

ARCHAEOLOGY

Jaguar God Was Worshipped In Peru and Central America

Close Similarities in the Monuments of This Cult Point to Contact Between Widely Separated Peoples

GOD was a jaguar to the Maya of Middle America thirteen hundred years ago, and at the same time the Indians of Peru worshipped a jaguar deity. Close similarities in the monuments of this cult in these widely separated places argue a close cultural contact between the two peoples, Dr. Herbert J. Spinden, curator of prehistoric and primitive art at the Brooklyn Museum, told the American Anthropological Association. The worship of a jaguar god seems to have originated in Middle America and spread southward, Dr. Spinden said. In exchange, the South American Indians gave their Mayan religious instructors such cultural elements as metal-working, which they had not had previous to that contact.

Said Dr. Spinden:

"Not only was the prowling beast of the jungle put in charge of the sun, moon and stars while he gradually assumed a human guise as principal deity both for the early Mayas and for the Peruvians of corresponding or slightly later age, but such elements of his regalia as a sun-disk shield with four serpent rays are found on important monuments in the two centers of highest pre-Columbian civilization. So unusual are these ideas of religious symbolism that it is inconceivable that they could have happened twice in an independent yet simultaneous evolution . . .

Concentrated Powers

"Dr. Tello, the Peruvian archaeologist, has demonstrated that Viracocha, the sky god of Peru, is essentially a humanized feline, although his body is enriched by the addition of serpents as well as by elements drawn from birds and other animals, perhaps to indicate that in him are concentrated all the natural powers, exemplified separately by the various creatures of the earth, sea and air."

Other religious symbols, common to the two cultures, attribute to the sky god power over all creatures: fruits attached to his body, and the sun disk

faces with plants between the serpent rays. Very close parallels noted by Dr. Spinden in both Peru and Mexico are the humanization of the centipede, the scorpion, the snail and the owl as warriors, through the device of attaching the animal body to the human body carrying shield and weapons.

"It appears," continued Dr. Spinden, "that subsequent to the penetration of Peru by Maya religious symbolism, which must probably be dated in the fifth and sixth centuries of the Christian era, there was a strong counter-movement which brought metal-working, an art not known to the early Mayas, northward into Central America, while in the twelfth century of our era there was a cultural wave that spread the peculiar war cults of the Toltecs not only southward to Peru and Argentina, but also northward into the area of the moundbuilders of the Mississippi valley, with the ultimate influence reaching almost to the ends of the New World."

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ANTHROPOLOGY

"Browns Valley Man" Much Like Modern Indian

FROM pieces of human bones carefully and eagerly salvaged from a gravel pit in Minnesota last summer, anthropological skill has discovered what an American of 10,000 B.C. or thereabouts looked like.

Prof. A. E. Jenks of the University of Minnesota, who first briefly told of the discovery in August, announced to the American Anthropological Association his conclusions as to the physical traits, the antiquity, and stone weapons of the latest discovered old American, called Browns Valley Man, from the place of discovery.

Browns Valley Man comes to life as a man 25 to 40 years old. If he is a fair sample of Americans of 12,000 years ago, he reveals them as very much like modern Indians. Prof. Jenks pro-

nounces the weapons found with Browns Valley Man to be of the famous Folsom and Yuma types, that is, the sort of weapons used in the days when American hunters followed the mammoth, extinct bison and other long-vanished animals. He is the first representative of that hunting age whose bones have been discovered. Hence, it appears that the mammoth hunters can be imagined as having the general physical type of the North American Indians that we know.

Some unusual characteristics found in the skull were, however, described by Prof. Jenks. The Browns Valley Man had a long skull and short face, a combination of features found in Cro-Magnon Men of Europe's Old Stone Age. Browns Valley Man also had prominent brow ridges, a very wide mandible—lower jaw bone—and wide skull base.

Not So Primitive

This ancient American is much less primitive, Prof. Jenks concludes, than the Ice Age population of Minnesota, known today by the type specimen called "Minnesota Man." The latter skeleton is that of a girl and is estimated to be 20,000 years old.

Prof. Jenks judges that Browns Valley Man lived 8,000 to 12,000 years ago, probably somewhere near the latter figure. This he arrives at by aid of the geologic features of the grave. The bones are partly mineralized, which in Prof. Jenks' opinion, is due to the covering of the grave by the outlet waters of Glacial Lake Agassiz, long ago. Two or three feet of gravel were deposited on the originally shallow grave, it appears, during this submergence.

The tools buried with the ancient American are of mineralized wood, brown in color. Indians are known to have quarried mineralized wood at a pit in North Dakota, Prof. Jenks pointed out, and this may well be the source of the material used by the ancient man of Minnesota.

Transitional

While the artifacts lack the groove down the center, which features the famous Folsom type of weapon used in ancient America, Prof. Jenks believes that they are "transitional from the older ancient Yuma type to the later ancient Folsom type."

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One naturalist has expressed the belief that most of the hickory trees in America were planted by squirrels.