

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF  
NATURAL HISTORY. ANCIENT  
CIVILIZATIONS OF MEXICO  
AND CENTRAL AMERICA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649053018

American Museum of Natural History. Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America by  
Herbert J. Spinden

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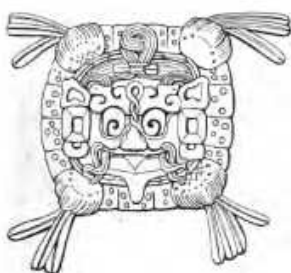


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AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS  
OF  
MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA



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FORMERLY ASSISTANT CURATOR, DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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HANDBOOK SERIES No. 3

SECOND AND REVISED EDITION

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NEW YORK  
1922

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## PREFACE

**T**HIS little book is intended as a general commentary and explanation of the more important phases of the ancient life and arts of the Indians of Mexico and Central America, and especially of their history. The substance of it is drawn from many sources, for the anthropologist must mould together and harmonize the gross results of several sciences. Archæology, ethnology, somatology, and linguistics all make their special contributions and we are only on the threshold of our subject. In the Mexican and Central American field we find the accumulated writings that result from four hundred years of European contact with the Indians and in addition a mass of native documents and monumental inscriptions expressed in several hieroglyphic systems.

The general method of this book will be to take up in order the recognized "horizons" of pre-Columbian history, beginning with the earliest of which we have knowledge. In relation to each horizon we will examine the records and discuss the principal developments in arts, beliefs, and social structures. The introductory chapter is designed to put before the reader such facts as may be necessary for a ready understanding of the discussions and explanations that will follow.

The Mexican Hall of the American Museum of Natural History furnishes illustrations of most of the facts given herewith. This Hall contains both originals and casts brought together by various expeditions of the Museum and of other scientific institutions. The principal patrons of science whose names should be mentioned in connection with the upbuilding of these collections are: Willard Brown, Austin Corbin, R. P. Doremus, Anson W. Hard, Archer M. Huntington,

Morris K. Jesup, James H. Jones, Minor C. Keith, the Duke de Loubat, William Mack, Henry Marquand, Dr. William Pepper, A. D. Straus, I. McI. Strong, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Henry Villard, William C. Whitney. But thanks are also due to innumerable persons who have contributed single specimens and small collections as well as those who have placed information at the disposal of the scientific staff. The principal collectors have been: George Byron Gordon, Aleš Hrdlička, Carl Lumholtz, Francis C. Nicholas, Marshall H. Saville, Eduard Seler, Herbert J. Spinden, and John L. Stephens.



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