlantic Ocean for the first time in the recorded history of any of the Mediterranean peoples, sighted a small island in the Bahamas which he called San Salvador. Beyond lay Cuba and Hispaniola, islands with strange inhabitants, both the cannibals and the gentle savages which contemporary European thought had classed as of kin with the phoenix and the unicorn ; beyond these, as Columbus gradually learned in the course of his three great voyages, were innumerable other islands. But it seems that he never suspected the mainland as a mainland : he thought of the islands only as rather disappointing preliminaries to his arrival either in India or in China.

It has been said that his coming ended the cultural isolation of America from the Old World. As we have seen in this outline of the growth of the Central American civilizations, there is no good reason for supposing that America was isolated from the Old World for any lengthy period from the beginning of the Christian era until the end of the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, when numerous wars, conquests and the like in Indo-China and Indonesia apparently put an end to a well-recognized and well-followed emigration route. Nor had America been isolated from Europe : the colonizings and adventurings of the Norsemen on the American coast as early as the later half of the tenth century are now well known. And there is at least a possibility, which need not detain us here, that in ancient times other cultural influences had crossed the Atlantic from the African and Mediterranean shores, though the main inspiration for the building of the Central American civilizations had always been Asiatic.

In the islands of the West Indies Columbus found not only matter for surprise in the character and characteristics of the inhabitants, but for some disillusionment regarding their material culture. We now know the islands to have been inhabited by peoples at the primitive level, without even the faintest traits of culture, until a short century or so before the arrival of the Spaniards. They were peoples living on the fringes of the great experiment of civilization elsewhere clouding the skies with sacrificial smoke in the Central, Northern, and Southern Americas. They were (like other American peoples beyond the reaches of that experiment (58)) children of nature, in an unambitious Golden Age, hunters, swimmers in the seas, charitable and hospitable and mirthful folk.

But from South America had come a warlike and trading people, who had learned civilization up on the Andean slopes and carried it down the Amazon, with its basis agriculture, and most of its unpleasing religious rites, including a ceremonial cannibalism which speedily ceased to be ceremonial. These newcomers, the Caribs, half-civilized tribes on the fringe of the American civilizations, apparently raided the Maya upon occasion, and traded with them on others. And they penetrated into the West Indies and here and there raised barbarous "kingdoms" amidst the communities of the primitives. They were, indeed, repeating the march of all civilizations since the first sprouted in Ancient Egypt, their march across the globe—when Columbus and his Spaniards came to wipe that experiment away, with a spray of lead, as a gardener spraying greenfly from a fruit.

But the Spaniards found no marks of the high civilization of India or China, until, on his third voyage, Columbus at Guanajo encountered the canoes of some merchants who gestured that they had come from the west. They were clad in cotton garments, these merchants, and apparently had golden ornaments; they reinvigorated the hope

of Columbus that westwards lay the India he sought.

It is probable that they were Mayaized Caribs from Yucatan, from the Chel seaboard, perhaps, or from Ekab. No account, unfortunately, of the reactions of those merchants to the sight of Columbus has come to us. They seem to have been less surprised than the Spaniards.

Columbus returned to Spain to die. Other voyagers streamed up and down the Gulf and amidst the islands, but the Central American civilizations and Mexico remained undiscovered. In 1506, it is true, Juan Diaz de Solis and Vicente Yanez Pinson apparently sighted the coast of Yucatan, and may be noted as its technical discoverers. But they believed it merely another island, and did not put into land.

The first intimate contact of Spaniard and Mayan was in 1511. A caravel bound from Darien colony to headquarters at San Domingo struck a reef and went down. So quickly did it sink that only the boat of the governor, Valdivia, escaped, together with twenty of the crew. Amongst that score or so of survivors were Geronimo de Aguilar, a pious young man, some kind of lay priest, and Gonzalo Guerrero, a sailor.

For thirteen days of sun and exposure they drifted in the open sea. Towards the end of the thirteenth day, however, a long line of coast appeared. It was Yucatan, though they were unaware of the fact. Wind and tide drove them towards the shore. Shortly after landing they were surrounded and seized by a party of Maya.

We may imagine the shock of surprise endured by the Spaniards. They had encountered savages in plenty in Darien, but none like these—men of diminutive stature, with squinting eyes and deformed heads, clad in garments skilfully woven, sandalled, strangely armed and armoured. Probably their captors stared at them and fingered them in an equal

wonder, then marched them into a nearby city. It is still very uncertain what that city was. Perhaps it was Tulum, where the Exbox ruled, and the Spaniards looked upon the city in its later heyday, a city with a thousand years of history, walled, with its temple-fires in the air, its strange and aberrant ceremonial and religious life.

The Spaniards were flung into a pit and left for a short time. Then a party of the Maya appeared and dragged out Valdivia and some others. They were hurried to a temple and sacrificed, very horribly, and their bodies then quartered, cooked, and eaten by their captors.

The remaining Spaniards, it seems, were kept for several days in captivity, being fattened on maize for the table. Then another of their number was taken away and sacrificed, and the remainder determined to escape. Probably Guerrero was the ring-leader of the attempt. They succeeded in slipping the thongs from their feet and wrists, and breaking from the pit or hut in which they were immured. It was night-time, and probably they looked back and saw the lights on the devil-temples and the strange wavering outlines of the buildings of the strange and horrible city in which they had been immured.

With these for guide, they fled in the opposite direction, into the bush.

All that night they fled through the forests of Ekab, penetrating deeper and deeper into the interior. Probably there were villages to be avoided, and dogs that bayed at them. They found themselves in a low range of hills with the coming of the dawn, and penetrated through those hills, thus, though they did not know it, passing out of Ekab into the state of Cochuah.

For several days they were lost in the bush, surviving meagrely enough in that waterless country. Then they fell into the hands of a chief called May, the presumptive ruler of Cochuah, and were taken to his city, possibly Tabi. Cochuah seems to have

been on bad terms with Ekab at the moment, and the Real Man of that state, from motives of pity or defiance, neither surrendered his captives to his neighbour, nor sacrificed them. The Spaniards found themselves enslaved, without rigour and without compassion.

The news of their arrival spread throughout the Peninsula with more than one curious result. There can be little doubt that both the New Empire Maya and the Mexicans had heard of the coming of the strangers in the West Indies: such canoe-convoys as Columbus had seen at Guanajo must have carried home that news speedily enough. In the east was blowing up a great cloud of tenebrous rumour and surmise. And, because in Amerindian legend and myth, strangers out of the seas were phenomena well known, the roots of all the Amerindian civilizations and religious systems came, alien-born, out of the seas, there was a natural attempt to identify those tarrying strangers with other figures in legend, with prophecies accredited to those antique figures. The story of the fears entertained by the High-Chief of the Aztecs, Moctezhuoma, then ruling in the pueblo of Tenochtitlan in Mexico, is well known. It was believed that the strangers were gods of the Toltecs, were children of Quetzalcoatl.

The high place of the Quetzalcoatl (Kukulcan) cult in Yucatan appears to have been Mani, the capital of the Tutul Xius. And it was there that Muchanxiu, the Real Man of the Xius, heard from his high priest, one Ahpula Napotxiu, that remarkable prophecy of the coming of the white men and their destruction of the land, in the interests of a "higher faith," which has aroused so much controversy. Yet there seems no good reason for doubting the essentials of the prophecy attributed to Napotxiu. No doubt the version to which the future was entertained had been poured through an orthodox Catholic sieve, but one may say that almost any intelligent Maya of those years of the New Empire,

looking at the political confusion around him, the country but slowly recovering from the last civil war ; further, hearing of the exploits of the Spaniards in the near west and the strange and terrifying weapons that they carried, could have made the prophecy of their conquering the distracted states. And by 1514, we must remember, the captive Spaniards had been held for two years as prisoners of the Maya of Cochuah.

A round dozen had succeeded in crossing the inhospitable hills from Ekab. But within two years only two remained alive. It does not seem that they were treated with peculiar brutality. The strange food and probably the malarial climate were responsible—possibly, also, the alien life of the city where they were imprisoned. They must have seen their Mayan masters taking part in horrifying temple-rites, rending the body of the victim, cooking his flesh, assisting at the awful ceremony when the sacrifice was flayed alive. In the dark temple corridors to which they bore burdens from quarries or plantations they would see the insane sculptures of snakes and feathers surrounded by the paragraphed devil-script, and cower from priests whose hair and garments were matted with blood. Of a race accustomed enough by then to cruelties in religious matters, it is yet possible that they were largely sickened and scared to death.

Only the pious Aguilar and the blasphemous and resourceful Guerrero were left. The former seems to have been protected by as singular a mental blindness as ever a stranger brought to an alien country. Wrapt and secure inside the armour of his own beliefs, he saw the Maya gods as devils, the Maya as infidels who denied the Christ. He was a messenger and an explorer, albeit an involuntary one, from the great adventure of civilization to one of its lost expeditions ; and he seems to have treated it as though it were a lapsed village in the Spanish mountains. Unimaginative, heavy, dutiful, he turned

his eyes alike from the wonders of the Mayan cultural life and from the friendly looks of the Mayan women. He might have been interpreter and historian of all that is dark to us in the Maya. Instead, he turned away his eyes, or, through the long, stifling nights, battled with the fiends of desire and lust which haunted his priestly bed, imagining that he was surrounded in the darkness by smiling Maya women, ardent to seduce him.

