Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, 1883-4, 1884-5

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL MISCELLANEA.

ANNUAL REPORT of the BUREAU of ETHNOLOGY, SMITHSONIAN
INSTITUTION, 1883-4, 1884-5.

The Smithsonian Institution has issued simultaneously the fifth and sixth Annual Reports of the Bureau of Ethnology, bringing the publication up to the year 1885.

It is needless to say that these handsome volumes contain much interesting and important matter. American anthropologists have a wide field, and are not so restricted in means as their English brethren; consequently, their researches are more thorough, and their reports are minute and exhaustive.

In the present volumes we get first, the reports of the director with regard to the work of the year, both in the field and in the office, with the papers illustrating the work of the explorers. Mr. Cyrus Thomas and his assistants have been engaged in exploring the mounds and other ancient works of the United States, east of the Rocky Mountains, and in so doing have made some very interesting discoveries; chief among which may be noticed several plates of copper very thin and evenly wrought, upon which are impressed, as if by machinery, figures bearing a striking resemblance to those found in the Mexican and central American codices. These remarkable works of art were found in what is known as the Etowah group of mounds in Northern Georgia, in which were also found some of those curious engraved shells described and figured in the second volume of the same publication. Of these copper plates the director remarks, "The skill and art manifested in their manufacture are far in advance of anything hitherto discovered appertaining to the mound builders, and raise a serious doubt as to their aboriginal origin," whilst the conditions under which they were found "clearly indicate that they were placed in the mounds when the latter were built, and not subsequently."

The conclusions at which Mr. Thomas arrives in consequence of these and other discoveries are:--

1. That different sections were occupied by different mound building tribes, in much the same stage of culture, but differing in habits and customs.
2. That each tribe adopted several different modes of burial, depending probably upon the social condition, position, and occupation of the deceased.

3. That the custom of removing the flesh from the bones before final burial prevailed extensively, and the bones of the common people were gathered in heaps promiscuously, and a mound raised over them.
4. That, although some religious ceremony took place in which fire played a prominent part, there is no evidence of human sacrifices.
5. That there is nothing to show that the mound builders had attained a higher degree of culture than that of some of the Indian tribes at the first arrival of Europeans.
6. That mounds were erected over the dead in several localities in post Columbian times.
7. That the mound building age could not have continued longer than a thousand years, and hence its commencement probably does not antedate the fifth or sixth century. That nothing has been found to justify the opinion of their great antiquity.
8. That all the mounds examined are to be attributed to the tribes found inhabiting this region and their ancestors.

The director, whilst endorsing the views of Mr. Thomas in most respects, justly points out, with regard to the seventh proposition, that "an attempt to fix the duration or beginning of the mound building period, is unadvisable in the absence of evidence not yet obtained, and which may never be forthcoming."

Although Mr. Thomas believes that the copper plates above referred to, were not the work of pre-Columbian, Indian, or Mexican workmen, the work bearing evidence of having been done with hard metallic tools, he fails to give any European or Asiatic analogues.

It must be observed that these works are found only in Northern Georgia, and in Northern and Southern Illinois.

One very curious discovery made by Mr. Mindeleff whilst excavating a pueblo in Arizona must be noticed.

In a marginal room in the pueblo was found "a circular doorway, made of a single slab of sandstone, pierced by a large round hole."

This would appear to bear a close resemblance to the Cornish Men-au-tol, but, as it is not figured, it is impossible to say more.

The narrative of Mr. Charles C. Royce relating to the Official Relations of the Cherokee Indians with the Colonial and Federal Governments, although containing much important historical matter, illustrated by excellent maps, will not greatly interest English readers, except as illustrating the migrations of a nation in modern times; but the paper called "A Mountain Chant," being a description of a Navajo ceremony, will delight the Anthropologist and Folk-lorist. It would be impossible in this short notice to give any idea of this very long and interesting paper, containing so many descriptions of dances and ceremonies among the Navajo Indians, with the myth from which they originated, and illustrated

