ANALYSIS OF THE PICTORIAL TEXT INSCRIBED ON TWO PALENQUE TABLETS.

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Part II.

As will be remembered, Part I. of this memoir was devoted to giving evidence of the fact that as far as our two Palenque tablets are concerned no images comparable to alphabetic characters were found forming the components of the engraved text. The 201 images we had to deal with turned out to be true *pictographs*, that is to say, sculptures representing objects either natural or manufactured.

Nicely cut as they are, their identification did not offer serious difficulties to one who is conversant with both symbolism and mannerism of the Central American artist. Later, when proceeding to classify the sundry components, they were found capable of being brought under the headings: chronologic dates, human profiles, idols, heads of animals, vessels, fruit, woven stuff, bundles and bags. That all these objects are of ritual character, could fairly be presumed from the fact of the tablets flanking the representation of a grand Sacrificial Scene. To strengthen this presumption, valuable support was derived from the authority of Bishop Landa, who in his "Cosas de Yucatan" took care to describe the curious paraphernalia connected with the religious ceremonial of the Maya priesthood. None of the ritual objects, as quoted by the Bishop, were found missing among those represented on our tablets, and no conclusion could be given to Part I. which was more likely to prove the correctness of our statements than

Landa's own words: "*All these objects can be seen graven, quasi in memoriam, on the walls of the temples and palaces.*" The pictographic character of our text, as a whole, and the ritual character of its individual components, therefore, appeared as definitely settled.

In Part II. we investigate a problem which is obviously inherent in, and not fairly separable from the former. We mean to attempt to ascertain what special message these two tablets were intended to deliver to posterity. To have picked out the sundry components from their context, to have subjected them to an examination of their pictographic value, and to have viewed them in the light of their classification,—all these steps must be judged as preparatory. Their aim could be no other than to clear ground upon which later on to raise, with the aid of the material gathered, a certain building—the building to be the syntactic construction of the text imbedded in the two tablets. We could not feel satisfied with the simple and exclusive gift of an analysis. It is but a natural impulse of curiosity to see the severed members of the text replaced in their tabular rank and file, and then to ascertain what special function they assume in their original combination, and how far they would contribute to the expression of an intelligible, definite thought, stated in a most novel way.

Had our problematic text been couched in some alphabetic language, and had we the key for it in our hands, it would be easy to translate the burden of the message, and in the very words intended by its author. Never before (and let this parenthesis be kindly pardoned), never before were we more deeply impressed with the inventive benevolence of fabulous old god Thot, than in connection with our present task. What power of ocular observation, we exclaim, what acute auricular perception, what faculty of practical transmission does not lie concealed in his so seemingly small gift of but seventeen phonetic letter-symbols! By means of them we are

enabled to think again the very thoughts conceived in the brain of the author, prearranged there, then anatomized into sounds, and finally deposited for visible perception on the little alphabetic key-board,—only one touch, one sight of them, and the whole mental music of the author would rush into the reader's brain and be repeated by his lips, to be imparted to thousands and thousands of readers.

No such advantages are proffered by the pictorial script and carving. If there is one, it is but this, that it addresses a wider circle of readers than does the alphabetic scheme. No particular knowledge of the language in which it is expressed would be required. A biped or a quadruped depicted will be recognized as such by all races and classes on the surface of the whole world. But what of the disadvantages. They are most numerous. Pictorial writing encompasses only representation of things visible and tangible. It addresses only the man seeing, not the man hearing, thinking and aspiring. For all the unlimited hues of the abstract, of the invisible, of the ideal, it has no picture. While alphabetic script is absolute and categoric, pictorial script is but relative and vaguely suggestive. In the former it is the author who carves the text. In the latter it is left to the beholder's best comprehension how to phrase it. Picture writing cannot be read—it can but be interpreted.