Guerrero was of other temper, yet he too failed the opportunity we can envisage. One imagines him prowling the streets of Tabi, quick for adventure with women and men, subservient and sly with the priests, forceful enough in other matters. In a year or so it seems that both he and Aguilar became very proficient in Mayan, and then Guerrero set about displaying his proficiency and skill in arms to the ruler of Cochuah. He improved their bows and spear-throwers, and probably introduced fresh tactics into Mayan warfare. Becoming discontented even with this progress up from slavery, and learning that the ruler of the neighbouring state to the south, the state of Chectemal, was one where skill in military matters was valued, Guerrero escaped across the border into Chectemal. If an account of his adventures had survived, it would probably contain twice the interest and information furnished by the entire records of that Spanish Conquest that was following at his heels. But Guerrero was too busied with his new master and the way of life he encountered in Chectemal to heed to recording his adventures.

He seems to have been hospitably received by the ruler of Chectemal, one Nachancan. He set about, under that ruler's instructions, re-arming and re-drilling the Can army; he was formally enrolled a member of the tribe, married a Can "princess," allowed himself to be painted and tatued in the Mayan manner. Further, through the emissaries of Nachancan in the rest of the New Empire it seems that Guerrero spread the warning that the

white men would come in time and attempt to seize the country. They should be killed as soon as they set foot on the land.

It was a remarkable but understandable metamorphosis. Aguilar meanwhile remained a slave in Cochuah. His account of his adventures during those years has many an unauthentic note. The most probable explanation of his slow preferment in the harim of the Real Man of Cochuah is that the Maya looked on him as a harmless idiot, and unkindly ascribed his sexual reticences to physical impotence.

This was in 1514. Five years were to pass ere a messenger was to arrive from Cozumel Island with ransom for the two strayed Spaniards.

ii. *Expedition of Hernandez de Cordoba*

Meanwhile, the Spanish slave-merchants of Cuba were finding it harder to collect cargoes among the islands. They knew of Darien and the Panama lands by then, and of a great island to the south-east of Cuba rumours grew ever more plentiful. That island was the as yet unnamed Yucatan (for to the Maya of the New Empire their country was simply the Land of the Turkey or the Land of the Deer).

In Cuba a number of Spaniards combined to purchase two ships for the ostensible purpose of exploring and reconnoitring to the west. Slave-raiding was not in the articles, for the Spanish crown, in spite of all that had happened to practically enslave and largely exterminate the native population of the West Indies, and that in the short space of twenty years, still set its face rigorously against slavery undisguised. Diego Velasquez, the Governor of Cuba, appears to have had no such scruples. He provided the two ships with provisions and his moral support, and they sailed from St. Iago de Cuba on the 8th of February, 1517.

An extra ship had been purchased by then, for the preparations had gone on for almost a year.

Apart from sailors, there were over a hundred soldier-adventurers and disappointed Spanish prospectors on board, ready to turn their hands either to gold-looting or slave-raiding. One of their most notable members was that genial Bernal Diaz, the historian, who was later to accompany Cortes to the colourful conquest of the Mexican tribes. The selected or elected commander was one Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba, as courageous as he was weak-willed and uncertain of purpose.

They sailed with uncertain winds that came and passed and left them becalmed and resumed again, stragglingly westwards, for a period of twenty-one days. The burning seas were unislanded and lightless. But on the 1st of March land at length was sighted, a great stretch of it, and nearer at hand a small island. The Spaniards disembarked at the island and gazed in surprise at the buildings upon it—temples with idols of women, perhaps of Ixchel the Rainbow Goddess. The island was deserted and the filthy temples brooded in the still heat. The Spaniards waited for a little while for the priests or owners to return, and then re-embarked. The island was used by Yucatecan merchants, and had no permanent priesthood. It seems to have been the last port of call of travellers voyaging out into the seas.

Cordoba had his ships head north again and they sailed along the coast. Then it was that a great town came in sight, shining with white roofs and walls in the sunlight. The Spaniards crowded the rigging and stared at it in delight and surprise. We do not know, in this time remote from that, which town it was; perhaps El Meco in Titzimin. To the delighted Spaniards it was proof positive that at last they had arrived in the legendary and longed-for East. They instantly christened the town Grand Cairo, and prepared to anchor. The wonder of that white town seen inland from the barbarous American shore comes down to us from them.

Night seems to have been falling, and the Spaniards slept on their hopes and expectations. Next morning five great canoes were observed paddling out towards the ships. They did no more for a while than reconnoitre, then came nearer and a parley ensued. Finally, presents were exchanged, albeit suspiciously and with some strain on both sides. The Maya of the town had heard of Guerrero's warning and their batab or governor had planned an elementary strategy for entrapping the invaders.

He did not invite them to land that day, probably perfecting his plans. But on the next the canoes came out again, and the canoemen, by gestures, invited the Spaniards to visit "Grand Cairo." There were considerable language difficulties, and a great deal of confusion over a Maya phrase which sounded like Cabo Catoche, to the Spaniards. They took this, somewhat ingenuously, to be the name of the nearby headland, and solemnly affixed that name to it in their chart and records. The alternative reading is that the Maya said *Conex Catoch—the town of the Canoch.*

The Spaniards agreed to land, but apparently in their own boats. A party of about thirty, with twelve arbalests and ten muskets, piled in and rowed to the shore. Here again a parley seems to have taken place, and the word Yucatan, for which modern philologists find half-a-dozen unconvincing meanings, was overheard by the Spaniards. They took it to mean the name of the country.

They could see Grand Cairo shining through a grove of trees, and the chief gestured them to follow him. On the outskirts of the town the Mayan holcones or militia fell on the strangers and a bloody battle ensued. At the noise of the fire-arms the Maya fled in terror, leaving two prisoners, later christened Melchior and Julian, in the hands of Cordoba's men. The Spaniards, albeit victors, turned about and retreated.

On the way to the shore Bernal Diaz tells (59) how

they came on a hideous " Temple of Sodomy " and some other buildings, with idols and the like gear in them. Probably it was a shrine of the phallic cult imported from Mexico, and Diaz, gazing at the carved genitals, was as shocked as a good Catholic ought to be. The comments of the rest of the Spaniards are not recorded. Probably they were unprintable. Strip-ping the temples of a few jewelled toys, the Spaniards re-embarked, together with their prisoners, and the Maya of Grand Cairo no doubt watched them go before they re-entered the town.

Disgusted with his reception, and having neither the command nor the force to occupy Grand Cairo permanently, Cordoba raised anchor and set sail along the north Yucatecan coast, coasting the long, flat islands which there stretch league on league, and with the now ruined temples probably occupied and alive with watchers. The news of the advent of the Spaniards at Grand Cairo appears to have been borne swiftly through the country. By the time they sighted Kimpech, once a retreat of the Cocomes of Mayapan, a description of their ships and persons was in the hands of its batab. Nevertheless, he received them courteously, the Spaniards disembarked and entered the town. They found it a great city of the usual long-houses and pyramided temples—temples which Bernal Diaz entered and describes in detail, the painted, sun-glittering exteriors, the blood-splashed walls within. All the town was alive with hordes of priests, wearing long garments, also blood-splashed, records Diaz. These priests we now know to have been the chacs, and perhaps one or other of the great annual festivals was about to be celebrated when the Spaniards arrived. In one temple Diaz was surprised to see a cross—a common symbol of both the Old and the New World, though Diaz did not realize this and supposed that Kimpech had once known the elements of his own faith and had subsequently relapsed. . . . Cordoba abruptly cut short his stay in the erratic fashion characteristic

of him, collected fruit and water, and sailed down the western coast of the Peninsula.

But at the next great town sighted, Champoton, the capital of Potonchan, he was destined to receive a warmer greeting than at Kimpech. Expectation and hostile preparation marched parallel with the south-westwards groping of Cordoba's ships, so that the ruler of Champoton, one Mochcovoh, prepared to give them a stern welcome. Gathering every warrior available he marched down to intercept the forces from the anchored ships.

There followed the first pitched battle in American history between the Whites and the civilized Americans.

Kneeling, the Spaniards fired into the charging, colourful mass of their opponents—browning them, in the hunter's phrase. But the Maya attack, though it reeled, did not break. Mochcovoh's voice and example stayed it. Undaunted wave on wave of the Potonchan Maya flung themselves against the Spanish landing-party, apparently indifferent to the continuous explosions of the fire-arms and the red execution caused by these and the steel swords of the whites. Presently the fighting appears to have been hand to hand and the numbers of Maya began to tell, in spite of their inferiority in weapons and armour. After an hour's fighting, Cordoba ordered a retreat to his ships, having lost over twenty men killed, besides two captured and instantly sacrificed in the sight of their horrified fellows. Also, over fifty of the Spaniards had been wounded, many seriously, the commander himself among them.

The Spaniards tumbled back into their boats and rowed for the ships, leaving the ferocious Mochcovoh the victor, though at terrible cost. Nevertheless, the Spaniards had been repulsed and had been proved far from invulnerable. Presently the ships raised anchor and turned north.