by many excellent engravings and coloured plates. The dances appear to be religious medicine dances, undertaken primarily for the healing of the sick and invocation of the gods. The points of resemblance to the Australian corroboree are numerous; the use, also, of that widely distributed instrument, the bull-roarer or groaning stick, which in this case must be made only of the wood of a pine which has been struck by lightning; the painting of the body in black and white, the great plumed arrow, the talking sticks, the plants used, and the songs and incantations, are all of very great interest; and it is not a little curious to find in the myth a story resembling that so frequent in our own fairy tales, in which the hero is invited to eat and drink, but receives a friendly warning not to do so, lest he should turn into some animal and never regain his own form. The four great pictures are remarkable and very instructive as regards the symbolism of the Navajo Indians, which perhaps may help to interpret some of the Mexican paintings. The appearance in one of them of the *swastika* is also of great interest.

The remaining papers in this volume are: one on the Seminole Indians of Florida, by Clay Macaulay, with illustrations representing the people and their costumes, their architecture, industries, &c., all which deserve careful study; and lastly, "The Religious Life of the Zuni child," by Mrs. Tilly E. Stevenson, which may be regarded as supplementary to the papers on the Zunis by Mr. Cushing, which have appeared in former volumes. This paper is also beautifully illustrated in colours, and contains a short account of Zuni mythology, birth customs, and initiation ceremonies.

In the second of these volumes the paper which will be read with the greatest interest is that upon "The Central Eskimo," by Dr. Franz Boas, which, taken in connection with those of Dr. Rink which have appeared in the Journal, may be said to give an exhaustive history of these very interesting people. The plans of houses, the sledges, boats, and weapons, and the tattoo marks of the women, are well illustrated; whilst the social life, the games, the religious and superstitious ideas of the people, are fully described, and the comparisons between the traditions of the Central Eskimo and those of the tribes of Greenland and Alaska are instructive. Dr. Boas also gives a number of Eskimo sketches, and songs with the airs to which they are sung.

The paper by Mr. Holmes on "Ancient Art of the Province of Chiriqui, Columbia," is a very valuable addition to our knowledge of a land and people very little known to Europeans. Several curious problems are presented by the objects found in the graves in this region, which appear to have been made for mortuary purposes, and not to consist, as is usually the case, of articles used by the deceased or his friends. Although they appear to have been skilful metal-workers, and even understood the art of coating copper with a thin plate of gold, they do not seem to have used metal tools. Their pottery was very elegant, resembling in form

the archaic Greek vases, but presenting also many grotesque animal forms, some being painted in geometrical patterns.

Mr. Holmes contributes another interesting paper to this volume on "Textile Art in its relation to the Development of Form and Ornament," well illustrated. Nothing in modern work seems comparable with an ornamental fringed mantle from an ancient Peruvian tomb figured by Mr. Holmes, in which rows of human faces are represented on raised rosettes surrounded by tassels, and terminating in a fringe of various colours, twenty inches deep, composed of tassels of various sizes, all of fine silky wool, and of a rich crimson colour. Mr. Holmes derives the arabesque style of ornamentation from the art of the weaver. How far he has proved his theory, readers of the paper will be able to judge.

The remaining paper on "Aids to the Study of the Maya Codices," by Cyrus Thomas, is one more for the student than for the general reader. If Mr. Thomas can succeed in deciphering the meaning of these Maya hieroglyphs, he will render a service to American archæology which may compare with the work of Egyptologists and readers of cuneiform. His present conclusions are that the Maya characters have grown out of a pictographic system, similar to that common among the Indians of North America.

Undoubtedly the two volumes before us contain an immense amount of information on a variety of topics, and will afford the student much food for thought, and probably not a little controversial matter; but it is in churning the ocean of controversy that Truth comes to the surface.

A. W. BUCKLAND.

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

The Sixtieth Annual Meeting of the Association will be held at Leeds, commencing on September 3rd, when Professor Flower, the President, will be succeeded by the President-elect, Sir Frederick Abel. In Section H, devoted to *Anthropology*, the President will be DR. JOHN EVANS; the Vice-Presidents, Professor Cunningham and Mr. Rudler; and the Secretaries, Mr. Bloxam, Dr. C. M. Chadwick, Dr. Garson, and Mr. Ling Roth. Papers to be read should be sent in not later than August 6th, addressed to "The General Secretaries, British Association, 22, Albemarle Street, W."