

LX. PREHISTORIC MIGRATIONS.

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The questions as to whence came progenitors of the native American race, as to whether they were Asiatics, who had found their way across Behring Strait to Alaska and thence spread southward and eastward across North America and eventually along the narrow confines of the Isthmus of Panama to South America, and as to the possibility of their having been the survivals of a lost Atlantis or of some other supposedly submerged continent, have been often asked and never answered conclusively. Moreover, it is extremely doubtful if such queries ever can be answered in a way that will be conclusive or satisfactory. Be all that as it may, however, it is not less interesting or less important to gain a definite knowledge concerning the development of racial divisions and subdivisions, the cultural differentiation of the same, with the causes and influences which made for cultural development or deterioration in certain known instances and the migrations, voluntary or involuntary, which must have taken place from time to time during the prehistoric period. So, disclaiming any disposition to take part in the controversy as to whether the first human inhabitants of America were of Asiatic, Atlantean or autochthonous origin, it is the purpose of this paper to present a few salient facts concerning the cultural origin, relationships and migrations of the peoples who were inhabiting the eastern half of the United States at the time of the establishment of the first white settlements on the Atlantic Coast.

The culture of any band, tribe or stock of native American people would naturally fall under one of three classes, namely (1) those of local development, (2) those of exotic development, or (3) those of exotic origin, modified by environment or local influences. That the culture of most of the peoples inhabiting the eastern half of the United States and eastern Canada, three hundred years ago, would fall in the last of these three classifications seems reasonably probable. Granted that a given culture was of exotic origin, it is not difficult to account for modifications, due to differences of climate, soil and vegetation, contact with and influence of other cultures, etc.

Who brought these cultures hither? Whence did they come, and why? In part, at least, these questions may be answered by asking others: On what part of the continent did an indigenous

population become sufficiently dense to make possible the development of a high degree of culture? Whence came the maize, or Indian corn, the pumpkin, the squash, the melon, the bean and other vegetable products which were cultivated by aboriginal inhabitants of the valleys of the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence and the Atlantic Coast country? Few, if any, of these seem to have been developed from plants which were indigenous to the temperate zone. Neither is there in temperate North America any evidence of a racial swarming ground, such as the Aryan race is believed to have had on the Hindu Kush Plateau, in Central race, and such as it most certainly has had around the Lower Baltic within the historic period.

It has been suggested that the Mound Builders and other forbears of the aboriginal inhabitants of eastern United States and Canada at the beginning of the historic period may have been Cliff Dwellers who migrated eastward from the arid Southwest. Opposed to such a theory is not only the utter dissimilarity of culture in arts and crafts but also the further fact that it seems highly probable that the vague and uncertain line which separates Arid America from the humid region east of the Great Plains has also marked a permanent boundary between two divisions of the native American race. It is certain that, south of the Platte River, this line was never crossed by emigrants from either section and also that, north of that stream, it was only crossed under pressure from east to west. It has been recently suggested that the mounds were really built by local tribes of Indians acting under the instigation of traders from the Maya country, in Central America, who it is claimed may have come north in quest of copper, mica, pearls, etc., and that it was through the exercise of magic art, or by working on their credulity and superstition, that the indigenous Indians submitted to and obeyed the behests of such traders. Yet no one who has personal knowledge of the descendants of such Indians of eastern United States can be convinced that they could have been thus exploited. Thus, by the process of elimination, we must turn to the subtropical or the tropical regions of North America if we are to find the real swarming ground, where the production of food, in vast quantities, on relatively limited areas of land and at such reasonable economic cost as to make possible (1) the sustenance of a dense population, (2) the development of a high degree of culture and (3) mass movement migrations.

The natural conditions thus prescribed as having been requisite for such developments may be found in Central America. A fertile soil, combined with a humid climate, from which there were

more or less continuous harvests throughout the year, rendered that region one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world. The evidences of a dense population are not lacking. Likewise, the ruins of ancient cities, with palaces and temples and pyramids, with marvels of architecture and sculpture and other forms of artistic development, bear witness of an advanced stage of culture which was largely if not entirely of local origin and growth.