They had turned back for Cuba, and did not arrive there for many days, what of the wounded and dis-

abled men on board. At St. Iago, within ten days of being carried ashore, Cordoba himself succumbed to his wounds, leaving to his surviving companions to spread the tale of the cided land to the west, rich in temples and bloody priests, golden ornaments and ferocious warriors.

iii. *Expedition of Juan de Grijalva*

The first round had gone against the Spaniards, but Cuba was full of adventurers little likely to be dismayed by the fate of Cordoba. The Governor, Velasquez, had the two captives, Melchior and Julian, assiduously and unceasingly questioned as to the state of affairs in their country of Yucatan. Probably the captives understood but little Spanish, and that with difficulty, for one cannot credit them with deliberate intent in the deception they practised on their interlocutors. Yes, they affirmed, there was much gold in Yucatan—a land singularly barren in the metal, all Yucatecan gold being imported.

Velasquez accordingly wrote off an account to the Council of the Indies of the rich new lands recently discovered by an expedition he had despatched : and asked for authority to outfit yet another expedition. Nevertheless, news of the disastrous fate of Cordoba's venture was common property, and probably the Council would have turned a cold ear to Velasquez but for the fact that its President, Bishop Burgos, was a friend of the Governor in Cuba. Burgos praised Velasquez to the Emperor, and obtained the necessary authorization.

Velasquez proceeded to outfit his new expedition, of four ships this time, and with a force of over two hundred men. The most obviously suitable commander was his own nephew, Juan de Grijalva, and, in spite of his dislike for and distrust of this relative, Velasquez appointed him to the command. Two or three of the other adventuring cavaliers with the expedition were to leave their names in history—

Pedro de Alvarado, whom the Aztecs and Quichés were to know to their cost, Alonso de Avila, the companion of Cortes, and a Francisco de Montejo, still no terror to the New Empire Maya.

Grijalva's instructions were simple: To collect gold, and found a colony, if it were possible.

He sailed from Cuba on the 5th of April, 1518, and five days later sighted the coast of Yucatan, possibly the low-lying northern beaches. Here he would have disembarked an investigatory party, but that again the treacherous tides played havoc with his plans, as with Cordoba's. The currents set in and carried them about the painted seas for another eight days. On the ninth an island hove in view, and the Spaniards cast anchor. Though they were unaware of the fact, they had come on the Holy Place of the Maya cult, the Sacred Island of Cozumel.

The Cumux priests, no warriors, appear to have fled to the bush or the mainland at the first sight of the ships. Grijalva, landing, found an empty city. The Spaniards climbed and adventured in the painted temples and long-houses and stared their amaze and disgust at the idols and objects of esoteric worship left behind by the Maya. They pried around hopefully, seeking treasure and finding little, except a young woman, a Jamaican Indian who had been brought to Cozumel, perhaps in slave-trade from her native home, subsequent to the coming of the Spaniards to the West Indies. She seems to have been overjoyed at the sight of Grijalva and his companions. She preferred the Spaniards to the Maya any day; and one, imagining her life in the grisly Sacred Isle, can wonder little at her choice. Touched, the Spaniards acceded to her request and took her on board the ships.

Hugging that inhospitable coast, Grijalva sailed north and then west, perhaps in view of Grand Cairo, but not venturing to land there. News of their second coming was speedily abroad in the Peninsula, for, despite the glowing embers of civil war, the Maya

had recognized the whites as a common enemy—all except the Tutul Xiu of Mani. The news reached Mochcovoh at Champoton, and on the morning of the 15th of May, when the ships of Grijalva cast anchor opposite Champoton, the Maya were found assembled on the shore in considerable force.

Julian and Melchior accompanied the Grijalva expedition, and remembering the last experience at Champoton, and recognizing the banners of the ferocious Covoh Real Man himself, advised Grijalva not to land. Grijalva, however, was of a different temper to the erratic Cordoba. He had the boats manned, and from these, before landing, the Spaniards poured in a hail of lead on the close-packed Mayan ranks. A considerable struggle took place on the water's edge, three of the Spaniards being killed and several wounded. Then the Covoh militia, dismayed at the casualties, broke in spite of the presence of Mochcovoh himself, and fled into the interior. Grijalva marched into Champoton, searched it, looted it, and re-embarked. There seems to have been little of value in the town, and the Spanish commander resolved to sail south in search of richer cities.

Southwards he accordingly sailed. But meanwhile Mochcovoh, defeated but undismayed, resolved that other Maya states should receive the Spaniards as he had received them. Accordingly, he despatched heralds along the coast, rousing the populace. Grijalva's ships sailed down to the Laguna de Terminos, paused there, and made indecisive explorations. Then he sailed on, still hugging the coast, till he arrived at the mouth of the Tabasco.

There he found a great army of the mongrel state of Acallan gathered to resist his landing. The heralds of Mochcovoh had already arrived. In the background was a great town.

Grijalva had the gathered natives addressed by Melchior and Julian. He spoke pacifically. The reply was truculent. They had already a "king" in Acallan. For this new King Carlos and his pre-

tensions they cared nothing. But of the fight at Champoton and the slaughter there they knew much. Sixteen thousand men, they declared, were gathering to defend the town from the invaders from the sea.

Most of this oration seems to have been for the benefit of Mochcovoh's heralds. Despite these vauntings they made little or no attempt to resist the Spanish landing. Instead, they entered into trade with Grijalva's ships, and permitted him to erect his standards on the shore. But Grijalva found their town disappointing—it was not yet one of the golden cities of Ind. Inquiries, however, elicited the information that a great and powerful empire lay to the north-west, a land where gold was plentiful. Grijalva reembarked.

For days he coasted up the Mexican Gulf, by rich lands and templed islands, till he was assured that the fabled Empire did really exist, and that the Aztecs, not the Mayas, were worthy of an expedition of conquest. With that certainty he turned his ships about and passed out of Mayan history, reaching Cuba on November 15th, 1518.

iv. *Expeditions of Hernando de Cortes*

Cordoba's report of the reputed wealth of the new lands had roused the Governor Velasquez, as nothing else in his governorship had done. Grijalva's expedition apart, he resolved to equip a strong venture for the conquest, or at least the successful looting, of the lands in question.

The most obviously suitable captain was again Juan de Grijalva, newly returned. But it appears that the Governor hated his nephew, and now found excuse to blame him for the fact that Grijalva had planted no colonies in Yucatan or Mexico. One of the tale-bearers to the Governor against Grijalva appears to have been Francisco de Montejo. Grijalva was dismissed, and Velasquez looked about for another commander.

This, after numerous intrigues and disputes, he found in Hernando de Cortes, a slave-owner and adventurer of a singularly fiery and yet cold spirit. After various delays, Cortes, with eleven ships and five hundred and fifty soldiers, sailed from Havana on February 18th, 1519, commissioned to win the "Indians" to the true faith and submission to the suzerainty of the King of Spain.

A storm of some violence arose, scattering the convoy. Taking advantage of this, and in spite of Cortes' orders that the ships keep as close together as possible, Pedro de Alvarado, in command of one of the vessels, sailed straight for Cozumel Island, where he had been before. The terrified Cumux priests looked out and saw another great sea-house come. As was their custom, they diligently fled into the bush. The Cumux, had they tried, would probably have been able to match their short-distance sprinters against the whole of the rest of the New World. Alvarado landed, raided the temples, stole a little gold, and was just recovering from the flush of this meagre success when Cortes and the rest of the Armada arrived.

Cortes, furious at this minor looting which threatened the success of the greater loot he had in mind, upbraided Alvarado bitterly in front of the whole army. Three of the Cumux had been captured, and Cortes had them addressed by Melchior, telling them that the Spaniards meant no harm to the Indians. He despatched them into the bush in an effort to stay the flight of the priests.

In a day or two a large number of the guardians of the Sacred Isle, drawn, no doubt, by both curiosity and confidence, returned to their houses and temples. Meanwhile, Cortes had explored these, not greatly stirred by the architecture or sculpture; the lack of gold vexed him. However, sight of the various idols in the temples stirred his crusading zeal, and we are told he held a solemn service wherein his chaplain expounded the truths of the Gospel to the Cumux

priests. The latter were unimpressed, though still perhaps a little breathless from these continuous flights into the bush. They declared that Cozumel was the Sacred Island of the universe, and its gods very powerful and terrible, not to be renounced under pain of terrible sufferings to all the country. Impatient at this reply, Cortes had the images of the gods flung out of the temples and images of the Virgin and Child erected in their stead.

The Maya priests stared at these in astonishment, recognizing the Mother-Goddess Itzazaluch and the boy Itzamna. Were these the deities they were called upon to worship, there was no great difficulty in the matter. Delighted, Cortes observed the change in the conduct of the Indians. They were apparently ready to become good Christians. With the erection of a great crucifix the Cumux were still more impressed—recognizing it as an obscene caricature of the Vahon-Che, the Tree of Life, with a dead barbarian fastened to it.

While this revel of mutual incomprehensibilities was going on in templed Cozumel, Cortes had heard that two Spaniards lingered in captivity on the nearby mainland. He despatched one of his captains to sail over to Yucatan, and from there send some of the Cumux priests into the interior, carrying various bells and beads as ransom for the unfortunates.

Aguilar at Tabi was discovered as keeper of the Real Man's harim. The May, in good-natured contempt, had thought of a way in which the slave's evident physical disabilities might be put to account. But Aguilar had remained unaware of the reasons for his elevation. He ascribed it to the fact that the evidence of his chastity had impressed the May to awe. For several years he had devoted himself with a scrupulous attention to his palace duties and to fighting the nightly temptations which assailed him. One can vision the giggling Mayan background to those years.

To the last he seems to have remained ignorant of even the name and title of his master, solemnly referring to that individual as the Ahkin Cutz—the High-Priest Turkey—and no doubt ascribing the consequent laughter of his charges to meditated assaults upon his chastity.

