

ART. XVII.—*A Notice of some Manuscripts in Central American Languages* ; by DANIEL G. BRINTON, A.M., M.D.

THE natives of Yucatan and most of those who formerly inhabited the provinces of Vera Paz, Chiapas, Guatemala, and Tabasco, spoke closely related languages, the most prominent of which was the Maya, current on the peninsula. Its name has been applied generically to them all, and may thus be understood to include the Maya proper or Yucateca, the Cakchiquel or Guatemalteca, the Quiche or Utlateca, the Tzutuhil or Atiteca, the Zahlopakap, the Pokome, the Tzotzil, the Mam, the Tzendal supposed to be, or most nearly to resemble, the parent stem, and the Huasteca of Tamaulipas which was

shown by the authors of the *Mithridates** to be an offshoot of the Maya. These various dialects resemble each other, both in vocabularies and grammatical forms as closely as the various Romanic tongues of modern Europe.

This linguistic family is of great interest for several reasons. It included the most highly civilized portions of the red race; their ruined cities are among the wonders of the New World; they had elaborated a phonetic alphabet far superior to the picture writing of the Aztecs; they had a body of mythology and poetry of which some very respectable relics still exist; and what of civilization was found in ancient Anahuac is supposed by many to have been inspired by them; moreover there is some philological ground to believe that the Natchez of Louisiana, the most cultivated aboriginal nation north of Mexico, had a large infusion of their blood.

They have deservedly therefore attracted the especial attention of those given to the study of native American languages. Mr. E. G. Squier has published a "Monograph of authors who have written on the languages of Central America, and collected vocabularies or composed works in the native dialects of that country" (New York, 1861); the Abbé E. C. Brasseur de Bourbourg has emphasized their importance and in his "*Collection de documents dans les langues indigènes*" (Paris, 1862-64,) has laid before the world that most interesting Quiche document, the Popol Vuh; Count Francisco Pimentel has treated of them at considerable length in his work on the languages of Mexico; M. H. de Charencey of Caen has inserted several excellent essays upon them in various scientific serials; while Dr. H. Berendt of Tabasco has collected a vast amount of material in the different dialects, which he expects to send to press on his return from the explorations in Central America in which he is now engaged.

In addition to the materials here indicated for a comparative study of this group there are in the library of the American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia, some manuscripts presented by Mariano Galvez, Governor of Guatemala, in 1836. They seem to have escaped the notice of scholars, their very existence there having been entirely unknown even to Mr. Squier, of New York City, although he tells us in the introduction to the above mentioned monograph that he had "given ten years of devotion to Central American subjects;" while not one of them is included in the more recent list of works given by Pimentel,† nor in Ludewig's "Literature of

* *Mithridates oder Allgemeine Sprachenkunde*, Th. III, Abth. III, S. 15, Berlin, 1813.

† *Cuadro Descriptivo de las Lenguas Indigenas de Mexico*, Tom. II, p. 124, Mexico, 1865.

American Aboriginal Languages." Some notice of them therefore will doubtless be welcome to "Americanistes."

The first I shall describe is a work on the Cholti dialect of the Maya by Francisco Moran. It is a small quarto of 92 leaves. The first three pages contain a narrative in Spanish, difficult to decipher, by Thomas Murillo, a layman, touching the missions in 1689-92. Then comes one leaf not numbered, with notes on the verso in Cholti, nearly illegible. On the recto of the fourth leaf,—

Arte || en lengua cholti que quiere || ere decir lengua de mil || peros.
32 pages in a clear hand, ornamented with scroll work and pen sketches of birds and grotesque animals. On page 35,—

Libro de lengua cholti que quiere || decir lengua de milperos.
24 pages in a cramped but legible hand. At the end the colophon,—

F'in del arte q^e trae no. M. R.^{do} P.^e Frai Fran^{co} moran en un libro de quartilla grande alto, que encuaderno i Recogio de nuestros Religiosos i barias cosas [añadió], el R.^{do} P.^e Frai Alonzo de Triana; Requiescant in pace todos. Amen Jesus, Maria Joseph.

A few notes on elegant phrases are added "que mi dio el P. Angel."

This is a duplicate of the preceding *Arte*, differing from it, however, in several particulars, being more full and accurate. They both seem to be copies of the original of Moran, not the one of the other.

After the *Libro* follow eight leaves of questions and answers at the confessional, etc., in Cholti. On p. 77 commences,—

Confessionario en lengua || cholti, escrito en el pue || blo de san lucar salac de || el chol, año de 1685:

three leaves ending with a catchword indicating that it is but a fragment.

