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# AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST

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## CONTENTS OF VOLUME 13

### ARTICLES

|  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Huron Moose Hair Embroidery. F. G. SPECK. (Plates I-III) . . .   | 1    |
| Some Aspects of Nootka Language and Culture. EDWARD SAPIR. . .   | 15   |
| An Ancient Sepulcher at Placeres del Oro, State of Guerrero, Mexico.<br>H. J. SPINDEN. (Plates IV-VI) . . . . .                                      | 29   |
| Bulu Knowledge of the Gorilla and Chimpanzee. ALBERT ERNEST<br>JENKS. . . . .  | 56   |
| A Petroglyph from Eastern Massachusetts. HARRIS HAWTHORNE<br>WILDER. (Plate VII) . . . . .   | 65   |
| Menominee Tales. TRUMAN MICHELSON . . . . .  | 68   |
| The Present State of our Knowledge Concerning the Three Linguistic<br>Stocks of the Region of Tierra del Fuego. ALEXANDER F.<br>CHAMBERLAIN. . . . . | 89   |
| Anthropology at the Providence Meeting, with Proceedings of the<br>American Anthropological Association for 1910. GEORGE<br>GRANT MACCURDY. . . . .  | 99   |
| A New Conception of Totemism. ROBERT H. LOWIE. . . . .   | 189  |
| Notes on the Material Culture of the Huron. F. G. SPECK.<br>(Plates VIII-XI) . . . . .   | 208  |
| The Four Seasons of the Mexican Ritual of Infancy. STANSBURY<br>HAGAR. . . . .   | 229  |
| New England Names. DAVID I. BUSHNELL. . . . .  | 235  |
| Aboriginal Remains in the Champlain Valley (Second Paper). G. H.<br>PERKINS. (Plates XII-XVII) . . . . .   | 239  |
| The Problem of Noun Incorporation in American Languages.<br>EDWARD SAPIR. . . . .  | 250  |
| Additional Notes on Iroquois Silversmithing. ARTHUR C. PARKER  | 283  |
| Native Account of the Meeting between La Perouse and the Tlingit.<br>G. T. EMMONS . . . . .  | 294  |
| War Customs of the Menomini Indians. ALANSON SKINNER. . . . .  | 299  |
| Proceedings of the Anthropological Society of Washington. . . . .  | 313  |
| Notes on the Kado or Sun Dance of the Kiowa. HUGH LENOX<br>SCOTT. (Plates XVIII-XXV) . . . . .   | 345  |
| Phonetics of the Micronesian Language of the Marshall Islands.<br>A. L. KROEBER. (Plates XXV-XXVIII) . . . . .                                       | 380  |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Professor Boas' New Theory of the Form of the Head--A Critical Contribution to School Anthropology. PAUL R. RADOSAVLJEVICH.....  | 394 |
| Description of a Winnebago Funeral. OLIVER LAMERE and PAUL RADIN.....  | 437 |
| Archeological Evidence as Determined by Method and Selection. HARLAN I. SMITH.....   | 445 |
| Philippine Literature. FRANK R. BLAKE.....   | 449 |
| On the Puelchean and Tsonekan (Tehuelchean), the Atacameñan (Atacaman) and Chonoan, and the Charruan Linguistic Stocks of South America. ALEXANDER F. CHAMBERLAIN..... | 458 |
| The Genesis of the Maya Arch. EDWARD H. THOMPSON. (Plate XXX).....   | 501 |
| Some Aspects of Winnebago Archeology. PAUL RADIN.....  | 517 |
| The Ruins of Tuloom. GEORGE P. HOWE.....   | 539 |
| A Comparative Sketch of the Menomini. ALANSON SKINNER.....   | 551 |
| Certain Earthworks of Eastern Massachusetts. CHARLES C. WILLOUGHBY.....  | 566 |
| Incorporation as a Linguistic Process. A. L. KROEBER.....  | 577 |
| A New Feature in the Archeology of the Missouri Valley in North Dakota. GEORGE F. WILL.....  | 585 |
| Exogamy and Totemism Defined: a Rejoinder. A. A. GOLDENWEISER.....   | 589 |