With his own release, a new duty was now laid upon him. This was to find Guerrero, whom he had not seen since the latter's escape from Cochuah, but who was said to be still alive, far to the south, in Chectemal, the kingdom of the Cans.

Enjoining the Cumux messenger to proceed to the coast and await his return, Aguilar set out for Chectemal. One would like to know his route and the things he saw and did on that journey, on the Yucatecan tracks, by the Yucatecan forests, in the heats by day and under the bright Central American stars. So at last he came to the Can capital, and, protected by the ransom he bore, sought out Guerrero. He found him in a thatched palace, a Maya warrior, painted and tatued, a Maya chief and a worshipper of devils.

Aguilar explained his mission, how Cortes on Cozumel had sent ransom for them and waited with his ships to take them away from Yucatan.

But the painted Guerrero laughed. To a Christian country? He was no Spaniard, but a warrior of Chectemal, married to an Indian, the father of three children. What Spaniard would welcome him back or admire his tattooings? Would Cuba rejoice over his ear-plugs or nose-ornament? He would stay on in Chectemal.

Finding that nothing could move the renegade, Aguilar embraced him, and went, and never saw him again, himself at last gaining Cozumel and the ships of Cortes before the latter set sail for the Gulf of Mexico to encompass the destruction of the Aztec civilization.

With that campaign this outline has no part. But the Cozumel venture was not Cortes' only contact with the Maya. Five years went by, years of fighting,

sieging, marching, looting and destroying in Mexico. The top-heavy Aztec civilization fell before the guns of the Spaniards, and by 1524 the entire country was in the hands of Cortes. Then there came to the latter in Mexico news that a lieutenant of his, Christoval de Olid, whom he had sent to subdue Honduras, was declaring his independence of the Mexican command and acting on his declaration. Cortes resolved on a desperate venture. This was to march down the length of Central America, through unknown lands, and fall upon Olid in Honduras.

It is one of the great marches of all history. Cortes passed down through Acallan into the forested lands beyond, watered by the Usamacintla and its tributaries. Somewhere in south Acallan he came to a great city ruled by a merchant prince, and despite the denials of many historians influenced by notions of the Old Empire's "abandonment" long before, this city of Izancanac may well have been Palenque or some other Maya site that bears a different name to-day. Beyond that, he found the country in a violent state of civil war. He was in the Land of the Deer, its cities being violently assailed by tribes of the Lacandones, barbarian Mayan tribes who had never been civilized. In this civil war we may see the true cause of the Old Empire's collapse.

Yet this is only another interrogation mark in the darkness of its history. Cortes was pressed for time, and had no leisure to waste in meditating on the war among the "Indios." So he passed south, till, in the Peten lands, he came on a small lake with an island in the centre, and on that island, the white-gleaming walls of a city.

This city was Tayasal, the lake Chultuna ; it had been settled nearly a hundred years before by Itza emigrants from Chichen Itza and surrounding territories, who, as we noted, migrated south after the fall of Mayapan. Its ruler was paddled across the lake to parley with Cortes, and the latter, in too

great haste to attempt the conquest of the city, nevertheless demanded admission to it. This was readily granted, and Cortes was rowed to the land, together with thirty soldiers. He found it templed and well-housed, a flourishing city in its strange lake, albeit worshipping the devil-gods of the New World. With the shadow of Olid on his mind, Cortes hastily preached to them the virtues and truth of another variety of gods, and, according to his own statement, had the satisfaction of seeing the reasonable Itzas burn or destroy all their idols. Then he crossed again to the mainland, and resumed his march, vanishing from the Itzas' ken, though leaving behind one of his favourite horses, Morzillo, in their care.

This thunder-beast had greatly impressed the Maya of Tayasal. They over-fed the horse in a temple specially constructed for it, and had the chagrin to find it die in their hands. A statue of the animal was carved in stone, and until 1618, at least, and probably for another seventy years more, it was worshipped there and in the surrounding country as Tzimin-chac, the thunder-god.

Cortes passed on to Honduras and out of Maya history. For another three years the New Empire remained uninvaded. Then, in the year 1527, the much-harried Cumux priests looked out one morning and saw a flotilla of the strangers' ships again arising out of the sea.

v. *Montejo Lands in Yucatan*

These ships bore the troops of Francisco de Montejo, a Spaniard whom we have met before in the expeditions of Grijalva and Cortes. A cadet of a rich family in Salamanca, a cautious and lumpish commander, he had little of either the magic frenzy or the magic magnanimity of Cortes. It was the misfortune of the oldest of the American civilizations to be conquered by the meanest of the white newcomers.

Despatched to Spain after the Mexican conquest, Montejo had set about a scheme cherished in his mind since he sailed with Grijalva: the conquest of Yucatan by himself. After busied years of intrigue and obscure plottings, he had at length received the coveted commission. Knowing that he would have to outfit the expedition largely from his own resources, he took the precaution to marry a second time, in 1526, a rich heiress, Dona Beatrix de Herrera. With funds acquired from this marriage at his disposal, his claims upon the Spanish crown had seemed much more imposing.

The commission he received conferred on him the rank of "adelantado," and made of him captain-general of Yucatan for life. He was directed to "conquer the Isles of Yucatan and Cozumel," to bring the "Indios" to the Christian faith, and to enslave only "rebels."

Early in 1527 he sailed for the land of the Maya New Empire with three ships, 520 mixed troops, foot and horse, some light guns, and several packs of bloodhounds.

The ships wheeled in by Cozumel and cast anchor there. For once the Cumux did not fly. Montejo disembarked and parleyed with the priests for food and interpreters. Further, he himself set about learning Yucatecan and instructed his officers to do the same. He also attempted to learn as much as possible of the nature of the country he proposed invading, and the characters and characteristics of its various "caciques." It is odd to reflect how much more complete in many details is our knowledge of these matters than Montejo's could have been. What the Spaniards discovered through slow years of conquest we can see unimpeded in a preliminary glance.

Even so, that landscape is blurred and indistinct. Naobonkupil ruled in the Kupil land, and Namuchel in Ahkinchel. Nachicocome, a vigorous scion of the Cocomes, reigned in Zotuta. Muchan was dead in

Mani, and had been succeeded by a son whose name is uncertain. In Chectemal the militia of the great Can clan was officered by the renegade Guerrero. At Tabi the harim of the May still giggled over memories of the chaste Aguilar. Mayapan was a smouldering ruin under the quick spread of the jungle bush—a ruin to which the Xiu holcones marched yearly to make show of suzerainty. The ferocious Mochcovoh a trifle subdued in his outlook upon the strangers, perhaps because of the stories of their prowess in Mexico, reigned in Potonchan. Uxmal was deserted by the Tutul Xiu. Chichen Itza was still a great Holy City, with ever-increasing sacrifices at its Cenote, the underground reservoir. Religion was a static aberration, a putrescence in the minds of those descendants of primitives whose gods were brought by far-sailing Pacific colonists. Art and sculpture had decayed greatly in the years of plague and civil war. Mutual hatreds between the three great clans, Xiu, Cocome, and Chel flared up every now and then in bloody campaigns. The peasants toiled as always they had toiled, priests sacrificed with the ancient rites, nobles hunted, cocks crew from the straw-built sheds. Everywhere was a rumour of the white men and their deeds in Mexico—mixed, perhaps with the story of the whelming of of that congerie of great cities to the south, that we call the Maya Old Empire—a whelming brought about by plague, dissension, and the raiding Lacandone barbarian.

This was the Yucatan that awaited the conquest of Montejo and his steel-clad adventurers, bearded men, excitable, covetous for gold, pious, cruel, sincere, sadistic and simple-minded.

Nor had it long to wait. Montejo, confident in the quality of the Yucatecan of himself and his officers, had his anchors weighed and the vessels coasted out from the shelter of Cozumel and turned towards the brown-green glitter of the Yucatecan shore. From Cozumel they sailed down that shore,

into Soliman Bay, and again cast anchor. There was a nearby town that we cannot now identify. Perhaps it was Zami. Perhaps its temple-steps crowded with sightseers to watch the landing of the white men—a ceremonial landing in which Montejo lined up his troops, the men standing bare-headed the while Gonsalo Nieto, the standard-bearer, unfurled the royal flag of Spain and declaimed “in the name of God I take possession of this country for God and the King of Castile.”

Round the standard gathered the cavaliers of the expedition—a less comely and valorous crew, to our mind, than those who subdued the Aztecs. There was Montejo himself, uneasy, heavy, suspicious, indecisive; his son, Montejo the younger, twenty-eight years of age, with more of both the darker qualities and the darker vices than his father; Montejo's nephew, an uncertain figure; Alonso Davila, the Paymaster, with a red reputation from the conquest of Mexico; Hernando Moreno de Quito, the Master of the Smelters, who was to oversee the smelting down of the treasure of the Maya; Gonsalo Nieto, and a few score more, all hardened to barbarian warfare. They knelt on the beach the while Fra Francisco Hernandea, the solitary and peevish cleric of the expedition, elevated the cross and invited on them the care of the saints, in especial St. Iago. Then the cavaliers mounted, the footmen formed in line, the guns rumbled behind on their carriages, the bloodhounds strained at their leashes; and, apparently without opposition, the Spaniards marched into the nearby town and occupied it.

