

## PAGAN CEREMONIALS SURVIVE IN CENTRAL AMERICAN RELIGION

Some interesting survivals of pagan beliefs in Central America which belong to the days before the Spanish Conquest, but have lasted on under Christianity, have recently been recorded by Dr. S. K. Lothrop, anthropologist, of Boston. Such practices are usually known to anthropologists and historians as "nagualism". The Indians readily adopted the forms of the Christian religion but as the Spanish churches often stood on the sites of heathen temples and native priests frequently secreted images of their gods beneath the Christian altars, a devotee of the Christian religion might still pray to the gods of his ancestors.

The priest-doctor, too, still survives, Dr. Lothrop states. One son of a family in each generation is selected for this purpose, and he performs ceremonies at birth, marriage, in sickness and in death, which appeal directly to the ancient gods.

Up in the hills in isolated spots are found altars dedicated to the ancient gods although the cross shows that the worshippers call themselves Christians. On the altar are strewn leaves and flowers, with rounded pierced stones, ancient club heads, mixed with obsidian axe heads and flake knives. These serve to emphasize continuity with the past. Such an altar was found by Dr. Lothrop a few leagues south of Santo Thoma. Another exactly similar was found by Dr. Gann on his recent journey to Coba. Here there was a cross with the figure of Christ painted on it.

Another survival of the ancient religion found by Dr. Gann at Chemux was the custom of making votive offerings to the Virgin or a saint in the form of models in gold or silver of eyes, legs, arms, and so on, as well as waxen images of pigs and dogs. They were placed there either as offerings to drive away disease or thank-offerings for recovery either of human beings or of cattle.

The custom of making offerings of the part affected either in the hope of recovery or as a thank offering was a widespread custom in ancient Europe. In Egypt it goes back from Roman times to the early dynastic period. Models of limbs and other parts of the body have been found in Naukratis, the Greek city of Egypt, among the debris of a house in which they were manufactured, and they occur in twelfth dynasty buildings at Deir El Bahari. It was a favorite custom of shipwrecked sailors to deposit some memento of their escape in a temple. The Latin poet Horace speaks of a votive tablet and drenched garments suspended in a temple in this way, while another favorite form of offering in the Mediterranean area was the model of a ship. Such models of ships suspended with other objects were still to be seen after the war hanging from the candelabrum in St. Sophia in Constantinople, though it is a Moslem place of worship.

-----

In the northern part of the United States, 90 per cent. of the people's food is made up of five articles: bread and cereals, fats, meat, potatoes, and sugar.

-----