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Mayas, Nahuas, Toltecs, and Aztecs

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“Everything goes to prove that the Ancient races of Central America possessed an advanced culture, exact ideas on certain arts and sciences, and remarkable technical knowledge.”—Nadaillac.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

MAYAS, NAHUAS, TOLTECS, AND AZTECS

FROM South America and the adjacent part of the Isthmus, our cursory survey of pre-historic American races takes us to the countries once inhabited by Mayas, Nahuas, and kindred peoples, and especially to Yucatan and Mexico.

In the Mexican Valley. In the Valley of Mexico and near-by countries there was found, at the time of the Spanish conquest, a degree of civilization in some respects superior to that of the Peruvians under the Incas. It covered an area of about forty thousand square miles, from 125 miles north of the present City of Mexico to a line near southern Honduras, and from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

Foundation of the City of Mexico. The year 1325, A. D., is generally regarded as the beginning of the historic era of that region, that being the year in which Tenochtitlan, the present City of Mexico, was founded. The accounts of what happened before that time contain a liberal element of fiction. Mr. Bancroft,¹ however, thinks that the annals of Anahuac take us back to the 6th century, "by traditions sufficiently definite to be considered as historic records." At that time, according to Mr. Bancroft:

"We find the Nahua civilization and institutions established on the table land occupied by them, as at every subsequent time, by many tribes more or less distinct from each

¹*Native Races*, Vol. 2, p. 96.

other. And there this culture remained without intermixture of essentially foreign elements down to the 16th century."

The brilliant historian quoted goes still farther. Following such authorities as Bradford, Squier, Tylor, Viollet-le-Duc, Bartlett, Müller, and Brasseur de Bourbourg, he endeavors to draw an outline of the history of the region before the 6th century.² It should be noted, in parenthesis, that Mr. Bancroft, although fully aware of the defects of Brasseur's work, from a scientific point of view, expresses the opinion that the researches of the learned Abbe have "done more than those of all other writers combined to throw light on primitive American history."

Old Maya Empire. According to the authorities mentioned, for some centuries before the beginning of our era and the first two or three hundred years, A. D., there existed in the Usumacinta valley an old Maya empire, known to its neighbors as *Xibalba*. The inhabitants were called Chanes, from Chan, an ancestor of Votan, the founder of the empire. They were also known as Colhuas, or "Serpents,"³ and their capital was in Chiapas, at or near Palenque. This empire grew northwestward towards Anahuac, where the Quinames, or "Giants," lived; and northeastward into Yucatan, where Zamna, or Itzamna, is said to have led a colony of Cocones and Itzas.

Quinames or Giants. The Quinames or "Giants" seem to have been among the early inhabitants of

²*Native Races*, Vol. 5, pp. 230-6.

³May it not be that their country was the "Snakeland" of Indian traditions?

many parts of America. Torquemada identifies them with the "giants" of the Peruvian tradition, which were destroyed by fire on account of their wickedness. Ixtlilxochitl thinks they were the survivors of an ante-deluvian race. He, possibly, has in mind the "giants" of Gen. 6:4; but the word translated "giants" in that passage should rather be "apostates," from *naphal*, "to fall." Veytia says they subsisted on the raw meat of birds and other animals, and that they were, in many respects like brutes.

Meaning of Xibalba. The meaning of the word *Xibalba* is, according to Ximenes, "Inferno." He says it was the Quiche name for what we call "hell." It is also said to mean, "He Who Disappears,"—the Maya name for an evil spirit. Whatever the meaning of the word is, it was the name given to the great empire of the Chans, or "Snake" Indians, and also to their metropolis, later called Palenque or Otolum. The name *Xhembobel Moyos*⁴ "seems sometimes to have been used by the natives in connection with

⁴Bancroft, *Native Races*, Vol. 4, p. 295.

It may, perhaps, be stated here that Palenque is not the name of the famous ancient city, but of a modern, small village, near the old ruins. That name is of Spanish origin and means a "stockade." *Xhembobel Moyos*, which seems to be the ancient name, may possibly be composed of three familiar words, *Shem*, *Babel*, and *Mayim*, the last meaning "waters." If this is the origin of the word, it might indicate that the builders of the *Xibalba* capital endeavored to embody in one word, easily remembered, some important facts of their history, viz., their Shemitic lineage, their escape from the tower of Babel, and their crossing of the waters. Or, it might point to a Mulekite rule of the *Xibalba* empire and capital. And be it remembered that the Mulekites, when found by Mosiah, though they had lost both their language and their religion, had by some means preserved the recollection of their lineage, the flight from Jerusalem, and their miraculous voyage. (Omni. 14-16.) The ancient traditions of the Mayas tell us that the founders of the empire originally came from "a land of shadow beyond the seas." (Nadaillac, *Prehistoric America*, p. 264)

Palenque," and *Xibalba* might be an abbreviated form of that name.

The Earliest Dates Recorded. Here it should be mentioned that Dr. H. J. Spinden, of the Peabody museum, Harvard University, has traced the Maya chronology back to Aug. 6, 613, B. C., and Dec. 10, 580, B. C. The material for his elaborate calculations he found mostly at Copan, Tikal and Palenque. On the first mentioned date Maya astronomers began observations for the purpose of perfecting a calendar, and on the second date, the calendar was completed, and it is stated that the work was so well done that the calendar functioned for 2,000 years without the loss of a day.

It will be noticed that this calendar reform was commenced about 13 years before the Prophet Lehi left Jerusalem. It must, therefore, have been the work of people who preceded Lehi, and the Jaredites are the only ones of that class, of whom we have a reliable account.