After that first flare of colour and action, the story halts for several weeks. Characteristically, Montejo seems to have hoped the country would both submit without opposition and at the same time give such resistance and treasure as would equalize his achievement with Cortes'. He despatched a ship to the viceroy in Cuba, telling him of the safe arrival of the expedition in Soliman Bay, and how, prior to

marching into the country, they would "await the Franciscans." Meantime, his troops seem to have engaged themselves in thoroughly ransacking the country-side.

They did so with a growing disgust, peering into huts, tearing aside the curtains from the doors of long-houses and colleges, climbing the clumsy steps of the pyramids to peer in dim and odoriferous rooms of sacrifice, and nowhere was there evidence of anything of value. Yet it was to take them another ten years to realize that there was less gold in the average Mayan town than in the most poverty-stricken European hamlet.

They began to suffer very dreadfully from the heat. Some kind of an epidemic touched the expedition. By the end of the first two months over fifty men were dead. Montejo resolved on some definite action. Leaving a portion of his force behind, he took the cavalry, the bloodhounds, and perhaps some of the foot, and set out northwards.

News of his coming ran quickly up through the Maya lands.

He halted at a town called "Ekab." The ruler is described as Nacom Balam: he was either the high-priest of the place, or the Spaniards entered into the usual maze of confusions in Maya names and titles. He received Montejo peaceably and contemptuously! The expedition had reached "Ekab" almost starving and the Maya dubbed their guests "eaters of filth." The soldiers sweated in the night-heat and their armour. At dawn Montejo marched out and north again.

One can imagine the heat and perspiring weariness of those marchings ever deeper into Yucatecan territory, largely through trackless country, a strange country where templed villages would erupt from the bush and fade back again into the green day-night of the jungle. The men marched and swore and hoped for treasure: Montejo, halting one evening at an unknown village and entertaining, as usual, a crowd

of Maya notables who had come to see the expedition, escaped assassination by a miracle: a giant Mayan snatched a sabre from Montejo's little negro slave and would have despatched the leader of the Spaniards but that one of his cavaliers cut him down. And still there was no sign of treasure, and still the Mayans left them unattacked, though they had now passed beyond Kukul territory and were entering Tizimin.

Here they came to a templed town, Lochè, a copal centre. They entered it without opposition, and were received languidly and disdainfully by a batab who lay in a hammock and scarcely raised his head to look at the conquerors. One regrets that the incident is not enlarged in the Conquerors' histories, this meeting of the Mayan Diogenes and the sadly-inadequate Spanish Alexander. The bored batab had the Spaniards fed; then, drawn by the rumour of great cities to the west, they pushed out from Lochè and marched into Ahkinchel.

There seems to have been some incidental skirmishing by this time, but no regular opposition. What happened next is sadly mixed in the various outline histories of the conquest of Yucatan. The most probable version is that the next city the expedition came upon was Chuaca, a great Chel centre; and entered it without opposition. The Chuacans they found seventy thousand in number and the most intelligent and cultured of the Mayas they had hitherto encountered. Their city had regular streets and was beautified with great "stone houses." Its extent was such that though they entered its suburbs towards midday and marched without halt they did not attain the city centre till darkness was falling. . . . One can only suppose that the conquistador who left this account must have looted and drunk several jars of the ceremonial balché in the suburbs.

But Namuchel, the Real Man of Ahkinchel, was at length moving. He raised his militia and marched down on Chuaca. In the morning the Spaniards in

Chuaca descried his approach. Montejo, glad to demonstrate his power in a definite engagement, marched out to meet him.

There followed what seemed in its essentials a repetition of many a battle fought by the Spanish conquerors of Mexico. The charging Maya were mown down in scores by the guns and arquebuses, dispersed and broken up by the charges of the horsemen. In an interval of the fighting the bloodhounds were loosed and these tore out the throats of the native wounded, or, leaping upon the warriors, affixed their fangs in the naked flesh under the loin-cloth. But the Maya recovered again and again, and in face of their overwhelming numbers, Montejo decided on retreat.

Six captives were left in the hands of the Maya to suffer the usual grisly fate of such unfortunates. Montejo retreated across country towards Akè, the principal pueblo of those parts. While Namuchel's army was licking its wounds, disposing of its dead, and sacrificing its prisoners, the indomitable Spaniards marched into Akè and surprised it. The inhabitants fled or submitted.

Again there is a blur of the historical record, one version giving an indecisive battle fought between Montejo and the Cocomes for the possession of Akè, and a retreat by Montejo back into Chel country. What is certain is that the Spaniards next appeared at Zilam, a Chel coastal town, and that there Namuchel came and made submission to Montejo.

The Adelantado had unconsciously profited, perhaps, by Chel hatred of the Cocomes, for the first of the Real Men to defeat the invaders must have had cogent reasons enough for submitting so shortly afterwards. With Zilam his base, Montejo summoned up his ships from Soliman Bay, and turned to subjugating the rest of the country.

But, by a fortuitous conjunction of events, the surrounding Maya territory neither wished nor attempted resistance to the invaders. The Chels

had submitted, the Cocomes seem to have remained mute after the battle of Akè (if such a battle was ever waged), and suddenly Montejo received an ambassadorship from the Tutul Xius of Mani, offering alliance and support of the most powerful state in Maya land.

What led to that submission is wrapt in as much obscurity as the rest of the campaign, but it does not seem unwarranted to connect the incident with the fact of Mani being a centre of the bastardized Kukulcan worship and the Spaniards being almost universally accepted as descendants of the God. So the last and strongest representatives of Maya civilization allied themselves with an invader who had come to end that civilization forever.

Kimpech made submission, and probably the minor states. All Yucatan now lay at the feet of the Spaniards.

vi. *Eviction of the Spaniards*

From Zilam Montejo presently transported the bulk of his followers to Chichen Itza. The sale of this city to the Spaniards by Namuchel, to whom it did not belong, is one of the few amusing incidents of this penultimate chapter in the long, tangled history of the Maya race. The Spaniards displayed an amazing punctiliousness in their purchase of the town, occupied it, doubtlessly cleansed its temples, and rechristened it Salamanca. Then Montejo set about the invariable practice of the Spaniards in their occupation of American cities—dividing up the surrounding country into *encomiendas*—sections of territory containing between two and three thousand "Indios" in each. These natives became the slaves, in fact if not in name, of the particular Spaniard to whom, for service in war or intrigue, the *encomiende* was donated.

For a little the Maya surrounding Chichen appear to have accepted their enslavement with a dazed

docility. Then the occupation began to show its worst features. Montejo, worried, wearied, and bankrupt, realized that this was not Mexico, that Mayan wealth, where it existed, consisted in corn and slaves and tobacco and cacao. The Spaniards let loose their fury and lust on the populace in torturings and beatings, the Maya rated so cheaply that a horse was valued as worth a hundred Indians, and "the daughter of an Indian Prince might be purchased for a cheese," in the words of one chronicler.

And for de Moreno, the Master of the Smelters, there was little or nothing to smelt.

Presently the rumour reached Montejo that the country with mines, the land of gold, lay in Chectemal, to the south. He despatched Alonso Davila and Francisco Vasquez, a mining expert, to investigate this rumour with a promise of 300 ducats reward for finding a single mine. There followed, on the jungly borders of Chectemal and Cochuah, several months of marchings and counter-marchings, raidings, skirmishes with the population, and growing discouragement on the part of Davila. On the borders of Chectemal the Can militia behaved with a new tactic: they acted in a fashion uncustomary with Mayan troops. Legend has it that this was the work of Guerrero, the renegade, that he himself was in command of the holcones who vexed the prospecting, marching, irritated Davila. He had made the Maya town of Chablè his capital; at last, from his raidings and colonizings in Chectemal he retreated back on that capital, apparently in some straits. Food was lacking and uncertain, and the Can army pressing him hotly. He despatched messengers without avail to tell Montejo of his straits.

But the lines of communication by land had been cut. Chichen Itza had risen against the Spaniards. From the surrounding country bands of Maya came marching down to invest the strangers in the fortress, men of Kukul and Titzimin, perhaps, though the records do not say. Provisions began to grow scarce

in the fortress and night after night the *conquistadores* listened to the threats of torture and death hurled at them over the walls by the besiegers. Since the beginning of the siege over a hundred and fifty of Montejo's men had been killed.

The Adelantado resolved to abandon the city to the Maya, for neither the Chel nor the Xiu seem to have shown any willingness to come to his rescue. It was probably a non-national holy crusade that was being waged against him. A secret way out of the fortress was found by the Spaniards, and an ingenious plan hit upon to deceive the besiegers. A number of Mayan dogs were in the fortress. One of these was chained just out of reach of a piece of meat. The other end of the chain was fastened to the clapper of a great copper bell so that whenever the starving animal strained towards the food the sound of the bell boomed through the fortress.

All that night the Maya spearmen and bowmen investing the stronghold under the gaping serpents and the protruding Ganesha-heads of America heard the tolling of the bell at intervals and credited the strangers with their usual vigilance. But when morning came the defences were seen to wear a deserted look. Not a gleam of arquebus or steel morion shone from the walls. A storming party of the Maya broke in the doors and barricades without opposition. The Spaniards had gone, passing through weary Chichen undetected in the darkness, and were far on the road to the sea.