Correctness of identification always being presumed, the prospective success of the interpreter may be said to depend upon two main circumstances. The one of them comprises the internal, the other the external symptoms. By the former we understand the presence of a certain variety in objects, the place they occupy, their sequence and their division into groups. By the other, the character of local association with which the inscription is visibly connected. Hence, circumstantial evidence alone will be the key by which to solve the pictorial riddle, and it is only by the uncommon richness of suggestive symptoms

present in our epigraphic master work of art, that the student may feel encouraged to venture upon the task of impersonating the interpreter.

Let us enter directly upon this task, and begin with asking: What is the serial arrangement of all the objects in question? Must we begin "reading" the text from the right to the left, or inversely? Are the elements set together in rows or in columns? In answer to the first question, we must obviously decide,—from the left to the right. This is plainly suggested by the observation that the left upper corner of Tablet I. is occupied by the large brazier, covering the space of four squares,—evidently an initial to the text. Whether to proceed thence in the transversal or in the columnar direction, must be decided in favor of the latter, for the reason that the portraits—the most conspicuous feature of the tablet—stand arranged in this way. This is also the arrangement as stated by Landa (page 44).

Double columns?—Another question remains to be considered. Several scholars have advanced the opinion that the text must be read not by single, but by double columns, so that the columns 2, 4 and 6 should be complementary to 1, 3 and 5. This view is correct to a certain point; namely, so far as it pertains to the portrait column, as is clearly indicated by the artist himself. He designed each of the portraits to be qualified by the emblem carved on the face of its adjoining square to the right; and to make his purpose as conspicuous as possible he merged the two squares, leaving no space between them. This arrangement, however, terminates just at the point where the column of portraits stops; beyond this point the columns stand separately, and remain so throughout on this tablet, as well as on the other.

An understanding on this question being reached, we observe in casting a glance over both tablets that although resembling each other in size, in position and carving, they

are by no means alike,—they differ one from the other, essentially. Tablet II. offers to the eye the monotony of a symmetrically laid-out surface, whereas the other is teeming with variety and life. The eye is caught by the large impressive initial, by the compact double column of portraits, with its attractive succession of profile heads, which in the ensuing text is then followed by more portraits interspersed at irregular intervals. If the tablets differ so much in appearance, so may they also in purport, and the topics treated on Tablet I. presumably may turn out of somewhat different burden than those on Tablet II.

Considering their interesting variety, let Tablet I. first be taken up as subject of a closer inspection.

Portraits on Tablet I. Their identification.—When looking at its specific feature—that of the portraits—one circumstance connected with them must attract attention, which is their arrangement. One portion of them, as already noticed, stands grouped at the head of the tablet, and the others make their appearance as scattered and interwoven with the pictures of the text, all over the tablet. When we observe this fact, the question will arise in our mind: Why do not all these portraits stand in a columnar group? or, why were those scattered, not combined into a column of their own? or, why were not all of them represented on dispersed spaces? Surely some very grave reason must have directed the artist to arrange the portraits just as we see them represented.

In our attempt to find an answer, let us consider the columnar group of portraits, and try to ascertain what various and particular circumstances may be found associated with them. And first its location! That it was the group of portraits which was to stand at the head of the tablet, cannot have been decided upon without a certain important reason. We furthermore observe that the same group was crowned with the emblem of the large sacerdotal brazier Ben. A third curious circumstance is the fact that