Another and later date is of equal importance. According to Dr. Spinden, in the year 392, A. D., two monuments were set up on hills in the Valley of Copan, about four or five miles apart. A person at a certain spot in the city could see the sun set behind the western monument two times every year, viz., April 9 and Sept. 2. These dates were thus marked for the benefit of the farmers, indicating the times for sowing the first and second crops. The year 392 is, as is well known, about 7 years after the last battle of Cumorah. Then, in the year 503 A. D.,

there seems to have been another congress of astronomers.

Peace in the Maya Empire. About the end of the second century of our era, what is known as the Maya civilization was in a flourishing condition. This corresponds well with the condition of peace and prosperity depicted in the Book of Mormon (4 Ne. 18-21) as enjoyed by the Nephites at that time. The Nephites, we read, were blessed and prospered until an hundred and ten years had passed away * * * and there was no contention in all the land. At that time, among the Mayas, city after city sprang into prominence in the southern part of the territory; that is to say, in what is now Chiapas, Guatemala, and Honduras. This, says Mr. Silvanus Griswold Morley,⁵ was a time of "extraordinary development" all along the line, as is evidenced in what has survived of monuments, and it lasted for upward of four hundred years. That was the "golden age" of the Mayas. During this time Palenque and Yaxchilan in southern Mexico; Piedras Negras, Seibal, Tikal, Naranjo, and Quirigua in Guatemala, and Copan in Honduras rose to prominence.

Long before this time the descendants of Lehi had invaded this region and assimilated with the people preceding them. They became Mayas, as inhabitants of the Maya empire.

Migration Northward. About the sixth century, or ninth cycle of Maya chronology, there is, we are further told, a sudden cessation of dates in all these

⁵*Introduction to the Study of the Maya Hieroglyphics*, Bull., 57, Bur. Am. Ethn., p. 2.

cities. What happened at that time is not known. But, presently, Chichen Itza in the northern part of Yucatan became prominent. There had, evidently, been a migration. Several colonies were founded in that barren region, where a long struggle for a bare existence must have ensued. The arts were then, necessarily, neglected. The settlers seem to have met with varying success. Bakhahal was occupied for sixty years and then abandoned. Chichen Itza was inhabited for about a hundred years. Chakanputun flourished for two hundred and sixty years, until it was destroyed by fire.

Cities Founded. At the beginning of the 11th century⁶ Chichen Itza was again occupied, and the cities of Mayapan and Uxmal were founded. Then architecture and sculpture were revived and several cities were built, among which were Merida, Izamal, Kabah, and Labna.

Civil War. In the 13th century civil war between the chiefs of the leading cities broke out. Mayapan was attacked by the ruler of Chichen Itza, whereupon that city or pueblo, called in the Nahuas in Mexico to their aid. Chichen Itza was destroyed, and the Nahuas eventually established themselves in Mayapan and kept the people under subjection until the Maya nobles combined their forces, sacked the city, and killed the tyrant. However, the Mayas were divided and weakened by civil war, famine, and pestilence, and that was their condition when the Spaniards, like destroying angels from another world,

⁶When Leif Ericson and the Northmen were exploring North American coasts.

appeared upon the scene. The sterling character of the Mayas was then shown in the fact that they fought for their homes and liberty for fifteen years against the invaders, before they were finally defeated.

Personal Appearance. The Maya Indians, as described by the early Spanish historians, were tall, active, and strong. They must have had peculiar ideas of personal beauty, for they flattened the heads of their infants and deliberately made them squint-eyed, and when grown up, they disfigured themselves with scars. Tattooing and adornment with red paint were demanded by their fashionable set; on the other hand, chastity was highly praised among them. An adulterer was tied to a stake and left to the mercy of the injured party. The adulteress was generally cast adrift by the husband.

Farmers and Hunters. Agriculture and hunting were carried on by cooperation. To that extent the idea of a united order survived among them. Bands of twenty, or more, passed from field to field and did the sowing, harvesting, or whatever was needed. Fifty, or more, frequently formed hunting parties, and the hunters divided the food procured.

Extensive Trade Connection. The Mayas traded in salt, cloth, slaves, etc., and they are said to have extended their trading expeditions as far north as Tabasco, and even to Cuba, across the water. As media of exchange they used cocoa, stone counters, and rare red shells.

Their Music. The musical instruments of the Mayas consisted of drums, rattles, reed flutes, wooden

horns, and bone whistles. They enjoyed comedies, dances, and social parties. They entertained their friends on vegetables, roasts, fish, corn cakes, cocoa, and intoxicants, and each guest generally received a present. The meals were spread on mats on the floor.

Military Organization. Their military organization was well developed. At the head of the army the Mayas had two generals. The office of one was hereditary; the other was elected for a term of three years. A certain number of men in each village were taken into the army, by popular vote, and they formed the nucleus of the fighting forces. They were supported by the community. Their weapons were bows and arrows, lances, and copper axes. The arrows and lances were tipped with obsidian. The protective armor consisted of wicker shields and quilted cotton coats. The officers wore helmets with brilliant plumes, and cloaks of tiger skins, possibly to inspire fear. After a battle the slain were often mutilated, the jaw bones being used for ornaments, and prisoners were made slaves, unless they were chiefs. These were frequently sacrificed.

Duties of the Chief Priesthood. The chief priest of the Mayas was called *Abau can Mai*. The priests were supposed to educate the children of the lords and nobles in the computation of time, in fetes and ceremonies, in the administration of the sacraments, in divination, healing, history, reading and writing, as far as these arts were practiced. Genealogies were carefully kept. He who had a genealogical record was an *Ab kaba*—"a man with a name;" if he had no such record, he was "nameless."