But outside that darkness they pass into a darkness of history almost as opaque. Montejo's natural line of retreat would have been to Zilam of the Chels and from there to take ship from the land of his misfortunes. Instead, at least one record pictures him reaching Zilam and from there setting out on a south-westwards march through Ahkinchel and Zotuta. Perhaps he hoped to reach Mani and the succour of his allies, the Tutul Xiu. But they seem to have offered no help whatever although Montejo

was probably pursued by the Maya insurgents almost in view of the towers of Mani. Somewhere in that country the pursuit slackened and the Spaniards at length reached Kimpech and safety.

It was not such safety as Montejo could trust. He lingered a few weeks longer at Kimpech, was joined by the depleted forces of Davila—who, after crazy wanderings through the bush-country of Chectemal and Bakhahal had reached Trujillo in Honduras and taken ships from there—then sent orders to his son at Zilam to bring the Spanish transports round to the western coast. Nearly half of that confident force which had set foot on the beaches of Zami was left dead in the lands of the Maya—half, and most of them unburied, their bodies rotting in the jungle or nailed to the temple-walls of Chichen or lying beside some village altar where they had screamed in the agonies of sacrifice. No treasure of any account had been found, nothing but disease, ferocious enmity, and the incomprehensible friendliness of the Xiu.

It was the year 1532. Fugitive and despondent, but swearing to return, the Spaniards embarked and sailed away from the land they had so nearly conquered, just as a terrible breath of pestilence came hurrying in with the spring.

vii. *The last Five Years of Mayan Freedom*

With that pestilence came a terrible drought. Famine spread rapidly. Few plantations had been tilled or planted in the western principalities, and the Kupul-Cocome force, marching home, found hunger and cannibalism raging in the cities so dearly won from the Spaniards. Scores died from the black death that came again from the altars. Daily in the decaying, half-deserted cities sounded the screams of victims offered up to the insatiable and implacable Rain God; and men, remembering the efficacy of the ancient Chichen pools, despatched parties to

sacrifice there. Cozumel was perhaps almost a forgotten sanctuary, or one defiled by contact with the "scum from the sea," as the haughty Maya had dubbed the Spaniards.

In Mani the temperamental Xiu Governor prepared an offering for the Chichen Itza cenote. Six youths and maidens were selected and permission requested from Nachicome for the party to pass through Zotuta to Chichen. So exhausted was the country that the Xiu believed the ancient hatreds were dead. Thus indeed it appeared: the Cocome Real Man returned a friendly reply, inviting the sacrificial procession to enter and lodge in his own city.

It set out from Mani under the leadership of a favourite son of the Xiu Governor, Ahkulelchi Xiu. Sacrificer-priests, sad-faced victims, and twenty soldiers marched behind him. They reached Zotuta on the nightfall of the day on which they had set out from Mani. The lethargic Cocomes watched their entry in silence, and perhaps some uneasiness came on the Xiu bowmen, those Maya Spartans. But Ahkulelchi found himself well-received by Nachicome and lodged in the guest-house of the palace, he and all his company.

In the dead of the night that house was fired by the Cocome guards. From the heart of the flames rose the screams of the trapped Xiu. They sought to break out by the window-slits and doors, but the latter had been tied by ropes of green hide, and whenever they succeeded in tearing down the obstructions a hail of arrows from the Cocomes drove them back. All the sacred embassy, including Ahkulelchi, perished in the flames.

The news of the crime stirred a strange indignation among the Maya. Even Kanul and Kupul, long enemies of the Xiu (as indeed were most other tribes) sent threatening messages to Nachicome. But they made no attempt to join the Xiu army of invasion which was being prepared at Mani. All Yucatan looked on in indifference at the gathering

storm-clouds of that last war between the two Maya states.

These two had fought across the Yucatecan stage for over half a thousand years ; and now again they faced each other, unconscious of their mutual destiny, how soon they would both be forgotten actors and their stage set for another play. Then the Xiu crossed into Zotuta and the campaign began.

It swayed now this way, now that. Nachicocome, a general of merit, drove out the invaders and would have occupied Mani had not the indomitable Lacedæmonians raised a fresh and vigorous army and beaten him off. But gradually vigour departed from the campaign. Food grew scarcer and scarcer. Soldiers on the morning of battle fell and died of plague. The armies degenerated into starving bands of robbers which still wasted the borders even after organized hostilities had faded out through sheer exhaustion.

That winter the rains came hardly at all to the parched and withered plantations, nor the next, nor the next. Instead, the wind brought great clouds of grasshoppers which stripped the foliage from the trees and destroyed the scanty crops, leaving the earth bare and brown, the trees shivering wands in the forests. The war still went on, the starving cities to north and south hearing of it as a conflict is heard in a nightmare. Then large numbers of the Maya began a great migration to the south. In great hosts, staggering, plague-stricken, they went into the jungle-trails on the track of the Little Descent, and, far from their states and cities, cenotes and altars, were dispersed and massacred by the Mopanes of Belize River.

Towards the end of five years of civil war and recurring famine, there died in Mani Ahpula Napot Xiu, who appears to have been the last high priest of the Xius. In that year the ships of the strangers again appeared off the Yucatecan coast, and the beach at Champoton rang under the iron-shod heels

of the new army of conquest brought from Mexico by the son of Francisco de Montejo.

viii. *Return of the Spaniards*

It was the year 1537. After obscure campaignings and plannings in New Spain, and particularly Tabasco, the Montejos, with a considerable force, had returned to the conquest from which they had been so ignominiously driven away five years before. The ships sailed up and anchored off Champoton, and the son of Mochcovoh received the strangers with a suspicious docility. He allowed them to land and make camp, and fed and entertained them. Then he attacked their camp.

After a lengthy struggle, he was beaten off. Negotiations were begun, and the Covoh submitted. But again he was merely gathering fresh forces; it appears, indeed, that he gathered them from far and near, perhaps there were Cocome and even Kupul contingents in the army of Maya militia that hovered round Champoton. At length the time was ripe and they struck. The Spaniards were driven from their camp and the camp sacked. All day the battle roared down towards the beaches of Champoton, and there by their ships the Spaniards turned and at length the Maya attack scattered and broke before the gunfire from the ships. Various companions of the Montejos were afterwards to tell in their memoirs of the ferocity of those hours of fighting, and a great disgust spread among them. Here were no meek Indios or eager allies, but ferocious and blood-thirsty tribesmen.

The invasion began to peter out. Most of the Spaniards sailed back to New Spain, though the Montejos' force hung on to some little part of Champoton and never quite relinquished it.

With a fuddled patience Montejo set about reorganizing the conquest, and at the end of another two years had drawn together an army of needy and

hardy spirits, though the more adventurous had sailed for the golden wealth and gilded lies of Inkaic Peru. By 1540, however, with Campeche in their hands, the Spaniards prepared again to subjugate Yucatan.

In a letter signed at Villa Real de Chiapa the senior Montejo handed over the chief command to his son, instructing him, in the curious muddled spirit characteristic of all the instructions given by commanders to sub-commanders in the Spanish conquest of America, to treat the Indios well, to make war on "rebels," to free slaves, to establish encomiendos, to leave the Mayan territory untouched, and to build a Spanish capital at Ti-hoo!

Re-christening Campeche San Francisco de Campeche, Montejo the Younger despatched a small force towards Ti-hoo to occupy that city and establish it as the Spanish headquarters in the Peninsula. It was understood that the chief of Kanul was friendly towards the invaders; but this friendship was feigned. Kanul and Chakan allied and gathered a considerable force to resist the marching Spaniards. Near a village called Pokboc invader and Maya met in a short and sanguinary battle. No details of it come to us, but the Maya were defeated with great slaughter and the small expedition marched on Ti-hoo and captured it with ease.

By the middle of the year 1540 Montejo the Younger was himself established in a small camp in Ti-hoo and narrowly watching events in the Peninsula. The exhausted Maya had moved lethargically against the fresh invasion, but now, with a leader at last found, they showed considerable determination. This leader was Nachicome, the Real Man of Zotuta who had slaughtered the Xiu delegation to the Sacred Wells. In the autumn of 1540 he gathered a considerable army and marched it against the "scum from the sea." Montejo descried it from the hill of Ti-hoo and marched out to engage it. The Maya met the invaders with their old tactics and weapons, and, as was almost always the case under

these circumstances, were bloodily defeated. Patriotism was not enough.

Nachicome retreated back into his own lands defeated but unconquered. While he gathered fresh resistance the Tutul Xiu moved on Ti-hoo, not, however, as enemies, but as friends to cement the alliance made with the Spaniards in the first invasion. The Xiu Real Man announced his conversion to Christianity, was re-christened, and promised to spread the Faith among his fellow-countrymen. He brought to Ti-hoo a lengthy train of Mani governors and batabs, all of whom submitted to baptism, and with their coming the delighted Spaniards saw the strongest state in the Peninsula conquered without a blow. Kukulcan had triumphed again.

The Xiu departed in February from Ti-hoo and, true to their word, sent missionaries far and near among the Maya states, advising submission to the invaders and acceptance of the Christian faith. Their embassy came to Zotuta in April, and Nachicome listened in a growing fury. Then he commanded that the Maya missionaries be butchered, and went on with his work of raising a great army against Ti-hoo.

On June 11, 1541, the combined Xiu and Spanish armies met the forces of Nachicome at a unknown place. He had brought seventy thousand warriors to this last great battle, probably the flower of the surviving Maya armies. The Spaniards looked out on a sea of plumes and gay mantles as the hordes of bowmen and spearmen marched to attack. Then the guns opened.