each of the portraits is connected with a brazier of its own and that the surfaces of these braziers show different legends or carvings. These facts will teach us that we have to do with a group of men of highest character, and taking into account the great difference of their physiognomies, leave no doubt in our mind that the artist did not intend to express ideal or conventional features, but those of distinct individuals—of persons. We see faces, actual portraits. If we now narrow this portrait-problem by further asking with what official character these men had been invested, no doubt, in view of all the circumstances alleged, we must feel induced to take this column for a representation of a group of priests. But to remove all doubt as to this assumption, let us still make inspection of that peculiar little bulk that makes its appearance at the root of the nose of each portrait. What special shape the sculptor gave to this protuberance with the portraits standing in the group, cannot be more exactly distinguished. The delicate delineation is somewhat worn and obliterated on the sculpture. But when consulting, for instance, the profiles standing in C 10 and C 11, they reveal forms which lead us to infer the existence of some frontal ornament. But this also may be but a conjecture. Full evidence thereof is given by one on the copies made by Waldeck, from a life-size sculpture on the Palenque walls (see figure 1), in which we see a finely cut leaf-ornament gracing the foreheads of two persons. The jewel is fastened to the front of the head-dress and reaches so far down as to cover the space between the eyes. Impressed by the vision of this large model, we are now able to discern plainly in C 10 the ornament of a leaf, and in C 11 that of an embossed human face (see fig. 2 and 3). In Oriental archæology a jewel of this kind is found forming part of the royal and sacerdotal "toilette," and is known by the name of "*nesem*." Such is therefore the evidence that leads to the immediate conclusion that the portraits were intended to represent no

FIG. 1, SHOWING THE NESEM.

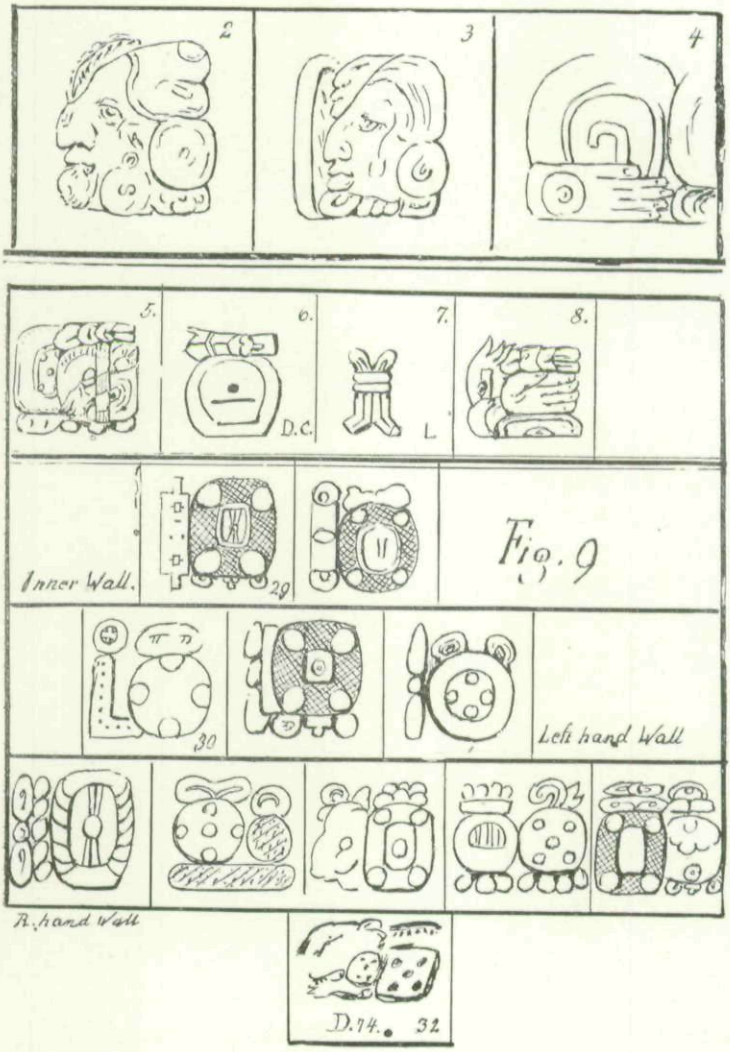
other men than such as were vested with the sacerdotal character.