## BOOK REVIEWS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| LÉVY-BRUHL: Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures ( <i>Goldenweiser</i> ).....           | 121 |
| ROUTLEDGE: With a Prehistoric People: the Akikúyu of British East Africa ( <i>Lowie</i> ).....          | 130 |
| PARKER: Iroquois Uses of Maize and Other Food Plants ( <i>Speck</i> )..                                 | 135 |
| SELIGMANN (with a chapter by F. R. Barton): The Melanesians of British New Guinea ( <i>Jenks</i> )..... | 136 |
| BINGHAM: A Gilbertese-English Dictionary ( <i>Dixon</i> ).....  | 138 |
| BROWN: Melanesians and Polynesians ( <i>Dixon</i> ).....  | 139 |
| DIXON: The Chimariko Indians and Language ( <i>Sapir</i> ).....   | 141 |
| LE ROY: La Religion des Primitifs ( <i>Starr</i> ).....   | 144 |
| THONNER: Im Afrikanischen Urwald and Von Kongo zum Ubangi ( <i>Starr</i> ).....                         | 146 |
| VAN OVERBERGH: Les Warega ( <i>Starr</i> ).....   | 148 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| LEÓN: La Obstetricia en México. Notas Bibliográficas, Etnicas, Históricas, Documentarias y Críticas, de los orígenes históricas hasta el año 1910 ( <i>Chamberlain</i> ).....   | 149 |
| BEAN: The Racial Anatomy of the Philippine Islanders, introducing New Methods of Anthropology and showing their Application to the Filipinos, with a Classification of Human Ears and a Scheme for the Heredity of Anatomical Characters in Man ( <i>Chamberlain</i> )..... | 150 |
| STARR: Philippine Studies. I. A Little Book of Filipino Riddles ( <i>Chamberlain</i> ).....   | 152 |
| MOOREHEAD: The Stone Age in North America ( <i>Bushnell</i> ).....  | 153 |
| FISHBERG: The Jews: a Study of Race and Environment ( <i>Hrdlička</i> ).....  | 320 |
| JOHNSON: The Prehistoric Period in South Africa ( <i>MacCurdy</i> ).....  | 322 |
| UHLENBECK: Geslachts—en Persoonsnamen der Peigans ( <i>Lowie</i> )..  | 324 |
| UHLENBECK: Original Blackfoot Texts ( <i>Michelson</i> ).....   | 326 |
| ROTH: Some Technological Notes from the Pomeroun District, British Guiana ( <i>Hough</i> ).....   | 330 |
| SARG: Die Australischen Bumerangs im Städtischen Völkermuseum ( <i>Hough</i> ).....   | 330 |
| DILLENIUS: El Hueso Parietal bajo la influencia de la deformación fronto-occipital; contribución al estudio somático de los antiguos Calchaquíes ( <i>ten Kate</i> ).....   | 331 |
| HADDON: Cat's Cradles from Many Lands ( <i>Boas</i> ).....  | 334 |
| CONANT: The RGH Law in Philippine Languages ( <i>Blake</i> ).....   | 472 |
| MARKHAM: The Incas of Peru ( <i>Farabee</i> ).....  | 473 |
| TORDAY and JOYCE: Notes Ethnographiques sur les peuples communément appelés Bakuba ainsi que sur les peuplades apparentees.—Les Bushongo ( <i>Boas</i> ).....   | 478 |
| TREMEARNE: The Niger and the West Sudan: the West African's Note-Book ( <i>Starr</i> ).....   | 480 |
| DENNETT: Nigerian Studies; or the Religious and Political System of the Yoruba ( <i>Starr</i> ).....  | 481 |
| Collection de Monographies Ethnographiques. VI. Les Kuku (VANDEN PLASS). VII. Les Ababua (HALKIN and VIAENE). VIII. Les Mandja (GAUD and OVERBERGH) ( <i>Starr</i> ).....   | 483 |
| HARTLAND: Primitive Paternity, the Myth of Supernatural Birth in relation to the History of the Family ( <i>Goldenweiser</i> ).....   | 598 |
| SMITH: The Prehistoric Ethnology of a Kentucky Site ( <i>Mills</i> ).....   | 606 |
| RUTOT: Le Préhistorique dans l'Europe Centrale ( <i>MacCurdy</i> ).....   | 607 |
| CURTIS: The North American Indian (volumes VI, VII, and VIII) ( <i>Farabee</i> ).....   | 609 |