The Name of Their God. The chief deity of the Mayas was *Itzamna*. He was regarded as the father of the gods and the creator. The Mayas, as the Peruvians, saw in the rising sun a glorious manifestation of the Deity. He was also regarded as the founder of the Maya civilization, and must therefore, at some time have appeared among the people as a divine leader and teacher. Next to him in importance was *Kukulcan*, the "feathered serpent," who was the founder of cities and the framer of laws. They also had a god of harvest, *Yum Kaax*; a god of death, *Apuch*, and a god of war; also a "black captain," *Ek Abau*, and many other deities.

Complicated Calendar System. The calendar system of the Mayas mentioned in a previous paragraph was very complicated. They had a period of 260 days, which has come to be known by the Aztec name *Tonalamatl*, because the Maya name is not known. *Kin Katun* has been suggested by Prof. Seler, but Dr. Morley doubts the correctness of that suggestion.⁷ The tonalamatl has been called "the sacred year," because it was divided into parts with special reference to festivals and religious observances. The priests studied the tonalamatl in order to ascertain which days were propitious for offering sacrifices, making confessions, etc.

They had also a solar year. This was called *Haab*. This year consisted of 365 days, divided into 18 *uinals*, or months, of 20 days each, with the addition of an extra 5 days at the end of the year. Each month had its own name, as had each day, except the

⁷*Introduction to the Study of the Maya Hieroglyphics*, p. 43.

last five, which were, therefore, the *xma kaba kin*, or "days without a name." They were considered the unlucky days. By an ingenious combination of the *tonalamatl* and the *haab* the Mayas obtained a cycle of 18,980 days, or 52 solar years, which have been called the "calendar round" for want of a better name. By calculation it was found that the precise order of the 260 days of the *tonalamatl*, with reference to the 365 positions each could occupy in the *haab*, repeated itself in 52 years, as the order of our week days does in seven years. By fixing an "initial date" which they called *4 abau 8 cumhu*, and by dividing time into kins, uinals, tuns, katuns, cycles, great cycles, etc.,^s they could fix any date within a period of 374,000 years.

Someone has well said: "Maya was the name of a powerful nation between the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and Darien. It was as well known among the ancients as France or England is today."

At Chichen Itza. Among recent explorations in Yucatan should be mentioned that of Edward H. Thomson, who conceived the idea of dredging the sacred well of the Itzas, and to examine the bottom in diving costume. This unique work was continued for two years, and it seems that it yielded many finds. The theory of the explorer is that maidens were sacrificed in the well, as messengers to the snake god, and that objects of value, of gold, copper and jade, were thrown after them, by the mourners. The Mayas,

^sMorley, *Introduction to the Study of the Maya Hieroglyphics*, p. 58. The day was called *kin*. 20 kins was a *uinal*; 18 uinals, a *tun*; 20 tuns, a *katun*; 20 katuns, a *cycle*; 20 cycles, a *great cycle*. The cycle, then, was equal to 144,000 days, and the great cycle to 2,880,000 days.



A Maya monument at Quirigua, known as Stela A. All that is known about the inscription is that it records a date called 6 ahau 13 kayab. As to what happened on that date, nothing is, so far, known.—Sylvanus Grisvold Morley in "An Introduction to the Study of the Maya Hieroglyphics," Smithsonian Institution, Bulletin 57.

he further believes, were one branch of a race that at one time inhabited most of Central America, and even lived as far north as New Mexico and Arizona.

An Observatory. Dr. John C. Merriam, president of the Carnegie Institution, some time ago told of the finding of an ancient astronomical observatory, "probably the first ever built on this continent." The ruins were found at Chichen Itza by Dr. Sylvanus G. Morley. The discovery, deep under a temple already excavated, of the ruins of another and more beautiful temple is supposed to indicate that 'middle-American civilization is even older than archaeologists have believed.

The throne of the rulers of Chichen Itza has also been found in recent years. It is thirteen feet wide, seven feet deep and three feet high, elaborately and beautifully sculptured.

Four Cultures Meet. Recent explorations in the valley of Mexico have indicated the influence there of Mongolian, Egyptian, and Chaldean as well as Indian culture. The Book of Mormon accounts sufficiently for the Chaldean and Egyptian influences. And if tradition is reliable, we are supposed to believe that in the year 499, Hwui Shan, a Buddhist missionary, in company with five priests, found a land many miles to the eastward of China which he named Fusang. They sailed along the Chinese coast to Kamchatka and thence along the Aleutian islands to Alaska. From Alaska, which they called Great Han, they sailed along the coast to Fusang. Hwui Shan describes the dwellings made of blocks of sun-dried mud, which housed many people, a description which



Courtesy of the National Geographic Society.

One of the best-preserved monuments at Quirigua, known as Stela D. The Egyptian type of face, with its characteristic little beard, shows very distinctly in this monument.

fits the pueblos and ancient America. He mentions a plant used in making cordage and paper, which afforded vegetable milk and which yielded tender edible sprouts. The maguey plant answers this description.

A few years ago the Chinese government directed its historians to make a search of the imperial records, and from them came the foregoing story. That would account for the Mongolian influence, and it is not impossible that the Chinese tradition relates to the colonization of the Jaredites.

The find of a "Mongolian library," as it has been called, seems to corroborate the accounts of an incursion from China. The library was unearthed in 1924, by Prof. Wm. Niven and Dr. J. H. Cornyn, from a thick layer of volcanic ashes. The offered explanation is that the entire valley once upon a time was a great volcanic cone with fifty active volcanic mountains, and at least three of these constantly in action, and streams of lava and ashes inundated the region like a great flood. This, they say, happened from seven to ten thousand years ago—a date which undoubtedly is too high. The library consists of stone tablets containing easily recognized characters or symbols. Among these are the symbol of the moon, the symbol of fire, the earth mother, water, lightning, the sun's rays, the symbol of the volcano god, the symbols of morning and evening, the symbols of the various stars and heavenly bodies. Many of the books of the Mongoloid library are books on the stars.

