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AN UNWRITTEN HISTORY

Very long ago, in many American schools I was taught American history, four centuries of wars and a series of presidents who built the country at the expense of others. There was one picture of Indians making a dugout canoe, but nothing to tell of the thousands of years during which mankind had built up patterns of life which we had done our best to destroy. Later I encountered ancient history and found something worth my understanding; yet now that I am an old man, I have yet to meet a history of this New World.

There are many reasons for this. The conventional concept of history depends upon written records of the past, and these go no farther back than the travels of Columbus. In the Old World the records of ancient civilizations were being unearthed and their records understood, and the unrecorded remains of earlier man were being studied. Actually Jefferson had made an excellent beginning of archaeology in Virginia, but his work was not carried on. When the caves of Europe told of very ancient man, it became necessary for the Americans to find even earlier relics. So the Calavera skull found in a California crevice was welcomed as incredibly ancient, and was followed by human skulls from Argentina. Unfortunately, these were all found to be very modern, and the Smithsonian Institute put a stop to these searches with a law that no Indians had reached America before 2000 B.C., and that no people of other races had ever arrived. Some people frivolously called this "The Monroe Doctrine of Archaeology", but in the American schools it remained law, and was not wholly abandoned until in 1949 radiocarbon dating destroyed it.

American archaeology continued, but the greater part of it was spent upon the old civilizations of the Old World and a lesser part on the civilizations of Mexico, Central America and Peru. During the Great Depression, the flow of money into foreign excavations ceased, but Roosevelt financed the study of American archaeology to keep the experts alive. Since that time,

archaeology has bloomed but is not yet satisfactory. It is a rule that excavations should be published promptly, but this rule is overlooked by many, and this with concentrations upon promising areas and leaving the rest unexamined, makes a jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces missing. It is doubtful if a Gordon Childe could gather the reports and make them into an intelligible history as yet.

The beginning of man is now accepted as belonging to the Old World and particularly to Africa and southern Asia at a time when no Red Sea or Persian Gulf existed to keep these areas apart. The oldest people in existence seem to be the Pygmies, small people and with dark skins in the tropics, though seeming to be related to the other somewhat larger and lighter-skinned people in many areas with less dangerous sun. The Pygmies are perfectly adapted to the jungles but less to the open forests and colder seasons. What little is known of ancient man suggests that those who moved gradually northward in Asia and southward in Africa were taller and had larger brains. We can only guess that they were paler-skinned, burly-bodied if in forests, longer-legged in the open land. The development of man was interrupted three or four times by ice-ages. Man needed meat to survive in the north. The glaciers drove the animals southward, and the hunters with their families followed them into a climate unsuited to them, and to greater dependence upon plant-life. The result would be a hybridization such as one finds in southern Asia, larger than Pygmies but dark and unsuited for a return to the north at the end of the ice-age.

When the last ice-age fell upon the world, the steppes of Russia and Siberia were the richest in wild herds and tall people. In the forests below the steppes were the sturdy Neanderthals, and yet farther south were the smaller and darker people. The cold increased, reaching a peak about 40,000 B.C. There was little or no food for the animals, so they moved southward, and most of the hunters followed them. Those who settled in Europe are known as the "cave-men", but the bifacial spearpoints of the steppe are found also in Asia, Africa and Australia.

There was another outlet from the steppe. The piling of ice upon the land had reduced the depth of the sea, and the Bering Sea lay as a wide ice-free passage to Alaska. Elephants, horses, wapiti, moose and bears crossed to the Americas, and the hunters followed. These were the first Indians, and they probably included Caucasoid, Mongoloid and Neanderthal. Some of them seem to have been beach-combers, which may explain why the Indians are usually darker than Europeans, who are descendants of the cavemen.

The custom of burying the dead with food and weapons for a further life had been begun by the Neanderthals. The men who first opened graves of the cave-men were astonished to find that the body had not been buried but only the bones which had been laid by hand and not always correctly. If they had had experience of Indian burials they would have found that the men at least were wrapped on a trestle until they were reduced to bones which then were buried. The same practice is still customary among the Australian aborigines.

When at last the ice melted, the surviving animals moved northward and many of the cave-men followed, but in the Pyrenees the Basques still speak a language which the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes as having the grammar of American Indians and the vocabulary of the Ugrians of Siberia. There is little doubt that Indians and Europeans came from the steppes.

In Eurasia the withdrawal of the ice left a poor period for the hunters. Most of the herd animals had been killed or departed, and the recovering forests made hunting difficult. Now the gathering of vegetation, the women's task, became of great importance while hunters turned their attention to fish and shellfish. Life depended upon the Goddess of the Earth. She must be given a suitable sacrifice, a god for a husband. So began the ceremonies of the death of Osiris, Adonis, Attis, Tammuz and the thrusting of men into the Danish bogs. The Neolithic period had begun.