The remaining leaves are occupied by a vocabulary, Spanish and Cholti, chiefly on the rectos only. At the commencement is the following marginal note,—

Todo el Vocabulario grande de no. M. R. P.^e fr. fran^{co} moran esta tra Dusido en este libro, Por el ABesentario, i algunos bocablos mas.

The colophon is,—

En este pueblo de lacandones llamado de Nta Señora de los dolores en 24 de Junio dia de S.ⁿ Juan de 1695 años.

We have here therefore two copies of the grammar and one

of the vocabulary of the Dominican missionary Francisco Moran, referred to by Father Francisco Vasquez in his *Cronica* (1714) as written in the characters invented by the Franciscan friar Francisco de la Parra (about 1550) to express the five peculiar consonants of the Maya group of languages. These are modifications of *k*, *p*, *ch*, *t*, and *tz*.* Both these copyists have, however, adopted Roman letters. Neither the original nor any other copies are known to exist, nor any other work in the Cholti dialect, though a certain Father Córdoba also wrote a grammar of it.† It has even been uncertain whether the Cholti was an independent dialect. It is not mentioned at all in Ludewig's "Literature of American Aboriginal languages," and Mr. Squier gives the title of Moran's work from Vasquez thus,—

"Arte de la Lengua Cholti (Chorti?)."‡

The Chorti, however, was spoken in Chiquimula and vicinity, while the Cholti, Chol, or Putum, was the dialect of the village of Belen in Vera Paz, of parts of Chiapas, and generally of the eastern Lacandones among the mountains between the former province and Guatemala. The name *chol* means cornfield, in Mexican Spanish *milpa*, and *acholob* or *cholti* owners or cultivators of cornfields, *milperos*. From the short vocabulary of Chorti collected by Mr. Stevens at Zacapa it appears to be farther than the Cholti from pure Maya.

The grammar of Moran is succinct, clear, and comprehensive, and eminently deserves publication, together with selections from the vocabulary. I have made a careful copy of it for my own use and have found it of great service as illustrating certain points of growth in these idioms, for instance with reference to the development of the personal pronouns, recently discussed in a scholarly essay by M. de Charencey;§ and affording some additional illustration of the "vowel echo," *l'echo vocalique* of the Maya dialects, to which the same writer has called attention as analogous to the law of the harmonic sequence of vowels common in Scythian languages.||

The remaining manuscripts are in the Cakchiquel dialect, at one time and even yet much spoken and studied in Guatemala, and hence called Guatemalteca.

* I have also noticed the occasional use in these manuscripts of a peculiar vowel sound represented by an *i* with a diacritical mark beneath it.

† Pimentel. *Cuadro Descriptivo de las Lenguas Indígenas de México*, T. II, p. 234. Córdoba is not mentioned by Mr. Squier.

‡ *Monograph of Authors*, etc., p. 38.

§ *Le pronom personnel dans les idiomes de la famille Tapachulane-Huastèque*: Caen, 1868.

|| *Etude comparative sur les langues de la famille Maya-Quiché*, *Revue Américaine*, Tom. I.

Calepino || en lengua cakchi || quel por Fray Francis || co de Varea hijo de || esta S. Provincia del || SS. nombre de Jesus || de Religiosos de || N. P. S. Francisco de Goatema || la.

A small 4to, one unnumbered leaf, 227 leaves paged, 11 unnumbered leaves of additions. Colophon at foot of page 453,—

Acabase de escrevir y trasladar este vocabulario yo fray franc^{co} ceron, siendo guardian aunque sine meritis deste convento de S. Pedro de la laguna, oy dia catorse de enero del año del Señor de mil seyscientos y noventa y nueve, dia del Dulcissimo nombre de Jesus Patron de nuestra S. Prov^a de Gua.^{ta} y en el tercer año del Provincialato de N. M. R. P. fr. Juan Bautista.

The title is on the recto of the second leaf. On the recto of the first leaf is the form of absolution in Latin and Cakchiquel; on the verso a note dated 1732 to the effect that the owner, a priest, received this volume in payment for masses for the soul of its previous possessor, a certain Señor Achutegui.

The dictionary is Cakchiquel and Spanish, written closely but legibly, with 35 lines to a page and averaging about four lines of examples to each word. An abundance of phrases and forms are given, but the alphabetical order is not strictly preserved. The characters of Parra are used throughout.

No author of the name of Varea is mentioned by Mr. Squier. But Francisco *Varela* is said to have gone to Guatemala in 1596 and to have composed a "Calepino" in 400 pages folio.* No doubt this is the same person, and unless the original still exists in the convent of San Francisco de Guatemala, this is probably the only monument of his labor extant.