A former Chinese minister to Mexico, M. L. Tao, is quoted as having said, that there are definite accounts of an emigration from China across the Pacific

about the years 2500 to 2000, B. C. That is important, for the immigrants are said to have been highly cultured even at that time.

The Egyptian influence is seen in the pyramids and in the various sculptured articles unearthed.

Lubaantum. One of the recent discoveries in Yucatan is what remains of an ancient city, which has been called Lubaantum. These ruins were discovered in the very heart of British Honduras, by the English archaeologist, Dr. Gann and his companion Mitchell Hedges. The two explorers with their attendants were proceeding up the Rio Grande, when their boat was upset, and they had to swim to the shore. It was while trying to cut their way through the almost impenetrable jungle that they came upon the ruins. They found a gigantic pyramid of earth, surrounded by large columns of lime rock, or sandstone. Farther into the jungle they discovered terraces leading up to an immense table land, where six pyramids of stone had been erected. There were also the remnants of a burial chamber of stone, which had caved in. According to Dr. Gann, all these structures were the resting places of kings and priests, who may belong to the time of the first dynasty of the Maya kingdom. Excavations are being made, and the hope is entertained that light will be shed on the beginning of the remarkable Maya culture.

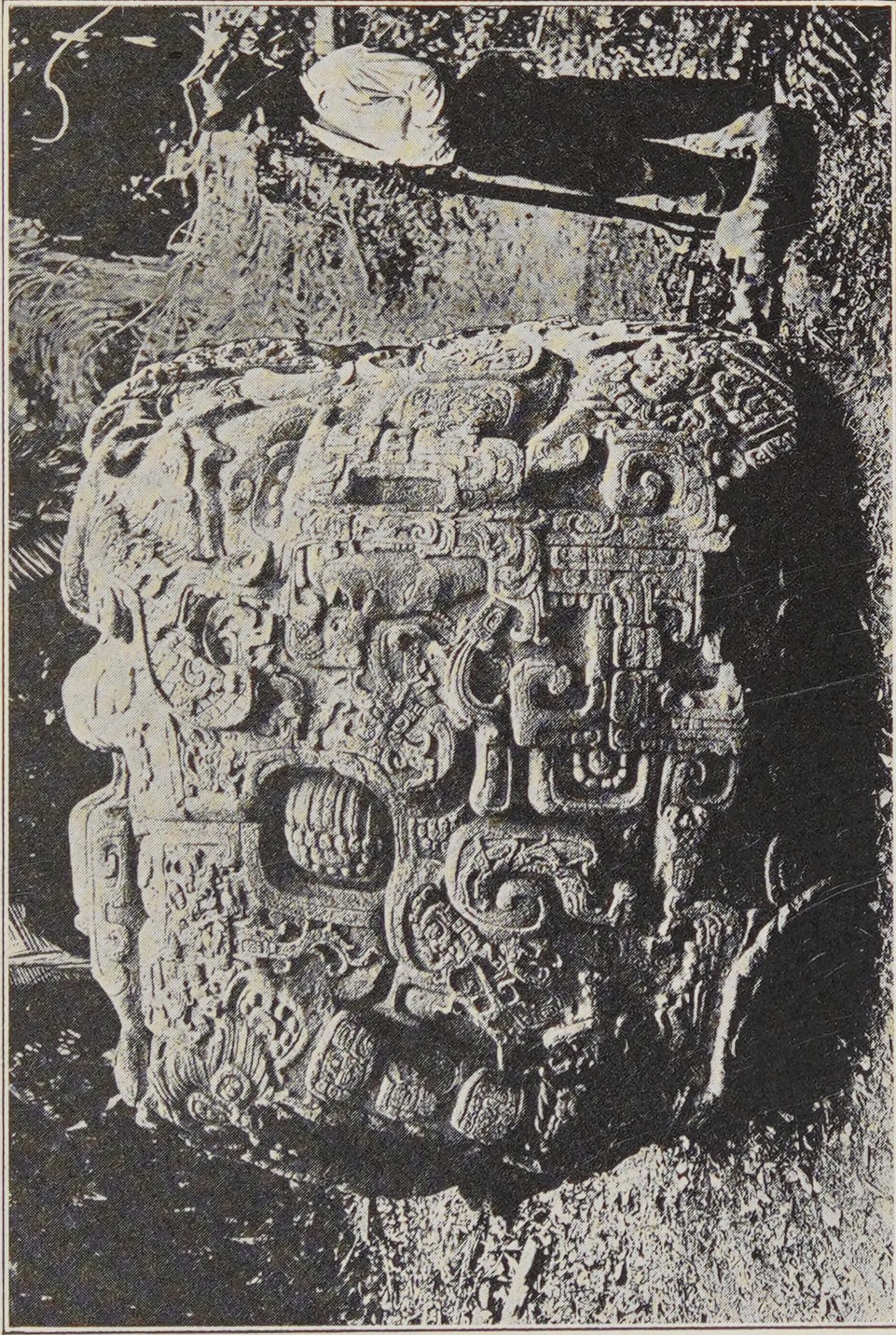
The Nahuas. Writers on prehistoric America tell us that a people called *Nahuas* flourished side by side with the so-called Xibalbans, or Mayas. They, too, reached out from Tulan in Chiapas towards Anahuac, where they encountered the Quinames, or

giants. Under the leadership of Cukulcan, they penetrated into Yucatan, where they came in contact with the Comes and Itzas. Gradually the Nahuas became strong in numbers and influence, and united with the Xibalbans on terms of equality. But some time before the fifth century of our era, there was a political upheaval. The various tribes were scattered, and the valley of Mexico became the center of the Nahua government. The Mayas and Nahuas became two separate peoples.