The Indians in America had not found life easy. The remains of a muskox killed within fifty miles of the border of Mexico gives an idea of the climate. Animals and men moved southward into South America and were established in Peru by 22,000 B.C. A group of beach-combers were content with the Gulf Coast and followed the Atlantic shore, depending upon fish and shellfish, and leaving crude tools, choppers of the eastern coast of Asia, as far as Nova Scotia.

A warmer spell filled the Bering Sea again, and a great flood must have swept the coasts of the world. But the ice-age was not over, and the Bering Sea dried again twice and twice again flooded the shores, the last about 8000 B.C. by which time a Neolithic culture with rice-gardens and domesticated cattle had developed in Thailand, and must soon have worked its way northward up the Pacific coast. Like the hunters in Europe, they must have turned to the sea for the protein that their crops did not give. But the coast from Malaya was dangerously open to sudden storms which swept boats out beyond sight of the land and into the Japanese Current which car-

ried them to Alaska and down the Pacific coast as far as Peru. In southern boats the ancestors of the Polynesians, a mixture of Caucasoid, Mongoloid and Negroid, and the most remarkable navigators of all time, were carried to the islands.

Curious finds aroused suspicion that Asiatics had reached America, three stone axes of New Zealand jade in Peru; sweet-potatoes cultivated in Polynesia and still with the name given by the Aymara Indians of Peru; a Tamil bronze figurine in British Columbia; Aztec children playing with wheeled toys and their parents playing a table game which Europe had learned from India. But the Monroe Doctrine was certain that such things had been brought by Spanish seamen.

At last in Ecuador a fishing village was found and dated to 3,000 B.C. Here was the first pottery in the Americas, and its origin was traced to three villages in southern Japan. This art of pottery spread gradually through the Americas to southern Nova Scotia. The Corded Ware of northern North America arrived near British Columbia and worked its way along the Great Lakes to the Atlantic. In the Ulua Valley of Honduras, Maya tripods follow the pattern of Chinese tripods. Blowguns with poisoned darts and the squeezing of poisonous juice from otherwise edible roots by means of twisted ropes of bamboo are found only in Malaya and western South America. Most of these suggest only storm-swept fishermen, but the Hindu relics belong to the age of Bronze. Only the Polynesians would have been able to take again to the sea and be swept homeward on the Humboldt Current.

Great changes were spreading in Eurasia. Hunters began to protect rather than kill the scanty herds that still remained, and gradually herd and herders became a single unit. Sacrifices of animals were rare and important. Male gods began to replace the goddesses, and in the Danish bogs a noble woman was sent down to be the wife of the god of the earth. Ravaging herders became a danger to farmers. Villages protected themselves with walls and weapons. Pottery kilns led to the management of metals, gold and silver for ornaments, copper for tools. Metal ores were scarce, so miners, traders and sailors were needed as well as smiths. All this demanded a specialization of all labour under a central control, Childe's Urban Revolution, and the beginning of kings and civilization.

It is still debated as to whether civilizations in Eurasia grew without assistance or were started by contacts from those already established. Civilizations appeared in Central America and Peru but not elsewhere. In these two

areas agriculture developed importantly and with native plants. The only plant that suggests a foreign origin is the cotton which is a hybrid of Asiatic and American plants. It is not to be expected for hungry fishermen to have retained viable plants or seeds after months on the sea, but they might carry more important treasures, such as religion and a sense of social structure. Some two centuries ago, a ship on the way to India was wrecked against the coast of southeast Africa. A Scottish governess reached the shore and was added to the harem of the local African king. When he died, she was accepted as king for the rest of her life. When Europeans took control of the country, this tribe had absorbed so many customs from her that they accepted the new order without difficulty. The hunting Indians have usually given welcome to single wanderers who have not attempted to claim their territory. A vigorous stranger might have introduced a technique, a religious concept, or the idea of war and slavery. We cannot hope for records of such strangers, but one can match the results with the social patterns of other cultures.

There were many minor cities on the coast of Peru, most of them famous for their arts, but the greatest achievement was the empire of the Incas, a vast communist kingdom from Ecuador to Chile. No single culture could have begun their pottery and textiles, though Japan is the nearest as it is in the sun-worship and the strict caste distinctions and organization of war. Mexico provided some of the important crops but was of little importance in all else. Peru was born of the Urban Revolution.

Mexico was almost completely different in most ways. It faced the Gulf rather than the Pacific. Both were sun-worshippers, but so were all the Indian hunters. The Aztecs were cruel warriors, but this was characteristic of the Athabaskans, who were late arrivals to America, perhaps during the last drying of the Bering Sea in 8,000 B.C. Their human sacrifices had existed before their coming, but they had increased the abundance and the cruelty beyond the dreams of the Neolithics. Their most Neolithic sacrifice was that of the Sky-god. Every year the most perfect captive of war was chosen to be the god. He was given rich garments and four wives and was trained to parade among the people, playing his sacred flutes to their adoration. When his year came to an end, he was led to the foot of the pyramid, his clothing was taken from him and he was led up the steps, throwing away his flutes. At the top of the pyramid he was bent over a low pillar, and the priest cut out his heart still beating. His head was cut off and left in the chapel, and his body was carried respectfully down the steps to meet the excited worshippers

who sliced from him pieces to give them fertility for family and garden for another year.