The next manuscript is a large folio, bound like the preceding in parchment, of 476 leaves numbered on the recto. The title is,—

Vocabulario || De la Lengua cakchiquel, v, Guatimalteca || Nu- euamente hecho y recopilado con summo estudio || trauajo y eru- dicion por el P.^e F. Thomas Coto. Pre || dicador y Padre de esta Prouj.^a de el S.S.^{mo} Nõbre || de Jesus de Guatimala. En que se contienen || todos los modos y frases elegantes conque los || Natu- rales la hablan y d. q. se pueden valer || los Ministros estudiosos para su mejor || educacion y enseñanza.

This dictionary is a splendid testimonial to the zeal and scholarship of the Franciscan missionaries. The pages are large, with double columns, 37 lines to a page, written quite distinctly though here and there the ink has faded so that it is difficult to read. The first 15 pages are handsomely written

* Monograph, etc., p. 47.

in imitation of printed letters. The characters of Parra are adopted for the five peculiar sounds. Unfortunately the copy is incomplete, ending with the word *vendible*. As it is exclusively Spanish and Cakchiquel, it complements the Cakchiquel and Spanish *Calepino* of Varea.

It should be observed that the letter C is wrongly bound so that the latter part of it comes first, and several other letters do not seem to have been finished. This copy appears to date from early in the last century and is unique so far as I know. Coto was a native of Guatemala and lived in the latter part of the 17th century. Mr. Squier gives under his name only one title; "Thesaurus Verborum; ó Frases y Elegancias de la Lengua de Guatemala;" which probably is the same work as the above. It is peculiarly valuable not only for the linguistic material it contains, but for the light it throws on numerous customs of the natives, on the botany and zoology of the country, and for its quotations of manuscript works in Cakchiquel. Coto's principal authorities are Father Francisco Maldonado's sermons in that tongue, those of Father Antonio Saz (*de san Joachim, de la visitacion, de la asuncion, de la concepcion, manual en la lengua* and others, none of them mentioned by Mr. Squier or Pimentel,) Father Domingo Vico, bishop of Chiapas, and the "*calepino*" of Varea.

Under many words quite a description is given of this or that usage. For instance, under the word *baile*, native dance, which I choose having in mind the remarks on it made by the Abbé Bresseur de Bourbourg in his introduction to the Quiche drama of Rabinal Achi,* he remarks that they are of many kinds; that for instance which represents Noah coming out of the ark is called *avatal*; that in which they whirl a stick with their feet, *vugh*; that only engaged in by lovers *xgul*; that in which they played on their flutes of hollow reeds, *lotz tun*; this latter, he adds, was prohibited by Bishop Uguarié on the representations of Antonio Prieto de Villegas, commissary of the holy office, a learned man, thoroughly versed in Quiché, and for twenty years incumbent of the benefice of Matzatenango; it was also prohibited by the diocesan constitution in 1690; several other *bailes* are also described.

Under the word *luna* he mentions that these Central American nations partook of a singular belief which we find very widely spread on the American continent. It was that an eclipse was caused by some animal eating the moon, and to drive it away accordingly they broke their jars, shouted, whipped their dogs, and made all the noise possible. They likewise attributed to this orb a malignant influence and supposed

* *Collection de Documents dans les Langues Indigènes*, vol. II.

her to be the cause of disease, a belief extremely common among the illiterate everywhere.

The fourth manuscript is a large folio of 77 leaves not numbered, written in Cakchiquel in ordinary characters. On the recto of the second leaf is the following title,—

Arte pronunciacion y ortographia de la lengua en el mismo idioma || Cakchiquel.

On the fourth line of the verso of the same leaf,—

RAMILLETE, Manual para los Yndios sobre || la Doctrina Christiana || por fray francisco Maldonado minorita, || Sub Censura sante Romane ecclesie Dialogo primo.

This “nosegay” or anthology consists of twelve dialogues on the confession, creed, sacraments, good works, etc., between a priest and his catechumen. After the twelfth dialogue there is an addition of nine leaves in Cakchiquel with the following title,—

Esta explica || cion de la Doctrina Christiana || va con el mesmo testo de la cartilla inpresa el Año || de mill y quinientas y cinquenta y seys por explicar los || terminos que los Yndios Saben mal entendidos, por tuvien || do el mismo authorre fformado la dicha Cartilla por man || dado de ill.^{mo} Señor Don fray juan çapata y Sanctoval || obispo de guatemala, se puso aqui en la misma forma || que la Conrregie para que sirva de brevi.^{ssa} exposicion A || la antigua sub cenSura Sanct || te Romane eccle || ssie.

