RELIGIOUS ANCIENT AND MODERN. THE MYTHOLOGIES OF ANCIENT MEXICO AND PERU

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649654369

Religious Ancient and Modern. The Mythologies of Ancient Mexico and Peru by Lewis Spence

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LEWIS SPENCE

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THE MYTHOLOGIES OF ANCIENT MEXICO AND PERU

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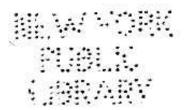
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THE MYTHOLOGIES OF ANCIENT MEXICO AND PERU

By LEWIS SPENCE



ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE & CO Ltd

1907

Checked May 1917

FOREWORD

IT is difficult to understand the neglect into which the study of the Mexican and Peruvian mythologies has fallen. A zealous host of interpreters are engaged in the elucidation of the mythologies of Egypt and Assyria, but, if a few enthusiasts in the United States of America be excepted, the mythologies of the ancient West have no following whatsoever. That this little book may lead many to a fuller examination of those profoundly interesting faiths is the earnest hope of one in whose judgment they are second in importance to no other mythological system. By a comparative study of the American mythologies the student of other systems will reap his reward in the shape of many a parallel and many an elucidation which otherwise would escape his notice; whilst the general reader will introduce himself into a sphere of the most fascinating interest—the interest in the attitude towards the eternal verities of the peoples of a new and isolated world. L. S. .

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THE MYTHOLOGIES OF ANCIENT MEXICO AND PERU

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF AMERICAN RELIGIONS

THE question of the origin of the religions of ancient Mexico and Peru is unalterably associated with that of the origin of the native races of America themselves—not that the two questions admit of simultaneous settlement, but that in order to prove the indigenous nature of the American mythologies it is necessary to show the extreme improbability of Asiatic or European influence upon them, and therefore of relatively late foreign immigration into the Western Hemisphere. As regards the vexed question of the origin of the American races it has been thought best to relegate all proof of a purely speculative or legendary character to a chapter at the end of the book, and for the present to deal with data concerning the trustworthiness of which there is little division of opinion.

MYTHOLOGIES OF MEXICO AND PERU

The controversy as to the manner in which the American continent was first peopled is as old as its discovery. For four hundred years historians and antiquarians have disputed as to what race should have the honour of first colonising the New World. To nearly every nation ancient and modern has been credited the glory of peopling the two Americas; and it is only within comparatively recent years that any reasonable theory has been advanced in connection with the subject. It is now generally admitted that the peopling of the American continent must have taken place at a period little distant to the original settlement of man in Europe. The geological epoch generally assumed for the human settlement of America is the Pleistocene (Quaternary) in some of its interglacial conditions; that is, in some of the recurrent periods of mildness during the Great Ice Age. There is, however, a possibility that the continent may have been peopled in Tertiary times. The first inhabitants were, however, not of the Red Man type.

Difficult as is this question, an even more difficult one has to be faced when we come to consider the affinities of the races from whom the Red Man is descended. It must be remembered that at this early epoch in the history of man-