Geographical Extent. The language of the Nahuas at one time extended from the State of Sinaloa in northwestern Mexico on the Pacific, to the domain of the Mayas in Yucatan, a distance of about 1,500 miles; then down into Nicaragua, 500 miles more. It ruled supreme on the Mexican tablelands. Its only real rivals were the Maya and Quiche languages.

Three Historical Periods. It is customary to speak of three periods of the later history of the Nahuas, viz., the Toltec, the Chichimec, and the Aztec. These and other Indian nations were closely related, and they were all Nahuas. According to some chroniclers, the Toltecs arrived in the Valley in the year 648, A. D., and disappeared in 1031. The Chichimecs rose to power in 1170. The Aztecs arrived in Tula in 1196, founded Tenochtitlan (the City of Mexico) in 1325, and were the masters of the country when Cortez arrived in 1519.

⁹These giants, by the way, were, according to a tradition related by Ixtlilxochitl, the descendants of some who had survived the destruction of the world by a flood. This tradition, if authentic, would point to a Jaredite origin. They are represented as "brutes" but that may not have to be accepted without explanation.



Courtesy of the National Geographic Society.
Sideview of "The Great Turtle" or monument called Zoomorph Z. Said to be the finest piece of aboriginal sculpture in the Western hemisphere.

Divided Opinions Concerning the Toltecs. The Toltecs are supposed to have been, at one time, at the head of a strong confederacy, with Tollan as its capital. Mr. Fiske¹⁰ is of the opinion that, while there was a tribe of Toltecs at Tollan, at one time, the notion of a "Toltec empire" is misleading, and Brinton identifies them with the Aztecs. But all authorities agree that they were well advanced in culture, and many ascribe to them the buildings in Mexico and Central America, the ruins of which still testify of the greatness of an age that is past.

According to Galatin,¹¹ the Toltecs came to a country called Huehue Tlapallan in the year 387, A. D. This country is believed to have been situated somewhere in the northeast. Tradition has it that the southward migration of the Toltecs was occasioned by attacks of the Chichimecs and that the strife lasted for thirteen years, after which the remnant fled and finally reached Mexico. It is further stated that they displaced a people that had come in ships from South America, called, Colhuas.¹²

It is well to bear in mind the date of the last battle at Cumorah, 385, A. D., after which many Lamanites, undoubtedly, began a migration from the land of the same name as the hill.

Ixtlilxochitl also relates a Toltec tradition concerning a Huehue Tlapallan,¹³ to which they had migrated 520 years after the flood. This may be a

¹⁰*Discovery of America*, Vol. 2, p. 217-20.

¹¹*Schoolcraft's Arch.*, Vol. 5, p. 96.

¹²James C. Southall, *Recent Origin of Man*, p. 532.

¹³Bancroft, *Native Races*, Vol. 5, pp. 18 and 209.

Toltec version of the Jaredite exodus from the home in the Old World.

The Toltecs are described by Nadaillac¹⁴ as tall, well-proportioned, with clear, yellow complexion, dark eyes and hair, aquiline noses, and receding foreheads. They constructed roads and aqueducts, and knew how to work metals, such as gold, silver, copper, tin, and lead. They could spin, weave, and dye cloth, and cut precious stones. They built houses of rock, cemented with lime mortar, and they constructed mounds. In fact, Dr. Foster considers them as identical with the mound builders of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. They knew the medical value of some plants, and they used vapor baths. They even had hospitals where patients received free treatment. They made implements of flint, porphyry, basalt, and obsidian, and jewelry of emeralds, turquoises, and amethysts. They were great sculptors, and they adorned their temples and monuments with glyphs, and their pottery was famous. Pestilence and famine, and civil strife, arising from dissensions of rival religious factions, undermined the Toltec regime. Other tribes became powerful, and many of the Toltecs fled to Guatemala, Tehuantepec, Campeche, and the distant coasts of the Isthmus.

The Pyramid of the Sun. This architectural marvel, which has only recently been completely unearthed at Teotihuacan, is a truncated mound 216 feet high and 760 feet around its base. It was, undoubtedly at first intended as an altar in honor of the Creator, whose splendor is revealed in the sun

¹⁴*Prehistoric America*, p. 275.

and the other heavenly luminaries. But in course of time, as the light of revelation grew dim and darkness fell upon the minds of men, the place was used for human sacrifices. According to accounts, the fairest and strongest boy or girl that could be found was selected for this sacrifice. They were feted in luxury for three weeks. The boy was given the finest of wines and food and the fairest daughters of the tribe. He was dressed in splendid gowns. The people poured their gifts on him. He was almost worshiped. Then on the sacrificial day he was led, with all the others selected for the rite, along what is called "The Highway of the Dead" to the top of the pyramid, and after certain ceremonies were observed was cast over the side to death.

This pyramid is only one of a great many. It is supposed to be from the Toltec period.

The Chichimecs. The Chichimec rule next claims our attention. Mr. Bancroft considers it probable that the great, original Nahua empire, whether it be called Huehue Tlapallan, Tamoanchan, Tulan, or Amaquemecan, was the Chichimec empire, from which the Toltecs migrated first, only to be followed by other Chichimec tribes.¹⁵ All agree that the two were of one blood and language. They appear in the vicinity of Anahuac, after having wandered about for a whole year, but tradition can give us no clue to whether the country whence they came and which they called Amaquemecan, was to the north or south of Anahuac. All that is known with any degree of certainty is that during the 6th and 7th centuries

¹⁵*Native Races*, Vol. 5, p. 219.