Could any Neolithics have reached here by sea? Ashe in a study of St. Brendan's voyage traces his course past the lesser islands to Iceland and perhaps Greenland. The two documents agree up to this point, but the *Navigatio* continues onward into a sea like a marsh without wind and with islands to the west. Ashe considers this to be an addition borrowed from some ancient Irish wanderer. This is possible, as the Labrador Current runs southward and might carry a ship almost to the West Indies. The story need not have been of the days of St. Brendan. The greatest sailors of the late Neolithic were the Minoans of Crete who gathered copper from Spain, England and Ireland. These may have been the Fomorians of Irish legends, the people of the sea. They have left the black hair and fine faces of Donegal, the royal pyramid of New Grange, and the writing on the wall of a cave near Sligo. These lands beyond the Pillars of Hercules might have confused the Egyptian idea of the base of Atlantis. Certainly some of their ships in leaving the Strait of Gibraltar must have been blown into the Equatorial Current which might carry them past the Sargasso sea to the West Indies and the Gulf of Mexico, but the massive sculptured heads of the Olmecs, the first civilization, tell nothing of either Minoans or Irishmen.

The Urban Revolution now spread along the coast and inland. Kings or gods were sculptured with unIndian faces and beards, but few of them can be identified. The last to arrive was Quetzalcoatl, the god of Learning. He was a tall bearded man who came from the sea. He taught many things, some like agriculture most improbable, especially to the Mayas. But he disapproved of human sacrifices and was unable to stop them, so he went the way he had come, telling that in time he would come again. Such sentimentality would scarcely have come from a bull-fighting Minoan or even a Phoenician.

The Mayas certainly made use of learning beyond any other Indian tribe. They alone developed a written language. Their sculpture was unequalled. Their calendar was more accurate than ours, and their knowledge of astronomy was sound. The pyramid of Copan rises a hundred feet sheer from the river. The other side is a staircase of ornamented stone carved with weird figures suggesting dragon sculptures of China. At the top of the pyramid stands the church or palace, its corbelled roof supported by great statues of kings or priests upholding the roofs with their backs and their

long headdresses of quetzal feathers. Nearby is a simple pillar which was a point of a sundial. At sunrise in the longest day of the year, the shadow of a pillar, the *Piedra Pintada*, seven miles away, falls upon the pyramid-pillar, assuring the accuracy of the calendar.

The Mayas were warriors as well, but they ran swiftly through the cycle of civilizations. Religion and war were burdens on the backs of the peasants who moved gradually away.

A drift of Indians moved northward. Some South American tribes moved up the edge of the Mayas. Mexicans drifted to the land of the Pueblos and on into the prairies. Along the Gulf Coast new tribes with the Mexican vegetables of corn, squash and beans spread agriculture. They cannot be certainly defined as from any one Mexican culture but rather of many. This is familiar. The coastal tribes of Mexico were fishermen and traders on a sea of sudden storms which could drive them into the Gulf Stream which would carry them to the Gulf Coast. These new tribes were sun-worshippers and had graded social classes under ruling kings. They worked their way up the Mississippi and the Ohio Valley, spreading their agricultural religion and their arts. Their culture spread over hunting tribes in New York State, the Iroquois. Like Neolithics, the Iroquois gave power to the women. When in trouble, their tribes joined together as no other tribes thought to do. If the white men had not come when they did, in a few more centuries the Iroquois might have begun a new civilization somewhat of Aztec pattern, with order and war, cannibalism and cruelty. When a captive was brought home in triumph, he was treated as a member of the family. He was paraded to the neighbouring villages and at each he sang his death-song. They gave him a wife for his final days, and then he was tortured to death, a shadow pattern of the sky-god of Mexico. It is possible that an Iroquoian civilization would have made life for the country no happier for the Indians than we have made it.

The last immigration before the coming of Europeans was that of the Eskimos. The late Dr. Giddings traced their development in Alaska. The earliest camps were those of Indians and used only in summer. They had wigwams, and their weapons were fluted spearpoints like the small points of the Clovis hunters who had last been known in 9000 B.C. and were here about 3000 B.C. They were followed by Eskimos. Some linguists have said that the language of the Eskimos comes from Finno-Ugrian, and other linguists

have denied it. In either case, the Eskimos came from the Asiatic coast where some still remain. Another settlement had buried their dead with their skulls ornamented in a way known only from the islands south of Japan.

Perhaps we shall never know American history. There are hundreds of languages needing to be studied to tell their past relations and the occasional words telling of other contacts. So many things need explanation. Ancient Hindus kept records with knotted cords. So did the Incas of Peru; and the gentle Jicaques of Honduras used them for sight-seeing. There is much to understand.