At the close is a table of contents followed by this colophon in Cakchiquel :

Chupam 6 de Julio huna 1748 año mixgizvi vugibaxie vae vutz libro Ramillete Manual tihobal quichin Yndios chupam vutzilz Dios Doctrina Christiana yn Seuastian lopez tzarin vae ueva voch-Sancta Maria Asumpcion tecpanatitan de tzolala.

Then follow two leaves in Cakchiquel headed :

A la emperatrix a la vergen Maria Señora Nra su humilde esclavo.

From this evidence we learn that this is a copy made in 1748 by Sebastian Lopez at Solola on Lake Atitan of two works, the older printed in 1556, author not given, the other by Francisco Maldonado. The former must be the “Doctrina Cristiana en Lengua Utlateca” or Quiche, published at Mexico in that year, whose author, Fray Francisco Marroquin died in 1563. It is true that this was said to be in Quiche,* and that Zapata y Sandoval was not a bishop until 1613.† But as I have

* Fr. Pedro de Betanzos who died in 1570, published a “Doctrina en Lengua de Guatemala” also at Mexico, year unknown. If this should prove to have appeared in 1563 also, one of the difficulties would be surmounted.

† Squier, *Monograph*, p. 52.

never seen a copy of Marroquin's *Doctrina*, I am unable to reconcile these discrepancies.

The *Dialogos* is a work hitherto unknown of Maldonado, one of the most learned of the Franciscan missionaries. He lived in the latter half of the 17th century. The only one of his productions given by Mr. Squier is "Sermones y Panegiricos en Lengua Cakchiquelche," which is that also chiefly referred to by Father Coto in his dictionary.

The next work is a small quarto of 109 leaves. Unfortunately the first leaf, with the general title, is missing. The top of the second leaf commences in the midst of a sentence in a *Doctrina Christiana* in Cakchiquel. This covers ten leaves, and is followed by two leaves of "Preguntas de la Doctrina," all in Cakchiquel. Next comes a "Confessionario breve en lengua Cakchiquel." The Spanish translation of each question and answer is also given.

After the Confessionario are three leaves, unnumbered and blank, except that on the recto of the second is a Latin Prayer to the Virgin, difficult to decipher.

On the recto of the next leaf is the following,—

Arte || de la lengua cak || chiquel.

It is written in a clear small hand, covers fifty-four pages with 30 lines on an average to the page, sometimes with one column, sometimes with two, and closes with this colophon,—

Martes ã 24 de Junio de 1692 años dia del Nacimiento de S. Juan Baptista se acavo el traslado de oraçiones y Arte en Kakchiquel.

From the close of this to the 96th leaf there is another series of doctrinal questions headed,—

Vae *Kutubal Khabal ti* || *Kut ubex richin Christianos* || cakchiquel *Khabal ri* || chin cakchiquel vinak.

(I designate the peculiar modification of the consonants by italics.)

Another "Confessionario breve en lengua castellana y cakchiquel" then follows, twelve pages in length, differing considerably from the previous one. The rest of the volume is taken up with "Platicas," short discourses on religious subjects. One of them is an incident from the life of Saint Vincent Ferrer, related for the purpose of "terrifying the natives, and dispelling the shame they usually have about confessing." There is an index to the book, and on the verso of the last leaf this note in regard to the binding,—"Este quaderno es de Fr. Alberto Miguez;" said "quaderno" being in dark calf, without boards, and with strings. The characters of Parra are

employed in all the divisions of the work, and the writing is mostly quite legible.

There is no hint throughout where this was written, nor by whom. The colophon above quoted seems to show that it is the original, at least of the *Arte* and the prayers. From the mention of Saint Vincent Ferrer, a Dominican, and from the known rivalry of the two orders at that time in Central America, I am inclined to attribute it to a Dominican rather than a Franciscan. None of the bibliographical authorities already quoted mention any writer of either order who prepared works of this kind in Cakchiquel at or very near 1692. The manuscript proceedings of the Philosophical Society for Sept. 1836, when the books were received, throw no light on the matter.

The linguistic value of the *Arte* is considerable. Only two grammatical notices of the language seem to have been published, one about 1560 in Mexico, another in 1753, in Guatemala. Both of them are excessively rare, and indeed it is doubtful if any copy of the first is in existence. The Cakchiquel is peculiarly important in the comparative study of this group of languages, and with the rich materials here at hand to illustrate all its constructions, a publication of this short manuscript with notes would be most welcome to American linguists.

In concluding this brief notice of these interesting documents I wish to express my acknowledgments to Prof. J. P. Lesley, librarian, and Mr. Eli K. Price, member of the Philosophical Society, for facilities afforded me in examining its library.