One curious circumstance connected with the portrait column cannot have escaped the eyes of the beholder. No portrait appears on the face of square A 7. Instead of a profile, we see this square occupied by a hand that holds a crooked staff (see fig. 4.) This interruption in the series is perplexing. Not that it raises a doubt as to the intended continuance of the portrait-series—for such a continuance is plainly indicated (1) by the succession of two more portraits of priests, (2) by the close connection of the shield with the emblematic brazier, and (3) because the hand that holds the staff shows the conventional mark of circles standing for the priest's cuffs; but because we are not able to understand the reason why the artist felt prevented from giving us the portrait of the priest himself and sought to symbolize him simply by a staff of crooked shape. Nowhere, at least in Maya imagery, do crooked staffs make an appearance, except in this place on our tablet. Landa, indeed, informs us that as a token of their high dignity the Maya priests carried staffs in their hands, but he does not say that the staffs were crooked. Such a striking resemblance to the insignia of a Catholic bishop would have moved him to make some remark to the point. Once only, but this in a Mexican codex (Cod. Vatic. pl. 11 and 13), Chipe Totec, the famous *adjunctus a latere* of Quetzalcohuatl is represented holding a crooked staff in his hand. Excluding this curious square, the number of the column-portraits would be but six, and six and not more of them will be found heading the double columns of Tablet I., as seen in the two other fanes in Palenque of a like plan and construction. What peculiar reasons prevailed for increasing that number of six portraits to seven in our fane, why to insert it between the 4th and 5th and just in a mere emblematic form, I have no acceptable conjecture to offer.

Let us here stir up the scanty ashes of tradition and spy for any glowing ember from which to catch some light to illumine the darkness hovering over prehistoric Palenque.

The seven Tzequiles. No province of Spanish conquest has furnished fewer documents for the study of its ancient condition than that of Chiapas, of which province Palenque seems in older times to have been the theocratic centre. One would think that the Fray de las Casas, who became bishop of Chiapas at about the same time that his colleague Diego de Landa was busy in collecting data for his "Relaciones," would have felt incited by similar ardor. But we know that his zealous mind sought employment in other channels of research. Nor have Remesal and de la Vega left any noteworthy historic suggestions. It was only in the last century that Don Ramon de Ordoñez y Aguiar, a Spanish alcalde, felt such interest in certain traditions still alive among the Tzendal Indians (Palenque), among whom he lived, as to pen down these traditions with Spanish letters in the native language. This manuscript was never printed, but was consulted by Dr. Felix de Cabrera, commissioned by the Viceroy of Mexico to write a learned introduction to Del Rio's official report on the first and memorable expedition to the ruins of Palenque. As it appears from Cabrera's abstract, the gist of the notes taken by Ordoñez is this: that a family of seven pious brothers, coming from Mexico, had once entered the territory of Chiapas and were the builders of those stately palaces and temples which are now deserted and in ruins. The immigrants, it is said, were called *tzequiles*, on account of the long robes they wore, and tzequiles, indeed, is still to-day the name for Mexicans among the natives of Chiapas, as *Yaqui* is for them among the natives of Guatemala.

There is a ring of historic truth in this tale. For the same tale is also told by Landa, with respect to the Maya tribe of Yucatan, of which we previously learnt that they had derived from Chiapas the tapir-cult, only that Landa,



CHRONOLOGICAL SYMBOLS.

instead of employing the word "tzequiles" speaks of "brothers," adding thereto that in the course of time discord broke out between them, causing finally the death and ruin of all of them. Stripped of the mystery with which both the natives and the early commentators indulged to color traditional events, the tale as given by Ordoñez will gain still more credibility when we consider it in connection with the pictorial inscription of our tablet. Should other circumstances not come to contradict, we indeed may feel entitled to the assumption that the memory of those "brother Tzequiles" has been perpetuated here on stone and that the portraits carved in the double column may be looked upon as being those of the founders of the Palenque theocracy.

As far as induction in our present case allows, a circumstance corroborative of the aforesaid assumption may come to light when we now proceed in our inspection of the tablet to take into account the other portraits which are scattered over its surface. We find five of them, in squares B 17, C 10, D 8, D 16 and F 4. There may be still three more, those in C 11, E 14 and F 8, but I shrink from accepting them as such, on account of their being encumbered with accessories which the others do not exhibit and because I do not see the reason why the artist should thus have ventured to veil their identification. As regards these scattered portraits, they must be considered also to be priests on account of the *nesem* decorating their foreheads. This much, for the present, on the character of the portraits themselves.

