

Maya Life Still Colorful in Yucatan

Anthropology

By EMMA REH STEVENSON

Life still has charm and romance in the land of the Mayas. There is much that has not changed since the days when Bishop Landa tried his hand at converting the Indians four centuries ago and complained that the Indians instead had converted Geronimo Aguilar, the first white man who lived among them. Geronimo, the bishop suspected, had become "as idolatrous as they".

Picturesqueness in the modern Maya village is not destroyed as it so often is in the Mexican villages on the mainland by dirt and misery, for the Yucatecan Indian is a luckier creature. He is cleaner, healthier and richer.

The town of Ticul, a dozen miles or so from the famous ruined city of Uxmal, is an interesting example of what has grown out of four centuries of European civilization implanted in the heart of the greatest prehistoric American civilization.

Ticul was a growing town when the

white man came, as the native will tell the visitor. Today nearly every one who speaks Spanish speaks Maya too, while a large proportion of the people speak the Indian language only. There is no pure white blood left, and native blood far predominates.

In the native sections of the town the Indians still live in their huts of sticks, adobe roofed with fan-palm, much as they did before the Conquest. The most notable change is that they use the hammock, introduced from Santo Domingo, instead of the straw rug or "petate" which they used as a bed before, and hammock-making has become a Yucatecan art.

Their huts are in gardens fenced with limestone walls, rich with orange, banana, palm, papaya and sapote trees. Magenta colored bougainvilleas and fire-red "flamboyans" add startling color to the picture. The handsome Indian or mestiza women with spotless white cotton gowns brilliantly embroidered at neck and hem, walk like barefoot queens through the stony

streets swinging jugs of water or naked babies on their hips. Statuesque women, with white enameled wash-basins full of beans or ground corn dough on their heads stalk out of the spotless market with its crisp green piles of herbs and heaps of seeds and washed vegetables.

Maya potters still ply their ancient trade in Ticul, and the town supplies the surrounding region with earthenware dishes, pitchers and pots. The prehistoric disk or "kabal", which was on the verge of becoming a true potter's wheel, is still used. The potter sits on the dirt floor of his hut turning the "kabal" with his toe and in-step while he gouges out the wet mass of clay as it slowly turns and changes into graceful shapes under his strong fingers. Ticul yards are full of pleasant round shapes drying in the sun waiting for baking day, when they are burned in primitive ovens such as were used before America was discovered.

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Tobacco Ills Discussed

Phytopathology

The ill that tobacco is heir to, taxing growers, manufacturers and smokers alike, occupied a considerable portion of time of the American Phytopathological Society, which at the recent New York meetings celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its foundation.

Dr. W. S. Tisdale of the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station at Quincy, Fla., told of a troublesome disease that has broken out in the tobacco fields of his state, and is thought to occur also in Connecticut, Kentucky and Ohio. It is due to a microorganism known as *Septomyxa affinis*. This germ apparently likes the shaded portions of seeds beds and cool, damp weather, for it is under such circumstances that it does most harm.

Two destructive scourges of Kentucky tobacco fields, angular leaf-spot and blackfire, have hitherto been thought to be two manifestations of the same disease, but Dr. W. D. Valleau of the Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station threw doubt on this assumption. Blackfire now seems to be due to insufficient nitrogen in the soil, and heavy applications of stable manure have been effective in controlling it. Angular leafspot does not respond to this treatment; it apparently traces back to a bacterial cause.

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Stone Age History Being Completed

Archaeology

Stone-age men whose tools resemble those of the famous Cro-Magnon race of Europe, but whose skulls are like those of an early Mediterranean or "modern" race once lived in the caves of Palestine. The first knowledge of these people has been gained during recent months through the work of Miss Dorothy Garrod, a pupil of the famous Abbé Breuil. Miss Garrod's explorations have had the backing of the British School of Archaeology.

The new discoveries fill in a wide gap that hitherto existed between the story of Abraham, who came into the country from the east about 2000 B. C., and the Galilee Skull, which was found in a cave overlooking Lake Genesareth during the 1925-26 season by F. Turville-Petre. This ancient skull, belonging to the well-known primitive Neanderthal race, dates back to at least 20,000 B. C., according to Sir Arthur.

The new finds, which bridge part of this wide gap, all belong to the Old Stone Age. Miss Garrod's first explorations were in a cave on the western slopes of Mt. Ephraim, between Joppa and Jerusalem. In the lowest strata she found bones and implements of the same race as that repre-

sented by the Galilee Skull. In layers of more recent date were the remains of about twenty men, women and children, skeletally "modern", but accompanied by Old Stone Age tools.

Another preliminary exploration was made in a cave on the seaward slopes of Mt. Carmel. This region is riddled with limestone caverns, in one of which the prophet Elijah lived and which have been the abode of religious hermits for many centuries. In one of these abandoned caves Miss Garrod again found tools of Old Stone Age date, though of a more recent culture within that period than that represented by the Mount Ephraim finds.

There still remain to be found relics that will give a view of the New Stone Age, which intervened between the close of the Old Stone Age and the beginning of the Age of Bronze, to which the patriarch Abraham belonged. The Age of Iron in Palestine came in at about the time of Saul, 1200 B. C.

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One reason why the European corn borer is so difficult to exterminate is that it can live on more than 200 different kinds of plants.