By nightfall the Maya were fleeing from the field, heartbroken and in despair. Nachicome retreated back upon Zotuta and watched through the succeeding months state after state fall into the hands of the "scum from the sea" and their allies. A ring of conquered country gradually encircled Zotuta, and at length, in May, 1542, that city fell, the last Maya city of importance to resist the strangers.

Prophecy had foreseen the end in the " Song of the Tiger-priest " that rang in the ears of the Maya in those years, as the Spaniards marched bloodily from conquest to conquest :

" Eat, eat, while there is bread,
Drink, drink, while there is water,
A day comes when dust shall darken the air,
When a blight shall wither the land,
When a cloud shall arise,
When a mountain shall be lifted up,
When a strong man shall seize the city ;
When ruin shall fall upon all things,
When the tender leaf shall be destroyed,
When eyes shall be closed in death,
When there shall be three signs on a tree :
Father, son and grandson hanging dead on the same
tree :
When the battle-flag shall be raised
And the people scattered abroad in the forest."

EPILOGUE

WITH the fall of Zotuta the Conquest of the Maya may be viewed as complete. The heroic defence of their countries by the Can and May armies of Chectemal and Cochuah, the rising of the Itza which culminated in the massacre of Valladolid, the terrible vengeance exacted by the Spaniards for that massacre before the country was pacified by Francisco de Bracamonte belong rather to the pacification of a province of New Spain than to the Conquest of the Maya. How one by one the antique cities were abandoned at the orders of the conquerors and the Maya herded in great new centres under the surveillance of Christian ruler and Christian priest, how for a brief time Mani under its Xiu "king" (whose descendants survive in Yucatan to this day) rose to pride and greatness in the shelter of the Spanish power and was overthrown not by arms but by an ironic combination of economic forces, how, long after the rest of the Maya had submitted the citizens of Peten on Lake Chultuna (who had entertained Cortes' horse so hospitably) lived free on their island till conquered and dispersed in 1697 by Martin Ursua—those happenings are with Hispano-American history, not Mayan. With the last great battle of Montejo the Younger the strange lost expedition of civilization in the American forests was rejoined to and submerged in the greater Adventure of mankind.

Nor was that submergence unjustified, nor may the Spaniards, whatever their motives, be accused of cruelties unknown before their coming or the overthrow of a culture higher than their own. The mind of Mayan civilization had grown feeble and debased. It left to the common mind of man not a single thought or aspiration of importance.

And indeed it may be asked what it left at all that this history of its rise and fortunes should be attempted. Perhaps nothing. But a wider imagination brings understanding and a growing sympathy

for those remotest men of the ancient Golden Age, the men of antique America, who were drawn in the maze of civilization's alien growth and, isolated from the great lights and compassions that came on that civilization elsewhere, knew only the unending circling of its dark and tenebrous ways or the phosphorescent glow of a brittle intellectualism. Imagination may forget the painted long-houses and the smoking altars, the brutish gods and the mystic scripts, and turn more happy eyes on such things as the great Sun Dial at Copan, more happy hearing to the faint murmur of the work and life of the first Kukulcan, that Amerindian Buddha.

We see them on the painted boards of pseudo-history, a little people, a little cult, dreaming its dreams and passing; and whether that is to us only a play and procession of days and ghosts, or indictment for the codes and crimes of our own civilization, prophecy for it of a fate as fantastic and terrible, is for each who reads to decide or pass and forget.

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INDEX

A

- Acallan, state of, 245, 246
 Acanceh, 187
 Aculhuaquê (Toltecs), 197
Agave Americana, 32, 140
 Agriculture, origin, 46
 spread of, 49, 52, 53
 Aguilar, Geronimo De, 233-
 238, 248-249
 Ahau can, chief priest, 189
 Ahkin mai, chief priest, 189
 Ahkinchel, state of, 224
 Ahkulelchi Xiu, 262
 Ahzuitok Tutul Xiu, 214
 Akè, 172
 Amerindian (*Red Indian*), 38
 "Antilia," supposed fragment
 of Atlantis, 60
 Archaic culture, 47, 48
 in Mexico, 194, 195
 Architecture, method, 73,
 74
 origins, 77, 78, 79
 Asiatic influences, 36
 Astronomy, 92
 Aztecs, 21, 222

B

- Bakhhalal, 142, 225
 Balchè, ceremonial drink, 185,
 186
 Ball-game, 135, 138
 Egyptian origin, 139
 Batab, district governor in
 New Empire, 187
 Behring Straits, 39
 Blom and Le Farge, Messrs.,
 exploring mission, 31
 Bracamonte, Francisco de,
 pacifies Yucatan, 268
 Buddhist influences in Maya
 religion, 184, 210, 216

C

- Calendar, 92, 93, 101, 102, 103,
 104, 105, 106, 107, 108,
 109, 181-186
 correlation of Maya and
 Christian, 107, 108
 Asiatic similarities, 101, 109,
 110
 Calotmul, state of, 225
 Caribs, 232, 233
 Catherwood, Frederick, 24, 25
 Catoche, Cabo, naming of, 240
 Cepech, state of, 224
 Chablè, 259
 Chac, God, 112, 113, 114
 Chacmool, humanized Rain-
 god, 177
 Chacmultun, 175
 Chacnouitan, halting place of
 Tutul Xiu, 142, 205
 Chacs, priests, 190
 Chac-Xib-Chac, 220, 221
 Chakan, state of, 224
 Champoton, 206, 207
 Chectemal, state of, 225, 259
 Chels, people of Ahkinchel,
 224
 Chichemaca, 202
 Chichen Itza, 29, 172-174, 175,
 205, 206, 213, 258, 259,
 260, 261
 Chilans, priests, 189
Chilan-Balaam (Books of the
 Tiger Priests), 35, 140,
 141, 182, 205
 Cholula, 197
 excavation in pyramid of,
 201
 Chuaca, 256
 Battle of, 257
 Civilization Mayan, three prin-
 cipal lacks in, 150, 151
 Civilization, origin in Ancient
 Egypt, 46, 47
 Cobà, 172, 173, 175
 Cochuah, state of, 225, 259

Coclè culture, 61
 Cocomes, New Empire family, 206
 Columbus, Christopher, voyages of, 231, 232, 233
 Copan, 24, 25, 69, 70, 207
 Cordoba, Hernandez De, Expedition of, 238-243
 Cortes, Hernando de, expeditions of, 246-251
 Cotton cultivation, 96
 Cozumel, Island of, 207, 213, 218, 219, 225, 244, 252, 253
 "Cross," Temple of at Palenque, 68, 69
 Cuiculco, Archaic site, 49, 50
 Culture, Archaic, origin, 47, 48

D

Davila, Alonso, 254, 259, 261
 Descent, Great, 203, 205
 Little, 203, 205, 206
 Diaz, Bernal, historian, 239, 240, 241
 Diffusion of culture, causes of trans-Pacific, 120, 121
 Disc, winged, 86, 87
 Dogs, as food, 96
 Dresden Codex, 28, 29, 33

E

Earth-monster at Quirigua, 70
 Egyptian—appearances, 25, 26
 Ekab, state of, 225
 Elephant as sculptural decoration, 87, 88, 89

F

Feasts, religious, in New Empire, 184-186
 Feather work in New Empire, 181
 Fresco-painting, 90

G

Ganesha, Hindu god as Maya deity, 113, 114, 183
 Glyphs, calculiform, 32, 34, 35, 100, 101
 Gods, Old Empire, 111-116, 164
 Gold, New Empire, 191
 Gold, search for, 48
 Gorgon as Sun-god, 114, 184
 "Grand Cairo," 239, 240, 241
 Grijalva, expedition of Juan de, 243-246
 Guerrero, Gonzalo, 233-237, 249
 Guildsmen, 190

H

Hanuman, Hindu god as Maya deity, 114
 Hernandez, Fra Francisco, 254
 Holon Chantepeuh, Tutul Xiu ruler, 141, 143
 Huasteca, Mayance tribe, 58, 195
 Huehuetlapallan, home of Toltects, 196, 198
 Humboldt, Baron A. Von, explorations of, 36, 199, 200, 201
 Hunac Ceel, 219, 222
 Hunahpu, mythical Quichè hero, 136-138
 Hunhunahpu, mythical Quichè hero, 135, 136
 Hurakan, God, 227
 Hurricane, Great, 226, 227

I

Indra, Hindu God as New Empire deity, 183
 Itzamal, 172
 Itzamna, New Empire leader, 203, 204

Iztas, 206, 208
 Ixchel, Rainbow Goddess, 203,
 239
 Izancanac (possibly Palenque),
 250

J

Jade, search for, 48

K

Kabah, 175
 Kanul, mercenary, 222
 date of, 224
 Kaxchiquel, 21, 134
 Kewich, 175
 Kimpech, state of, 224
 Kukulcan (Topiltzin Axcitl
 Quetzalcoatl), 203, 209,
 213
 Kupil, state of, 225

L

Labnà, 175, 187
 League of Mayapan, 216, 223
 Life, every day Mayan, imag-
 inative picture, 151-168
 Life-giving substances, de-
 posits, 61
 search for, 48, 49
 Lochè, 256
 Lubaantun, 72

M

Macanxoc, 175
 Maize, cultivation of, 53, 54,
 93, 94, 95, 96, 192
 Makara as Earth-monster, 89
 Man, Early, his character, 43
 in America, 44, 45, 46
 Mani, 219, 223
 Maudslay, Dr. A. P., 30