Space-wise record of the portraited priests. But when now bent upon our task of looking for more informative suggestion, we shall find it near at hand. We need only inspect the series of objects carved on the squares and spaces intervening between one portrait and the next that follows, to meet with a welcome surprise. We see that in all these spaces the objects represented repeat themselves.

They are all of the same ritual class and known to us from their identification in Part I. The object is always a date, a vessel, an idol and a sacrificial gift. In spaces of longer dimension we find more of the same class. They also change somewhat in size, in form, or in minor details, but the motive of the object itself remains unchanged. To illustrate the repeated exhibition of the same object within the successive space, take, for example, the portrait standing in C 10. The space as far as the next portrait in D 8 is filled out with fourteen squares. We analyze the pictures of these, one after the other. In C 11 stands a human face, but not in the sense of a human portrait. The base on which the head rests suggests it to represent what the missionaries called an idol—in reality the head of a defunct lord or priest baked of earth or carved of cedar wood (see Landa, pp. 158 and 198). The annex is the cacao-pod. In C 12, a chest of wood or skin (petaquilla, L., p. 240, 278), on top spread out the contents—a sacerdotal mantle, embroidered with crosses with a fringed hem. Left side, a cacao-pod. In C 13, a chest resting on a chalchihuitl, contents left side? beans? In C 14, the date 3 Ben. In C 15, the two fruit vessels Chicchan; l. s. ? In C 16, the date 1 Cavac. C 17, idol head? resting on chalchihuitl. L. h. a shield with emblem of Ben. In D 1, the thorn-vessel Chuen, l. s. a chalchihuitl and a cacao-pod. In D 2, the tapir idol. In D 3, the date 4 Ahau. In D 4, a hand holding a drooping flower?, and resting on a chalchihuitl. In D 5, the date 2 Chuen, on top the tablilla with 4 copal balls. In D 6, a sacrificial vessel (Ben?) resting on chalchihuitl, l. s. the fruit vessel Chicchan, on top body of bee? In D 7, sacrificial vessel resting on chalchihuitl, on top a tied bundle, l. s. the mask of god Chac. We shall now see that the seven squares which follow the portrait in D 8 are inscribed with quite similar ritual objects as the foregoing, as well as all the other portrait-spaces. In D 9, a small

Ben vessel and a larger one. In D 10, the date 8 Ben, base—a chalchihuitl, on top two maize-cakes. In D 11, the date 8 Cib, on top a cacao-pod. In D 12, a bag with beans? on top a heap of ground maize (la masa de mais), l. s. leaf of maize. In D 13, the vessel Chuen, on top the copal-tablillas, l. s. a chalchihuitl and a cacao-pod. In D 14, the date 18 Ben, on top the miniature of initial. In D 15, vessel Ben resting on a bale tied, on top and l. s.?—The smaller objects, of which there appear a great number on both tablets, are of very difficult definition. They undoubtedly represent eatables, as fruit and maize-cake of different ingredients and traditional form. (See Landa, pages 118, 212 and 216).

From the analysis just made and under the circumstances as given, what else are we entitled to infer but that in each of the spaces and squares intervening between two portraits, a record is contained of the priest that heads the space, this record consisting in the registration of the days on which he officiated at a certain sacrificial vessel to a certain idol, and offering certain ritual gifts, or others brought along for the occasion. As to the priests at the head of the tablet, we cannot help considering them to stand for contemporary founders. This was also a reason to represent them closely grouped together. Consequently, the portraits that follow, and are singly scattered and distributed among the squares of the other columns, cannot help being taken for those of the priests who were the gradual successors of the former, both in time and office.

We have still to inspect the other tablet.