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| BUDGE: Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection ( <i>Casanowicz</i> ).....                             | 615                |
| The Encyclopedia Britannica ( <i>Wallis</i> ).....   | 617                |
| JEVONS: The Idea of God in Early Religions ( <i>Wallis</i> ).....                                  | 620                |
| WATERHOUSE: Modern Theories of Religion ( <i>Wallis</i> ).....                                     | 621                |
| AVEBURY: The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition<br>of Man ( <i>Lowie</i> ).....    | 623                |
| Some New Publications.....   | 155, 335, 486, 623 |
| Bibliography of Periodical Literature: Compiled by <i>Alexander F.</i><br><i>Chamberlain</i> ..... | 625                |

#### ANTHROPOLOGIC MISCELLANEA

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| David Boyle, 159. A Key to the Navaho Orthography Employed by<br>the Franciscan Fathers, 164. The Numerals "Two" and "Three"<br>in Certain Languages of the Southwest, 167. Activities of the<br>Anthropological Department of the Field Museum of Natural<br>History, 168. Fate of the New York State Collections in Archeology<br>and Ethnology in the Capitol Fire, 169. On the Future of the<br>Independent Mode in Fox, 171. A Rare Missouri Flint, 172.<br>Edward Palmer, 173. The Origin of the Names Ute and Paiute,<br>173. Minor Notes, 174-180. Annual Meeting of the American<br>Anthropological Association, 337. Kalamazoo, 337. Note on the<br>Gentes of the Ottawa, 338. On the Etymology of the Natick Word<br>Kompau, 'He stands erect,' 339. The School of American Ar-<br>chæology, 339. Minor notes, 340-344. The Stone Collars and Three-<br>pointed Stones of the West Indies (Plate XXIX), 489. Mr Bushnell's<br>Review of "The Stone Age," 494. Anthropological Work under the<br>Canadian Government, 496. The Museum of Anthropology of the<br>University of California, 498. Minor notes, 499-500. Mr Warren<br>K. Moorehead and "The Stone Age in North America," 722.<br>Some Shoshonean Etymologies, 724. A Tentative List of the<br>Hispanized Chumashan Place-Names of San Luis Obispo, Santa<br>Barbara, and Ventura Counties, California, 725. Minor notes,<br>726-731. |     |
| Officers and Members of the American Anthropological Association,  | 181 |
| Index to Authors and Titles.....   | 732 |

# American Anthropologist

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## THE GENESIS OF THE MAYA ARCH

BY EDWARD H. THOMPSON

UNTIL now, it has been the generally accepted belief among archeologists that the entire plan of the ancient stone structures of Yucatan was developed elsewhere, that in some unknown region the evolution of this structural type had been carried out until perfected, crystallized as it were, before the first stone structure was built on the peninsula of Yucatan. I find no evidence to maintain this belief, while I do find much, and, to me, conclusive evidence of a very typical process of development from the *ná* or the native palm-thatched hut of Yucatan, to the magnificent structures of stone and lime that crowned the terraced levels in these ancient centers of population on the peninsula. I regard, not the stone structures, but the little known and still less studied *ná* as the primitive, the unchanged and unchanging type structure. As it is today so it was in all essentials before the stones were quarried, the lime burned, or the flints chipped, that helped to make the first stone structure on the peninsula of Yucatan. I claim that the *ná* is the germ unit of the edifice chambers, and the edifice simply a collection of *nás* expressed in stone and mortar. While my examples are specific, the claim covers and the facts hold good generally all over the Maya area. Wherever this race of ancient builders, now called the Mayas, held sway, there the *ná* with its environmental changes became the type unit. I shall seek to prove these basic facts with few words but many examples.

Commencing, as we logically must, at the very foundations, I