With a dense population, naturally, it must have been but a question of time until there should have been manifested feelings of unrest. These might have been due (1) to a real or prospective shortage of food as the result of overcrowding population, or (2) to political discontent, or (3) there might even have been efforts to find an outlet or a lessening of congested conditions by attempts at imperial colonization. In any event, there is not only a possibility but a probability that there were extensive migrations. Whether these all fared forth in the same direction or otherwise is, of course, conjectural. Being tillers of the soil and living in a humid region, where there was always an abundance of rainfall, such emigrants very naturally felt no disposition to seek to effect a new settlement in a region of arid lands or one that was likely to be deficient in moisture during the crop growing season. That pioneers or scouts may have been sent ahead to spy out the land and return with reports concerning the same, would not seem to be at all improbable. What would have been more natural, then, than that such an exodus should have followed a course leading northward along the narrow coastal plain of the Gulf of Mexico? At no point would such a course have been far from an arid region, at least, not until after crossing the Rio Grande and inclining the direction of the migratory advance toward the northeast.

There is also at least the possibility that some of these migrations may have been made wholly or in part by means of large canoes, in which the Gulf Coast could have been skirted to the northward, beaching the craft for encampment at nightfall. By resorting to such a means of travel it would have been possible to obviate much of the opposition which otherwise might have been encountered. It also might well have been that such a method not only made it practicable to carry more property in the way of weapons, supplies, etc., but even to advance for some distance into the interior by navigating the Mississippi or some of the other navigable rivers of the adjacent region.

In eastern Oklahoma, this writer has personally excavated the

remains of two prehistoric cultures, each distinct from the other, both of exotic origin, and both giving evidences of kinship with the cultures of the tropical end of the continent. Among other vestigia are implements and ornaments of copper and ornaments of pearl and turquoise, as well as of polished stone. Other investigators have made similiar finds in the states bordering on the Mississippi, throughout the greater part of the Ohio Valley and elsewhere. In many instances, however, items which might have been recognized and identified as having a more or less direct bearing on the subject of prehistoric migrations and the introduction of exotic culture have been merely regarded as peculiar phases of local cultural development. Without attempting to cite any of the numerous instances which might be mentioned as giving evidence of the presence of the culture of the tropical swarming ground, hitherto overlooked, it will suffice for the present purpose to refer to recent discoveries in two widely separated localities, namely, those of Director Warren K. Moorehead in the Etowah Mound, near Cartersville, Georgia, and those of Prof. Harry C. Shetrone and Director William C. Mills in the Pricer Mound, near Bainbridge, Ohio, in both of which instances these widely known investigators secured indubitable evidences of cultural kinship with the Maya civilization of Central America.

Since the culture of the tropical swarming ground was developed by a people whose sustenance was gained by the tillage of the soil, it certainly follows that emigrant off-shoots were primarily in quest of corn lands whereon the cereals and vegetables, upon which they had chiefly depended for subsistence, could be readily produced. Hence, it is not at all unlikely that the discovery and working of copper mines, mica quarries, pearl fisheries, oyster beds, etc., were wholly incidental to this primary and more important purpose in migrating. Moreover, in entering a country which literally teemed with wild life, it was not strange that, as they became more scattered, they should have tended to revert to the more primitive habits and customs, devoting an increasing portion of their time and energy to hunting and fishing and attaching proportionately less importance to soil tillage and crop production, though never entirely discontinuing the same in the region under consideration. The cultural deterioration attendant upon such a change of habits was quite pronounced and, though gradual, undoubtedly showed great changes within the span of a few centuries.

It is conceivable that the people of any one of these extensive migrations might have been the parent stock of one of the linguistic

families into which the native American race of eastern United States is naturally divided. There were five of these which occupied extensive ranges between the Great Plains and the Atlantic Coast, namely, Algonquin, Iroquoian, Siouan, Mobilian or Muskogean and Caddoan. The parent stocks of these, respectively, probably migrated northward in the order named and there is at least a possibility that the first of these had been preceded by Shoshonean and Athapascan peoples. That the Caddoan people had been the last to arrive north of the Rio Grande, there can be no question. That the Caddoan migration had been preceded not more than a century or two by that of the Mobilian or Muskogean peoples is not improbable, since the migration legend is still current in several of the tribes of the latter.