Maya, origins, 57, 58, 59, 60
 Maya, sites names of, 73
 Mayan, civilization, three prin-
 cipal l a k s in, 150, 151
 everyday life, imaginative
 picture of, 151-168
 Mayapan, 172, 175, 214
 Mayapan, League of, 216, 223
 Mazahua, 195
 Melanesian incursions, 39
 Menchè-Yaxchilan, 65, 71
 Merchants, 190, 191
 Metal work in New Empire,
 179-181
 Mexican mercenaries, 221, 222
 Mexico, 193-202
 Milk, remembered as divine
 drink, 54
 Mitla, 177, 199, 200
 Mixe, 195
 Mixtec, 195, 199
 Mochcovoh, ruler of Cham-
 poton, 242, 243, 245, 246
 Moctezhuoma, high-chief of
 Aztecs, 235
 Mongoloid stock, differentia-
 tion of, 40
 Monte Alban, 199, 200
 Montejo, Francisco de (The
 Elder), Expedition of, 251-
 261
 (The Younger), Expeditions
 of, 254, 265, 266
 Mound-builders, North
 America, 50, 60, 198
 Mu, 29
 Muchanxiu, ruler of Mani, 235

N

Nachancan, ruler of Chectemal,
 237
 Nachicome, ruler of Zotuta,
 252, 262, 265, 266
 Nacon, civil administrator,
 188, 189
 Nacons, priests, 189, 190

Nacotcocomé, 222, 223
 Nahua, 29
 Namuchel, ruler of Ahkinchel,
 252, 256, 257, 258
 Naobonkupal, ruler of Kupul,
 252
 Napotxiu, Ahpula, high priest
 of Mani, 235-236, 263
 New Empire (General), 169-
 171
 Archaic culture in, 170, 171
 batab, district governor in,
 187
 calendar in, 181-186
 feasts, religious in, 184-186
 feather work in, 181
 gold, 191
 metal work in, 179-181
 Mexican mercenaries brought
 to, 221, 222
 "Real Man," paramount chief
 in, 187
 sciences in, 178-181
 warfare, 187, 188
 Nieto, Gonsalo, standard-
 bearer, 254
 Nonoual, home of Tutul Xiu,
 141

O

Old Empire, three racial types
 in, 117, 118
 end of, 143-147, 250
 theories of catastrophic de-
 cadence in, 124-129, 143,
 144
 religion of, 111-116
 warfare in, 130-133
 Otomi, 195, 196

P

Painting, 89, 90
 Palenque, 27, 68, 69

Peasants, 191, 192
 Peresianus, codex, 33, 34
 Peten-ekte, state of, 223
 Peten-Itza, state of, 223
 Phallicism, 218
 Piedras Negras, 70, 71
 Pinson Vicente Yanez and
 Juan Diaz De Solis, dis-
 coverers of Yucatan, 233
 Plongeon, Dr. A. Le, 29, 178
 Polynesian incursions, 39
Popol Vuh (The Book of the
 People), 134-140
 Potonchan, state of, 223
 Pottery, 91, 92
 Pusilhà, 71, 72

Q

Quetzalcoatl, Amerindian
 Buddha, 210, 216
 Topiltzin Axcitl, 179
 Quiché, 21, 27, 134
 Quirigua, 27, 70
 Quito, Hernando Moreno de,
 254, 259

R

"Real Man," New Empire
 paramount chief, 187
 Religion, Old Empire, 111, 112,
 113, 114, 115, 116

S

Sacrifice, human, 115, 116
 San Andres Tuxtla figurine, 57,
 59
 Sayil, 175-177
 Sculpture, 80-89
 Asiatic similarities, 85-89
 Shells, as amulets, 54
 Slaves, 191

Solis, Juan Diaz De and Vicente
Yanez Pinson, discoverers
of Yucatan, 233
Stelæ, 56, 80, 81, 82
Stephens, John Lloyd, 24, 27
"Sun," Temple of, at Pal-
enque, 68, 69

T

Tayasal, on Lake Chultuna,
250-251
Tecpan Guatemala, 27
Teotihuacan, 197
Teosinte (wild maize), 53
Three Brothers, the, 207, 208,
209
Tibullon, 225
Ti-hoo, 175, 265, 266
Tikal, 66, 67
Tixchel, state of, 223
Tizimin, state of, 225
Tollan, 196
Toltecs, 21, 193, 196-199, 201,
202
Toltec, art influences, 215, 216
Toltec, origins of culture, 198,
199, 202
Tools and weapons, 98, 99
Tools, Stone Age, world-wide
diffusion, 41
Totanaca, Mayance tribe, 58,
195
Troano-Cortesian Codex, 33
Tulum, 171, 172, 175
Tutul-Xiu, clan, 35, 140-143,
205-207
Tzibanchè, 67, 68

U

Uaxactun, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66
Ulil, Governor of Izamal, 220

Ursua, Martin, conquers Peten
(Tayasal), 268
Uxamacintla, 21, 24
Uxmal, 27, 174, 175

V

Vasquez, Francisco, 259
Vestals, 190
Vukub, Hunahpu, mythical
Quichè hero, 135, 136

W

Waldeck, F. de, 23
Warfare, New Empire, 187, 188
Old Empire, 130-133
Weapons and tools, 98, 99
Weaving, methods of, 98

X

Xbalanque, mythical Quichè
hero, 135-138
Xibalba, mythical kingdom,
135-140

Y

Yucatan (General), 21, 30,
32, 169, 170, 171

Z

Zami, 254
Zapotec, 195, 199, 200, 201
Zian Caan (Bakhalal), 142
Zotuta, battle of, 266
state of, 224, 225
Zuyua script, 30



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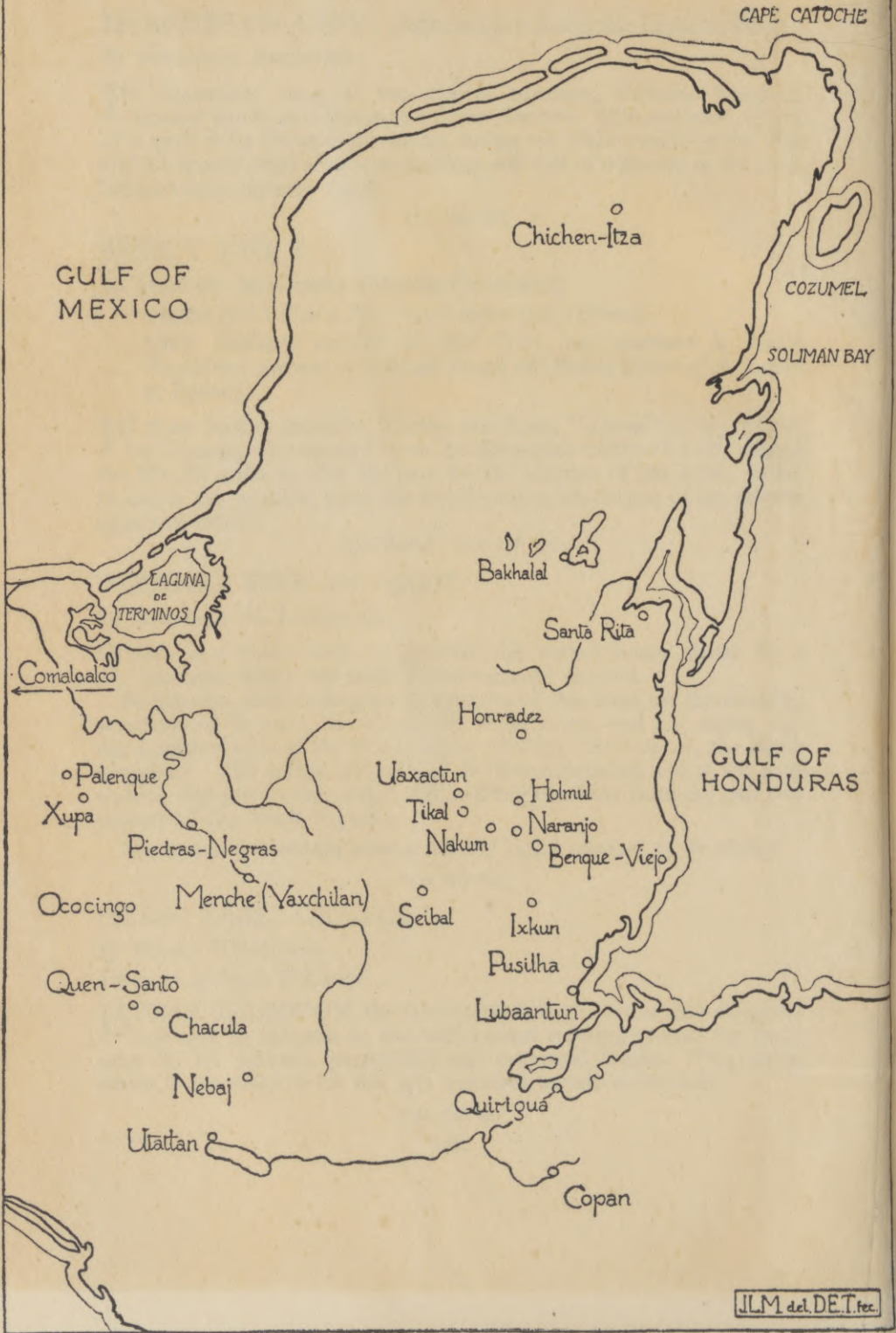
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