Tablet II.

Its characteristics.—This tablet will be found lacking in conspicuous features. We do not see it headed by a broad, emblematic Initial, nor does it exhibit any double columns of portraits, nor in fact any portrait at all. Their absence

reminds us of the necessity now to look out for such prominent and characteristic features as will be able to lead us on the track of the particular theme contained in the new text.

After having for this purpose made a survey over the whole tablet, we return from our inspection with the result that we are acquainted with nearly all the pictures found on the other tablet. Only a few new features present themselves. Thus, for example, we become aware of a few new day-symbols, those of *Eb*, *Caban*, *Imix*, *Lamat* and *Kan*, which were not registered on Tablet I., while on the other hand we will miss those of *Manik*, of *Cib* and *Igk*. Passing from this research among the day dates to that of ritual objects, we may be struck with the very frequent representation of *Birds*, among which a parrot with outstretched tongue plays a principal part. See f. e. squares S 8, S 17, T 1, U 12, V 6, V 16, W 4, X 3, X 9 and X 17, ten times, at least as far as recognition goes. Other varieties of birds may be seen in S 12, W 10 and X 8.

A quite new feature is also that of the Sorcerer's Mask. But all these small discrepancies will not engage our attention so much as would the disproportionate amount of Calendar dates which are registered on this tablet. When counted, we find their number to be *forty-seven*. They, therefore, occupy nearly one-half of all the squares into which the tablet is divided. In this connection we remember that we found only thirty-two dates on the portrait-tablet, and moreover, that these thirty-two dates were divided among twelve portraits. In want of any other striking characteristics, we seize upon this fact. We argue upon it, and the following conclusions may be judged to be acceptable. We say: If the columns on Tablet I. are found subdivided by spaces showing the records of several persons, and if, on the other hand, the columns of Tablet II. are not interrupted by any portrait, the long and uninterrupted record of Tablet II. must necessarily be assigned to but one person.

The record of the entombed priest. That this person must also be a priest will find no serious contradiction. For it will be borne in mind that the little fane which harbors our sculpture is built on the top of a tumulus. Two more tumuli, crowned with similar fanes of similar height, and adorned with similar sculptures, stand at no great distance from this; and fourteen others, as heaps of crumbled ruins, have been counted, scattered on the Palenque grounds. The whole condition of the plain and its surroundings excludes the idea that these tumuli are natural hills; they were thrown up by the hands of men. When the floor of one of these fanes was broken up by Del Rio, in 1787, he found stairs leading to subterranean chambers, profusely decorated, and in which was deposited an urn. Considering the neighborhood of the large monasterial palace, this seat of a once powerful and highly cultured theocracy, it needs not further proof that these tumuli and fanes were erected for receiving the earthly remains of the priests when deceased. (See also Landa, page 198.) Now, since we find the other two fanes above mentioned, each adorned with a sacrificial tableau and each flanked by tablets of the same arrangement as ours, it seems the custom has prevailed, at the interment of a priest, to inscribe the left hand tablet with an epitomized record of the founders and their successors, and to devote an additional tablet to the one priest whose ashes were entombed beneath the floor of that fane which was erected to his special memory. Certainly, an imbedding of the portrait of the deceased into the initial square of his tablet would have more emphatically sanctioned our assumption. But it seems as though the artist, or the council that decreed the construction of this mortuary hall, deemed, for reasons perhaps still to be discovered, such a token of personal commemoration to be superfluous. It may be that the portrait in the single column, stretching along the back of the officiating Chac-priest,—a column whose location is still somewhat

enigmatic,—was his, and that the Chac-priest himself was intended to represent his person in full.

If, then, the record must be referred to the priest entombed in the tumulus, judging from the large amount of dates recorded on his epitaph his sacerdotal life must have embraced a pretty long period of time. It cannot fairly be assumed that each of the minor festivals of the year should have been registered on this pictorial necrologue. But we may presume that he had been officiating at least at one or two of the annual festivals celebrated in honor of god Chac, and have conducted these ceremonial acts in person. Should this hypothesis be found acceptable, when taking the forty-seven dates as basis for computation, we should have a functional record before us that extends over more than twenty years, always supposing that the years he passed in his minor grades were not registered.

