

ARCHAEOLOGY

Beginnings of Maya Culture

By E. N. FALLAIZE

Secretary, Royal Anthropological Institute

Recent excavations at Lubaantun in British Honduras have furnished results which make it seem likely that further work on this site may throw light on the obscure question of the origin of the early culture of Central America. As is well known, the culture of Central America when discovered by the Spaniards had reached a comparatively high level. Archæological research has further revealed the fact that the races of Central America, and especially the Maya of Yucatan and Honduras, produced work of high artistic excellence, especially in architecture, stone carving, and fresco painting. But even the so called "Early Maya" culture of Copan and Quirigua has a long history of artistic development behind it. Yet no archæological investigation has succeeded in bringing to light any evidence to show what were the earliest beginnings of this highly developed culture, and the lines upon which it travelled to arrive at the pitch of excellence at which we know it. This is the problem which it is now hoped to solve at Lubaantun.

The recent excavations which make this appear possible were carried out by Capt. T. Athol Joyce of the British Museum, England, in company with Lady Richmond Brown and F. A. Mitchell Hedges, to whom the concession to make excavations was first granted by the Government of British Honduras.

The site of Lubaantun lies on a spur between two converging river valleys which lead down to the Columbia river. The top of the spur was levelled and a number of buildings erected upon it, principally pyramids and mounds intended for religious purposes. The sides of the hill were hollowed out into a series of terraces which were faced with blocks of stone. The earlier terraces were subsequently covered over or refaced by additions of later date. In several respects the remains on the site are unique in Maya archæology, and the site itself is the largest Maya site known, being over 600 feet in length and 500 feet broad.

Four different styles of architecture can be distinguished in the building of the terraces and with one exception their chronological relation can be determined. The

(Just turn the page)

GENERAL SCIENCE

Pres. Noyes on the A.A.A.S.

In response to a request by Science Service, Dr. A. A. Noyes, newly elected president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, has made the following statement.

It seems to me that there are three main directions in which the American Association is making large practical contributions to the "Advancement of Science"—the purpose expressed in its title:

It is popularizing science, by creating better appreciation among the intelligent public of the spirit and methods of science and of the tremendous intellectual and practical importance of extending by research the bounds of knowledge.

It is acting as an agency for the federation and broadening of scientific work, by bringing together, especially at its annual meetings, the various scientific societies and leading scientific men in different fields.

It is directly promoting research, by the formulation and promotion of large projects of investigation, by assistance to and recognition of individual investigators.

The last of these functions the Association shares with other scientific organizations. In connection with the first two of these functions it has, however, a somewhat unique opportunity; and to fuller realization of this its efforts in the next few years should, I think be primarily devoted.

Dr. A. A. Noyes is director of the Gates Chemical Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, a position which he has held since 1920. Previous to that time he had for seven years been in charge of research in chemistry at the same institution. His earlier career had centered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, his first alma mater, and had included a period of two years as its acting president.

Dr. Noyes was born at Newburyport, Mass., in 1866. His education began at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1886 and his master's degree one year later. He went to Germany for his Ph.D., which he received at Leipzig in 1890. He holds honorary degrees from the University of Maine, Clark University, the University of Pittsburgh, Harvard University and Yale University.

A sturdy adjustable platform that can be fitted outside of a window sill makes washing windows a safer job.

Science News-Letter, January 8, 1927

PSYCHOLOGY

Does Sex Sway Thinking?

When you hear the word "party" what do you think of first? This is one of a series of experiments being carried on by Dr. Lewis Terman of Stanford University to determine the degree of masculinity and femininity in the make-up of the personality. To the word "party" the boys were most apt to respond "eat" and the girls "dress." When the word "squeeze" was spoken most of the boys thought first of "lemon" and the girls "love." But for the most part the tests so far given show that traditional ideas on what each sex is interested in and finds attractive are far from accurate. It was hardly expected that girls would excel boys in remembering the number of bones in the body, or that boys would outdo the girls in knowing about the Mona Lisa, but such is the case, Dr. Terman found.

"Very little is known as to the differences between the sexes in abilities and talents and character," he stated. "Literature on feminism sheds more light on sex prejudices than on sex differences. This investigation aims to find out where the differences really lie, and how they may be characterized."

Definite information may settle the old question of whether the extremely masculine type and the clinging vine feminine type really make the best matrimonial combination, Dr. Terman suggested.

Science News-Letter, January 8, 1927

PSYCHOLOGY—PHYSICS

"Blues" Collected by Camera

The white magic by which the modern scientist can make sound waves appear before him and reveal their secrets is described by Dr. Carl E. Seashore, of the University of Iowa. He said that photographic records of the sound waves that make up a song are far more faithful in detail than the message that the song carries even to the most musical ear. Dr. Seashore has a visible record of a negro "blues" song as sung in a cornfield and also an Indian song.

Showing how these marks in black and white reveal much more definite information as to the pitch, vibrato, and other qualities of the singer's voice than phonograph records can record, he declares that no collector of primitive music can now afford to collect with the phonograph alone.

Science News-Letter, January 8, 1927

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The National Museum has been given a collection of 20,000 water beetles.

Emery was used for grinding and polishing in the time of the Pharaohs.

The Gobi Desert of Mongolia abounded in life in earlier geologic times.

Only three cases of yellow fever were reported on this side of the globe last year.

A suspension bridge 250 yards long in China is built entirely of bamboo cables.

There are no public libraries in 1,160 countries in the United States and Canada.

The American bison has a hump on its shoulders, whereas true buffaloes have no hump.

Salt content of the Colorado River is much higher than it was 25 years ago, because of areas now under irrigation.

That typhoid fever is still a strong menace to life is shown by the fact that there were 9,000 more cases in 1925 than in 1924.

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Beginnings of Maya Culture

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earliest consisted of perpendicular buildings with excellently cut and well matched blocks with a regular setback at every few courses. The second is peculiar to Lubaantun, and represents a new phase in American architecture. It is an "in and out" method of building in which each of the second of two courses projects beyond the one below it. The third type consisted of obviously late additions composed of badly cut and ill matched blocks.

In the fourth style, of which the chronological position has yet to be determined, the buildings are composed of huge blocks of stone, so large as almost to justify the term megalithic. They are over five feet long, two feet high and four feet deep. Masonry of this kind has not been discovered hitherto in Central America though it is known in Peru. The position of these megalithic terraces suggests that they are older than two of the "in and out" pyramids, themselves of very high antiquity.

It is noteworthy that throughout the whole district of Lubaantun there is an entire absence of ornamental carving in stone. The pottery and fragments of plaques and figurines, each with a whistle behind, resemble in style the stone carving of such early Maya sites as Copan and Quirigua. But as the pottery from Lubaantun is derived from surface finds, that which will be found in the lower submerged layers may be expected to reveal sensational finds of a culture even earlier than the earliest Maya culture now known.

It would seem that this British Honduras site has revealed a branch of Maya culture with entirely new characteristics. Many of the structures are obviously of very great age, and the extent of these remains shows that not only must a considerable antiquity be allowed for its inception but the quarrying and cutting of the thousands of stones built in the numerous terraces must have been the work of a highly organized population of considerable size whose labors extended over a long period of years.

Science News-Letter, January 8, 1927

A method of measuring the strength of a dose of X-rays has been developed and is expected to eliminate danger of burns from X-ray treatment.