Anahuac and adjoining territory north and west were settled by several Nahua nations. Some settled in the fertile valleys and became the standard bearers of the most advanced culture. They were known as Toltecs. Others were hunters, rude and barbarous. They were the "chichimecs," the "dogs" of their age; or as we should say, the "riff-raff," the "canaille."

The Aztecs. Among the warrior nations that rose to power in Anahuac were the Aztecs. They, too, were Nahuas, and the traditions relating to their origin must be understood as covering the traditional infancy of all the kindred tribes or nations.

The Aztecs are said to have come from Aztlan. That name has been translated "the place of cranes," or "the place of salt water," or "the white country," the last rendition assuming that "aztlan" is from "iztac" which means "white." There may have been an Aztlan in New Mexico (Mr. Morgan), or in the Mississippi Valley (as held by some), as well as in Mexico, and Aztecs may have inhabited either or all of them, at one time or another; but the original Aztlan was, probably, in Asia. Mr. Denison,¹⁶ is inclined to this view. But he also makes this suggestion: "They worshiped towards the east, whence the sun rose, and that may be the true origin of the word"—Eastland.¹⁷ It has also been suggested that it may mean, "The home of the gods." That would be the Scandinavian Asaland or Asaheim, "the home of the Æsir," the chief city of which was Asgard, which means a castle on

¹⁶*Primitive Aryans in America*, pp. 134-50.

¹⁷Another explanation is that the first settlers found there a rock upon which grew a cactus, in which an eagle with a serpent in its beak was perched, and that the word means, "place of the cactus rock."



Page 74 of a Maya manuscript known as the Dresden Codex, preserved in that city. According to Förstemann, it depicts the Maya conception of the end of the world. The serpent is belching forth water. Water flows from the sun and the moon, and the powers of evil are distributing death and destruction.—Sylvanus Grisvold Morley in "An Introduction to the Study of the Maya Hieroglyphics," Smithsonian Institution, Bulletin 57.

the hill, from *as*, "hill," "ridge," and *gard*, 'castle," "burgh." Can it be, that Aztec tradition and Scandinavian mythology originally grew up in the same soil?

Tenochtitlan. On their arrival on the Mexican plateau, the Aztecs found the most favorable locations already occupied, but they established themselves on a spot protected by the marshes of lake Tezcucuo, where, in due time, they built the famous pueblo of Tenochtitlan, so called, possibly after their great ancestor, Tenuch, one of six sons of Iztax Mixcohuatl.

Their power began to be felt in 1375, A. D., when Acamapichtli, having been elected to the position of *tlacatecutli*, or chief of men, made improvements that gave the city a standing among its neighbors.

Two Cities Combine. During the administration of *Itzcoatzin*, "Obsidian Snake," Tenochtitlan and Tezcucuo joined forces and destroyed the city of the Tecpanecas, and butchered the inhabitants. After this "victory" the two cities mentioned and Tlacopan formed a federation for the express purpose of plundering other communities and dividing the spoils. This was the famous Aztec confederation which existed when Cortez arrived.

Montezuma a Despot. Montezuma II, a son of Axayacatl, was at the head of affairs then, having been elected *tlacatecutli*, or "chief of men" in 1502, A. D.¹⁸ At that time the incumbent of that office

¹⁸This position may be compared to that held by the tribal chief of Israel in the days of Moses and Joshua. These were "princes," which means "first" of men. (Num. 1:16.) They were judges. (Ex. 18:21, 25.) They

was a despot with, broadly speaking, unlimited powers. He was revered as the representative of God, as were the Incas of Peru. He was so sacred that only five mortals were permitted to see his face.

Class Distinction. Next to the ruler stood a privileged class, each individual of which was a despot in his limited circle. When Cortez arrived upon the scene, a class war raged between this "nobility" and the merchant class, the latter being powerful because of their wealth. Montezuma sided with the nobles, and these were often guilty of extortion and violence.

The People were Slaves. A considerable portion of the people were slaves. Prisoners of war, criminals condemned to servitude, and persons who had sold themselves, or children sold, were in this class. Prisoners of war were kept for sacrifices, but the captor could dispose of them in the market, if he preferred to do so. Human beings were, therefore, always for sale. Slaves in the hands of good masters were treated well, as were those of the Hebrews anciently (Deut. 15:15; 16:11, 12.) They were permitted to marry, to raise families, to work for themselves at stated intervals, and even to keep slaves for their own convenience, if they could obtain them. Refractory slaves, however, were punished severely. If they

took the lead in forwarding the offerings of the people for the support of the sanctuary. (Num. 7:10, 84), and they acted as scouts for the camp. (Num. 13:1-16.) The Aztec "chiefs of men," in addition to other duties, were commanders-in-chief of the military forces, and performed priestly functions. At first they were elected by popular vote, women as well as men exercising the franchise. Then a council of electors cast the vote for the people, the oldest brother or near relative of the deceased being chosen, thus making the office, virtually, hereditary.

persisted, they were sacrificed as cattle. If, however, a slave succeeded in escaping and reaching the courtyard of the palace, he was set free. To that extent the Aztecs had preserved the principle of the Hebrew law of refuge (Num. 35:6.) Compare Psalm 48:3: "God is known in his palaces for a refuge."

Children and Parents. Aztec children were taught to obey their parents and to honor aged persons. This is in accord with the Mosaic law. Pricking with thorns seems to have been a common educational punishment. The Jews, too, had a proverb about "kicking against the pricks" (Acts 9:5.) Liars were punished severely. Sometimes their lips were split open. To work and to perform religious duties formed part of the education of the children.

