

# THE SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER

*A Weekly Summary of Current Science*

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## ANCIENT MAYAS STUDIED EARTHQUAKES; SOUGHT LAND FREE FROM THEM FOR HOME

Definite proof that the ancient Maya civilization of Yucatan and adjacent regions of Central America originated in an archaic pre-Toltec culture in the Valley of Mexico, is claimed by Dr. Manuel Gamio, who recently returned from an expedition into the highlands of Guatemala, Dr. Gamio, who is one of the foremost archeologists of Mexico and former head of the Mexican Department of Anthropology, was sent into the field by the Archeological Society of Washington.

In a series of excavations in the high plateau region of Guatemala, particularly in the vicinity of the cities of Quiche, Huehuetenango and Quetzaltenango, Dr. Gamio uncovered pottery so similar to the oldest recognized type of similar material of Mexico as to be identical. This type has been found in city ruins underlying an ancient lava flow considered by geologists to be not less than four thousand years old. It has been unearthed especially under the Pedregal lava in the vicinity of Cuicuilco, Valley of Mexico.

Pottery of this type is called the Archaic because it predates and was the origin not only of the Aztec type, but also of the Toltec, which is considered older than the latter, and is supposed to be the oldest grade of culture higher than the neolithic, or stone age development of the North American Indian.

Basing his premise on the generally accepted theory of an Asiatic origin of the American Indian, Dr. Gamio declares the red man did not develop a higher culture until he had migrated, during many years, far to the south. The pueblo culture of the southwestern States was a step in this progress, he believes, though many of the pueblo people remained where their ruins are now found and did not develop much further. Not until the tide of immigration reached Mexico was the stage of culture very high. The route of immigration, according to his theory, was down the Mexican highlands into the mountains and plateaus of what is now Guatemala, thence eastward toward Yucatan and then throughout the peninsula where aboriginal American civilization attained its peak.

From the similarity of forms found in Guatemala, Dr. Gamio presents the theory that some of the Archaic people abandoned central Mexico in search of a region free from earthquakes and volcanic disturbances, such as demolished their more northern cities or buried them under many feet of lava and volcanic dust. He also believes that the Maya and similar cultures are not found south of Guatemala and Honduras because the migrating people found themselves approaching a land of still worse

volcanoes and more frequent earthquakes. That no building ruins are found in seismic regions is believed by the Mexican scientist to be proof that the Mayas purposely never built their great buildings where they knew earthquakes would endanger them.

Having slowly developed to the stage of building in stone, this ancient people moved toward Yucatan and finally to its northern extremity, he declares. Yucatan is free from volcanic and earthquake movements and therefore, Dr. Gamio believes, not only did the ancients migrate there for that reason after a period of development in Guatemala, but their engineering and architectural art was able to reach its high state because of that freedom.

Dr. Gamio also unearthed primitive stone monuments, some plain, some lightly carved, which indicate to him that the ancients, having come from a section where such stelae are not found, developed this art first in Guatemala. The intricately carved stelae or columns of the ruined cities of Yucatan, generally bearing human statues in relief, were an important branch of Maya art. The form and treatment of the early Guatemala stelae, both plain and carved, clearly show they were the first of these monuments, Dr. Gamio claims. The Archaic art of the Valley of Mexico and the finished style of the Mayas are plainly connected through the Archaic of Guatemala, he asserts.

Dr. Gamio's expedition was to decide two theories he had long advocated: that of the migration of the ancestors of the Mayas from central Mexico into Yucatan via Guatemala and the direct connection of the two cultures, and that the Mayas were students of seismic and volcanic action and studiously avoided building stone cities in earthquake sections. He also wished to demonstrate that malaria, which it has been declared was introduced into the New World from the Old, possibly of an Italian origin, existed in the Americas in olden times. He states that he found no malaria in the high regions, but other proof existed of the occurrence here of malaria, and that the Indians have, in the course of untold centuries, become to a great extent immune.

Dr. Gamio published the report of his findings in the Society's journal and also announced a totally new theory bearing on the stratigraphical occurrence of the several archeological types. He divides the cultures into the Classical Archaic, Neo-Archaic, Transitional and developed Maya.

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#### NEW TREATMENT FOR CANCER USES EXTRACT OF LIVER

Liver extract is the latest addition to the long list of weapons with which medical science seeks to stem the rising cancer death rate.

The work with liver extract, which in the United States has been used with some success in treating high blood pressures, was initiated by Dr. John R. Howitt of the medical school at the University of Western Ontario. He based his theory on the fact that since the liver is disproportionately large during embryonic life, when it does not secrete bile, it must have some other function. Its relatively large size suggested that it might exercise some influence on the extraordinary growth that the human body undergoes during the embryonic period. As cancer is a manifestation of abnormal cellular growth, Dr. Howitt decided that the effect of the active principle