That the Algonquian, Iroquoian and Siouan immigrants were mound builders, is readily proven. It may well be doubted whether the mounds were built by the voluntary effort of a free people, monuments of such magnitude in all ages and in various parts of the world almost without exception representing the handiwork of peoples who labored unwillingly and under compulsion. It would therefore seem evident that either the invading immigrants must have conquered peoples of a more primitive type whom they found already in possession of the country and reduced them to a state of servitude, or else that they came as imperial colonists, divided into two classes, namely, soldiers and serfs. That such an invading force, however superior in arms, culture and organization, could have subjugated any tribe or tribes of the native American race, which had previously experienced the freedom of the forest and field, and reduced the same to a state of servitude seems almost incredible though, of course, not impossible.

Opposed to any theory which would ascribe a common swarming ground or place of origin for the progenitors of each of the five big linguistic families of eastern United States and Canada is the apparent lack of anything approaching a kinship of language between them and also certain wide divergencies in physical type. Yet it is not difficult to account for such differentiation if it be assumed that each of these several invasions resulted in the subjugation and assimilation of one or more tribes and bands of indigenous people, each of which was possessed of its own distinct language or dialect and its own physical types. Instances wherein the vanquished have imposed their language upon the victors are by no means unknown elsewhere in the world. Moreover, if the invaders were mound builders, their oppressive tendencies must

have been such as to greatly reduce the proportion of men among the conquered peoples, so it would follow that the process of amalgamation would be practically completed within the brief period of a single generation. In such event, the language of the children would most assuredly be largely if not entirely that of their mothers, regardless of that which might have been spoken by the alien fathers. Of course, if but a single tribe had been subjugated, its language formed almost the sole basis of the speech of the ensuing generation. On the other hand, if two or more tribes or bands had been subjugated the result would be the compounding of a new language in which that of the invading conquerors would be much better represented, though doubtless also differentiated, as in the separate dialects of the Upper and Lower Cherokee, or the more marked distinction between the Muskogee tongue as compared with that of the Chickasaw and Choctaw. So, too, the blending of hitherto unlike stocks might as easily account for new variations in physical type, appearance and disposition.

The theory that the numerous evidences of Central American culture in the eastern portions of the United States and Canada might have been due to commercial penetration and its resultant influence upon the indigenous tribes has opposed to it the tenacious conservatism of the native American people that, as a rule, has ever strongly resisted cultural encroachment, for, beyond those things which would aid them in the continuance of their primitive habits, they had small desire to imitate or emulate the arts or customs of any other people whatsoever. So strong has been this propensity on the part of the people of most of the tribes and stocks that, only by long association or forcible imposition, have the Indians been reconciled to adopt for themselves the culture of any other people as a whole.

If two centuries of first-hand contact with and exploitation by such an institution as the Hudson's Bay Company has left people of the native American race still primitive in many of their habits and customs, it would seem to be very improbable that the cultural influence of transient traders from Central America, in the pre-historic period, could have had a very profound or lasting cultural effect upon the same sort of people in the valleys of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers or elsewhere in the states east of the Mississippi.

The chronology of the several migrations would necessarily be a matter of conjecture. The arrival of the Caddoan peoples probably did not antedate the beginning of the Twelfth Century and, indeed, it is possible that its occurrence might have been a

century of two later. Of the five big migrations, the earliest probably did not take place more than twelve or fourteen centuries ago. In other words, the Migration-Mound Builder Era in pre-historic North America must have been nearly contemporaneous with the Middle Ages in Europe.

If this hypothesis be well founded, then the nearer the tracks of these several migrations converge in the approach to the ancient swarming ground, the more convincing the evidence that should be unearthed. Hence it should follow that systematic concerted and co-ordinated effort on the part of the agencies and institutions concerned in archaeological research, in Arkansas, eastern Oklahoma, Louisiana and Texas, should reasonably be expected to throw a flood of new light upon the story of the native American race before its first contact with the exploring and colorizing Aryan.