Marriages. Among the Aztecs the age of marriage was about twenty years for men and between eighteen and twenty for women. As customary among Orientals, brides were selected by the parents. If these were tardy, the priest would hasten the matter. Those who refused to marry were taken for the temple service. Union between blood relations was not permitted. A brother was expected to marry his deceased brother's widow, as in the Mosaic law; but with this difference: Under the Aztec code he was under obligation to do so, only if there were children to take care of, not otherwise provided for. Under the Mosaic law the Levirate marriage was instituted for the express purpose of perpetuating the name of the deceased. (Deut. 25:5, 6.) The marriage was completed in the temple¹⁹ and ended with a banquet

¹⁹"Accompanied by the dancers and musicians, the newly wedded pair was conducted to the temple, at the door of which the tlamacazques, or

and dancing. Immediately after the wedding the newly-weds fasted for four days. This ordeal completed, they retired to a specially prepared couch, which the following day was brought to the temple as a thanks offering.

A Baptismal Rite. A kind of baptismal rite was performed as part of the marriage ceremony. The bridal pair was placed on green reed mats, and a priest poured water on them. Nobles who could afford the extravagance had four ablutions of water and as many of wine.

The arrival of a child was a great event among the Aztecs, as everywhere. But, strange to say, they called the time of the birth "the hour of death." The early Christians looked forward toward the day of death as their birthday.

Infant Baptism. The washing of the infant by the midwife was a ceremony of a solemn importance—a veritable infant "baptism." The lady took water, breathed upon it, and then touched the head and chest of the infant with it. Then, placing the little one in it, she said: "Enter thou into the water called *metlac* and *tuspalac*; may it wash thee, and may the

priests, appeared to receive them. While the company remained below, the wedded couple with their sponsors and parents ascended the steps of the temple. The priest wore his robe of ceremony, and carried in his hand an incensory filled with incense, with which he proceeded to perfume them. He then placed himself between the two, with the man on his right and the woman on his left, and taking them by the hands led them to the altar of the idol, muttering prayers as he went. The altar reached, he placed a fine and showy shawl woven and variegated with many colors, in the center of which was painted a skeleton, as a symbol that death only could now separate them from each other. He then perfumed them again, with the incensory, and led them back to the door of the temple, where they were received by the assemblage and accompanied to their home with dancing and music."—Bancroft, *Native Races*, Vol. 2, pp. 257-8.

Omnipotent cleanse from thee all ill that is inherent in thee from the beginning of the world and from before the beginning. Begone, all evil imparted to thee by thy father and thy mother."

On the fifth day after the birth another "baptism" was administered, if the signs were favorable; if not, the ceremony was postponed. When applying the water this time, the midwife said: "Evil, wheresoever thou art, begone, avaunt! For the child liveth anew and is born again; once more it is purified: a second time it is renewed by our mother, *Chalchichuitlicue*." Then, lifting up the infant toward heaven, she prayed to *Ometochtli* and *Omecioatl*: "Behold, O Lord, the creature which thou hast sent to this place of sorrow, affliction, and anguish; give it, O Lord, of thy gifts and inspiration, for thou art the great God and the great Goddess."

It is evident from this that the Aztecs had infant "baptism," whatever the explanation of the strange fact may be.²⁰ It is also evident that the Aztecs believed in inherited sin and pre-existence, and the cleansing virtue of consecrated water.

In the eleventh month all women who had become mothers during the year were "purified,"²¹ and the children presented before the Lord. Circumcision was practiced by some, but was not generally observed.

Temple Services. The Aztecs held daily services in their temples. The priests fasted often, and some-

²⁰Infant baptism was one of the errors condemned by the prophet Moroni. See Moroni 8:9-26.

²¹Compare Lev. 15:19. For the idea of consecrated water see Num. 19:2-9.

times tortured themselves, and the people imitated them, drawing blood from their arms, legs, tongues, and other parts of the body. Offerings were brought to the sanctuaries at the festivals. Some of the people had, perhaps, only a flower to give, or a cake of bread; others donated labor, robes, jewels, gold, or even slaves. Sometimes children were carried to their death on litters gorgeously ornamented with plumes and jewels. Bodies of human victims were cut up and eaten, partly at least. At the festival of the winter solstice a number of captives were slain, one of whom represented the sun and another the moon. At harvest time the first fruits of the season were offered to the sun, and a criminal was sacrificed by being ground to death between two large stones. Every eighth year the so-called festival of bread and water was observed, and every fifty-second year, which completed the cycle, the festival of the "binding up of the years" was celebrated.

Food Resources. Hunting, fishing, and agriculture furnished the people with the means of subsistence. On the main land few fertile spots were left uncultivated, and on the lakes were "floating gardens," as famous as the "hanging gardens" of ancient Babylonia. They were built either on rafts or on the bottom of the lake where the water was shallow. Among the domesticated animals were turkeys, quails, geese, ducks, etc., and an animal, *techichi*, resembling a dog. The nobles kept also deer, hares, and rabbits. Cannibalism was practiced as a religious rite.

A Perfect Language. The Aztec language has

been regarded as the most perfect of all the American languages. It lacks the sounds represented by *b*, *d*, *f*, *r*, *g*, and *s*, but it is, nevertheless, rich and elegant. It compares favorably with Latin. It was spoken over a wide area, extending from the Valley of Mexico eastward to the Gulf of Mexico and westward to the Pacific. It was spoken in Salvador, Nicaragua, and in Guatemala, and traces of it have been found in Tabasco, and even in Yucatan. To the north, traces have been discovered in Sonora, Sinaloa, Durango, Chihuahua, Texas, Arizona, California, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon.²² "It is even possible," says Bancroft,²³ "that it may at one time have been used even east of the Mississippi." Sahagun, quoted by Bancroft, says the Apalaches were "Nahoas" speaking the Mexican language, and that they had highroads along which they traveled far into Mexico for purposes of barter and commerce. Dr. Brinton, who does not recognize the Toltecs and Chichimecs as separate tribes, places the Nahuas in the large group which he calls "the Uto-Aztecan tribes."²⁴ The principal members of this stock, he says, are the Utes, Shoshonees, and Comanches in the north; various tribes in Sonora, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, and Durango in the center, and the Nahuas and the Aztecs in the south. Tribes speaking these related dialects have been found from the Isthmus of Panama to the banks of the Columbia River. The relationship of these numerous bands, he adds, is unquestionable, although many of them have adopted words from other stocks.