The chronologic symbol for the Lustrum.—There is one symbol standing in square V 15 that appears only once on the tablet, and which engages interest. This square shows the well known image of god Chac, characterized by the long nosed profile. (See fig. 5.) We see his head and jaw tightened by a nicely woven ribbon, and on top an object lying that frequently is met with on the garland shields of the Dresden Codex. (Plates 24, 58, 62, 63, 70 and 72.) (See fig. 6.) This object, no doubt, represents a rope doubled and tied in a knot, as we may find it also in the Mexican Codices, where it represents the symbol for tying the years (ligatura de los años). The same knotted rope also appears in Landa's alphabetic scheme, where it stands for the sound *ha*, with the phonetic allusion to *haab*, the Maya word for *year*. (See fig. 7.) Figure 8 is taken from the column along the sacrificer's back, square 13th. In our square V 15 the rope-symbol seems to call attention to the fact that a chronologic symbol is in sight. This symbol we see placed at the left hand of god Chac's, and

merging into it. It is engraved with five little rounds, and I think I am not mistaken in interpreting this sign to be the symbol for the twenty years' period or Katun. I invite the student interested in this specialty to compare it with some other five-dotted symbols, ten in number, which I have gathered from the walls of a certain Palenque building called "el templo de la Escuela" (school-temple), (see John L. Stephens, Incidents of Travel, vol. 2, page 344), represented in fig. 9. The imagination of the sculptor seems to have revelled in representing this rare and important symbol in the most artistic way. The specimens are beautifully elaborated, varying in the motives of the rounds as well as in that of the frame. Our reason for assigning this symbol the value of the twenty years' Katun may be read in Cogolludo's Historia de Yucatan, Lib. IV., cap. 5, from which the following passage is the translated abstract: "They (the Maya) counted by *lustros*, from four to four years. When they had counted five lustros they called these five lustros a Katun." Apply this statement to what is shown in figure 9. Those two shields, with only four rounds, would then represent the *lustra of four years*, and those with five rounds account for the Katun-period of twenty years. The former being of lesser years show no elaborate frame, while the others of higher figure and of five rounds were deemed worthy of being represented like a jewel on a precious finger-ring. The same motive frequently recurs engraved on the face of the ear-pendants of idols as well as of priests. It is to be regretted that the large tablets of the Escuela building are partly incrusted by filtration, and that as far as I know no photograph has ever been taken from it. In view of what is left, the tablets mentioned offer material for the study of the Palenque question as rich, and possibly still more interesting, than our Temple of the Sacred Tree.

This much is what I have been able to glean from the tablets as to the information their texts contain.

Final remarks.—Only a few remarks to conclude the subject. The art of picture-writing, doubtless, was only confined to the few, these few belonging to the *gremium* of the Priesthood. The common people seem to have been wisely kept in continuous awe before the sorcery of so much art. To quote one single example for illustration. We read in the Historie of Fernando Colon (Cap. XCI.) that at the landing of his father at Cariai (Nicaragua) he was most amicably met by the natives assembled on the shore. Yet, as soon as they noticed that some clerks, commissioned to take notes, produced paper, inkstand and pen, the people fled frightened in wild consternation, but only to return and blow clouds of incense (in Tzendal= fiecontli, see Dupaix, Exped. III., pollen, hoddentin?) to ward off the writing sorcerers, or *calachuni* (halach= holy, and uinac=men), as later on Hernan Cortes's priests and the Spanish missionaries were called by the Maya speaking tribes. Cogolludo, in Lib. IV. 3, expressly states that the people never used to draw up a document about any civil and social act, as f. e. marriage, sale or loan. All this was done orally before witnesses.