²²Bancroft, *Native Races*, Vol. 3, p. 557.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 726.

²⁴*The American Race*, Vol. 3, pp. 118-34.

Besides the Nahuas, or Aztecs, numerous other tribes are known to have flourished in territory where they had settlements. Among these were the Otomis who preceded the Aztecs in Mexico; the Tarascans west of the Valley of Mexico; the Totonacos, who claimed they had come from the north and northwest; the Zapotecs and Mixtecs; the Zoques and Mixes, who had traditions of a migration from the south; the Chinantecs, and the Chapanecs. Many of these were highly civilized and valiant, and had enjoyed independence for centuries, when they came under Aztec rule.

Legends and Traditions. Nahua legends and traditions, as preserved by the native, Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, begin with an account of the flood and the building of a tower.²⁵ For many years after these events a few families kept together and wandered over wide expanses of land, and crossed waters, arriving, finally, at a place called Huehue Tlapallan.

Then came a great hurricane which swept away trees, rocks, houses, people. Only those who took refuge in caves were saved. When they emerged, they found a multitude of apes in the land.²⁶

Next we hear of an earthquake which swallowed up the Quinames in the coast regions, together with many of the Toltecs and Chichimecs. After that catastrophe there was peace, and the wise men came together and decided to make an historical record and to revise the calendar.

Convulsions in Nature. One hundred and sixteen years after this gathering of scribes and

²⁵Bancroft, *Native Races*, Vol. 5, pp. 209-14.

²⁶This is exactly how a legendary account of a voyage like that of the Jaredites, for instance, might be expected to read.

astronomers "the sun and moon were eclipsed, the earth shook, and the rocks were rent asunder, and many other things and signs happened, though there was no loss of life." This, we are told, happened in the year 33, A. D., the year of the crucifixion.²⁷

Then follows an account of an exodus, which began with a revolt in the year 338, A. D., and ended with the entrance of the wanderers in Anahuac in the 6th century of our era.

This legendary account of the history of the Nahuas is in some essentials so similar to the Book of Mormon story of the Nephites and Lamanites, as to warrant the conclusion that the Nahuas were the descendants of those very nations, with, probably, a liberal element of Jaredite blood.

This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the name *Nabua* is, both in form and meaning, the same as *Nephi*. I hope to enter into this proposition more fully in another place. Here I will only say that the Nahuas did not have a letter for our *f* or *ph* sound. Their *u* is equivalent to our *f*, so that the name may be pronounced, *Nab-fa*. That is *Nephi* almost without any change.

Anahuac is generally explained to mean, "any country situated about a lake or large sheet of water" (Nadaillac), or "country by the waters" (Bancroft), or "lake country" (Fiske); all on the authority of Brasseur de Bourbourg. I do not deny the correctness of this explanation, but somehow it does not appear satisfactory. As in the case of *Tenochtitlan*, which generally is said to be derived from

²⁷Compare this with 3 Ne. 8:5-25.

two words meaning "rock," and "cactus," but which also has been regarded, with more probability, as immortalizing the name of a great leader, Tenoch, so there may be a simpler and more probable explanation of *Anahuac* than that proposed by the learned Abbé.

If, as I believe, *Nabua* is the Book of Mormon name *Nephi*, then *A-Nabua-c*, or *Ab-Nabua-ac* might be Maya for "the Land of Nephi."

That the Nephites at some time settled on the Mexican plateau is certain; or reasonably so; for they were by treaty given the land north of the "narrow passage," (at Tehuantepec?) "which led into the land southward." (Morm. 2:29.)

We have already noted that some authors on prehistoric America hold that the Aztecs came to Anahuac from the north. Among modern writers who reject this view is Mr. John D. Baldwin. He examines briefly the various theories offered to explain the origin of the Nahuas—the lost-tribe theory; the Malay, the Phoenician, and the Atlantis theories, and, after having rejected them all, he says:²⁸

"It has sometimes been assumed that the Aztecs came to Mexico from the North, but there is nothing to warrant this assumption, nothing to make it probable, nothing even to explain the fact that some persons have entertained it. People of the ancient Mexican and Central American race are not found farther north than New Mexico and Arizona, where they are known as Pueblos or Village Indians. In the old time that was a frontier region, and the Pueblos seem to represent ancient settlers who went there from the South. * * * Investigation has made it probable that the Mexicans or Aztecs went

²⁸*Ancient America*, p. 217.

to the Valley of Mexico from the South. Mr. Squier says: "The hypothesis of a Migration from Nicaragua and Cuscutlan to Anahuac is altogether more consonant with probabilities and with tradition than that which derives the Mexicans from the North." "

In answer to the question whence they came into Nicaragua, Mr. Baldwin gives this remarkable opinion:²⁰

"The civilized life of the ancient Mexicans and Central Americans may have had its original beginning somewhere in South America, for they seem more closely related to the ancient South Americans than to the wild Indians north of the Mexican border; but the peculiar development of it represented by the ruins must have begun in the region where they are found. I find myself more and more inclined to the opinion that the aboriginal South Americans are the oldest people on this continent; that they are distinct in race; and that the wild Indians of the North came originally from Asia."

²⁰*Ancient America*, p. 185.