When considering the special occasions on which picture-writing was resorted to, the limits of its employment can be still more closely narrowed. As much as can be culled, for the present, from the inscriptions left, not only from those of Palenque but also from the steles in Quirigua and Copan, shows that the texts bear all the symptoms either of a mortuary epitaph, or those of a shorter inscription graven on some sacred and memorial object. Nothing inconsistent will be found in the solemn attention paid to the memory of the departed. Nor will the appearance of a pure unadulterated picture-writing be found inconsistent with the occasion, when we see it employed on the maguey or parchment pages of the calendars. In the eyes of the people these books were as holy as were to the Hebrews the Sinaitic tablets and the chapters of Leviticus, and this was

also the reason that like the idols the calendars had one day in the year appointed on which they underwent a solemn lustration. (See Landa, page 286.)

When summing up the subject-matter of Part II., it will appear that the fane had been erected in memory of a defunct priest. Traditional usage seems to have made it incumbent on the sacerdotal phratria residing in the monastery of Palenque, to have a large sculptured tableau embedded in the rear wall of the mortuary fanes, and emblazoned with the representation of a sacrifice offered to that god at whose brazier the defunct had been officiating. Of the two tablets flanking this tableau, that on the left hand—as we infer from a like disposition in the other two mortuary fanes—was inscribed with an epitomized record, to state how many priests had deceased since the foundation of the brotherhood. Space did not allow the record of each of the deceased to extend to more than a few squares. Each of these squares, as a rule, had to show: (1) the image of the priest; (2) those sacrificial vessels that he had been appointed to attend to; (3) the images of the respective idols; (4) the gifts offered; and (5) the dates on which the sacrifices were performed. The other tablet, however, was that of the *occasion*. It was devoted exclusively to a full record of the sacerdotal life of the one to whose glorification the mortuary fane had been constructed on the top of the tumulus, and a record as full as the tablet's space and the partition, parallel to its counterpart, allowed. No individual name of any of the persons commemorated in the portraits appears to have been pictorially appended. To infer from certain particularities, the tablets were worked by different hands. On the conception of the sculpture as a whole, on the artistic finish of both the symbolic and the realistic detail, it is not here the place to expatiate. Aside from a certain mannerism, the execution is simply perfect. The chisel did its best work in the column along the back of the Sacrificer. To fix the exact

time of the construction of the fane escapes chronologic determination. Only this may be said, that to judge from some annalistic material extant, the Palenque theocracy may have ruled during an epoch of about 400 years, between 900 and 1300 of our era.

The soil of Palestine, of Assyria, of Babylonia, Egypt, and India, has been upturned, and monumental inscriptions have been gathered by the thousands. None of them shows on its face the chaste and genuine standard of picture-writing. Nevertheless, it has been proved over and over again that the original forms of all kinds of alphabetic letters were derived from pictures taken therefrom.

A curious fact this,—and one which opens a wide field for historic speculation and research,—that one portion of our American continent should have become the custodian of the lost primordial manner of recording.

NOTE BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

It seems due to Dr. Valentini, as an earnest worker in archæological research in America, to show the variety and character of his labors in a field where, as may be learned from a short biographical sketch in our Proceedings of April, 1878, page 108, his long residence in several of the States of Central America gave him a near acquaintance with the subjects of which he treats. For that reason we append a list of some of his essays and the dates of their publication.

1. The Mexican Calendar Stone (with plate of Calendar Stone). (In Proceedings American Antiquarian Society, April, 1878.) pp. 91–110. The same. Reprint. pp. 29. Worcester, 1879.
2. Mexican Copper Tools (with illustrations). (In Proceedings American Antiquarian Society, April, 1879.) pp. 81–112. The same. Reprint. pp. 41. Worcester, 1879.
3. The Katunes of Maya History (with illustrations). (In Proceedings American Antiquarian Society, October, 1879.) pp. 71–117. The same. Reprint. pp. 60. Worcester, 1880.
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