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The Anthon Transcript and the Maya Glyphs

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Abstract: A. Hiatt Verrill's work, *Old Civilizations of the New World*, reproduces an "inscription found at Sahhuayacu, Peru" that closely approximates "the script of the Anthon Transcript." Argues that the Mayan people did not progress from pictographs to a linear script, but possessed a linear, semicursive script from its early history.

The Anthon Transcript and the Maya Glyphs

by Ariel L. Crowley

MORE THAN a century ago the Book of Mormon revealed to men that the developed, reformed Egyptian system of writing was carried to America by the Israelitish house of Lehi.

More than a century ago the form of that writing was set down for the use of the learned by an exemplar now known as the Anthon Transcript.

The script of the Anthon Transcript dates to a period anterior to 600 B.C., and represents a stage of Egyptian writing which is far advanced from the stage of pictorial representations of early Egypt.

In the experience of men there is a virtually universal history of development of writing by drawing pictures. In his *Conquest of Civilization*, Dr. James Henry Breasted illustrated the point by saying that "a farmer, for example, might want to know how much he paid as taxes. He might scratch a crude picture of his basket grain measure and a number of strokes on the mud wall of his hut, to indicate the number of grain measures he had paid. The use of these pictorial symbols was the earliest step leading toward writing."

In accordance with this fundamental concept, and with rare exceptions, scholars who have turned their minds to the consideration of the enigmas of the Maya glyphs have regarded them as ideographic or, as Dr. Sylvanus Morley said in *The Ancient Maya*, (2nd ed. p. 260), only one step removed from pictorial representations.

The Book of Mormon and the Anthon Transcript point to a fundamental error in this current concept of the Mayan writings, indicating that the glyphs are not the pictographs of a people just learning to write, nor ideograms drawn from pictographs, but on the contrary, are elaborations and conventionalizations of a simpler,

dominantly linear script, of a semi-cursive character.

As a matter of logic, if the ancestors of the Mayas were Book of Mormon people, whose system of writing in remote times was that of the Book of Mormon as now illustrated in the Anthon Transcript, then the Book of Mormon script is, in high probability, directly or indirectly, the prototype of the Maya glyphs.

Little could be expected from the short text of the Anthon Transcript by way of aid in deciphering the Maya inscriptions, it being no easier to read than the other. But the very existence of a potential prototype, pointing to a reversal of the process of refining pictographs into an alphabetic system, and indicating that the Maya glyphs are in fact, growths, additions to, or elaborations and conventionalizations of that prototype, is

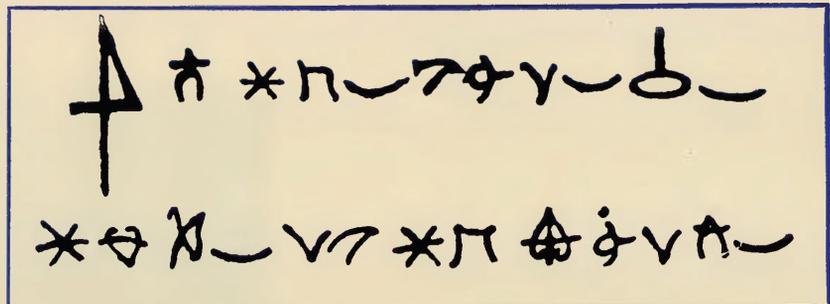


Fig. 1. The pre-Incan inscription found at Sahuayacu, Peru, closely approximating the script of the Anthon Transcript.

of immense importance as a guide to inquiry.

As Dr. Morley says in the work cited (p. 260), "The earliest Maya text does not reach back even as far as the beginning of the Christian era." Yet the Maya inscriptions are wonderfully intricate, filled with amazing and confusing detail and variety, evidencing the highest skill in execution. It appears that for perfection of detail they might have sprung in full dress and maturity from the fertile brain of some Mayan

genius. There is a total absence in known Mayan history of the millennium after millennium of progress from pictorial to ideographic, to phonetic, syllabic, and alphabetic which characterized Egyptian writing.

The minds of learned men have not been idle in the effort to solve the Mayan puzzle thus presented.

Dr. A. Hiatt Verrill, in *Old Civilizations of the New World*, suggested the existence of an early, well-developed cursive script and re-produced (p. 313) in evidence, the pre-Incan inscription found at Sahuayacu, Peru, closely approximating the script of the Anthon Transcript. (See figure one.)

It was Dr. Verrill, also, who first brought personally to the attention of the author the linear script adduced, photographed, and published by the German Scientific Society of Santiago, in its report for 1889 (Book 2, p. 35) which is set forth in figure two.

The most casual comparison of the foregoing inscription with the Anthon Transcript cannot fail to evoke comment upon their similarities.

In more recent times, a long stride forward has been taken by Dr. Rafael Larco Hoyle in his two excellent studies, *La Escritura Mochica Sobre Pallares* (*Revista Geografica Americana*, Ano IX, Vol. XVIII, August

1942), and *La Escritura Peruana Sobre Pallares* (*Revista Geografica Americana*, Ano XI, Vol. XX, November 1943 and December 1943).

In the latter study (p. 32) Dr. Hoyle not only suggests that the Maya glyphs are elaborations of an ancient simple, linear, and semi-cursive script, but by an effort only less than herculean, he has succeeded in extracting from the pallares inscriptions, as the immediate prototypes of the Mayan glyphs, the essential strokes and curves consti-

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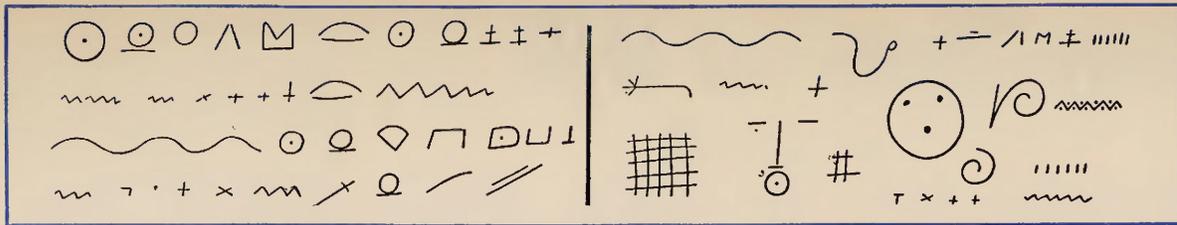


Fig. 2. Linear script published by the German Scientific Society.

tuting the basic script upon which the elaborations were made.

The illustration, in figure three, containing as it does, numerous forms indistinguishable from forms appearing in the Anthon Transcript, speaks for itself.

Dr. Hoyle does not say, nor is it here contended, that the sure and only key to the Maya glyphs lies in the fundamental linear and semi-cursive script so developed. But with characteristic caution, he does suggest that "if there exists any connection between the two systems (the pallares and Mayan) the Mayan writing is the third step in the evolution of the American writing, and the transition from ideograms to the hieroglyphic."

If Dr. Hoyle's suggestion is correct, a simple, linear, semi-cursive script was the beginning; in America, the pallares inscriptions were the first elaboration, and the Mayan inscriptions were the third, or last elaboration, retaining in each instance, beneath the conventionalizations, the fundamentals of the linear system.

But we have pointed out that within the limits of present knowledge, men have never begun with a well-developed cursive script, nor in any other way than by picture writing. (Morley, *The Ancient Maya*, p. 259.) It follows necessarily that somewhere in antiquity, before Columbus, before the Mayas, before the Incas, before the Aztecs, before the pallares inscriptions of Peru, there was a source,

whence came this highly developed cursive script.

The Book of Mormon, illustrated by the Anthon Transcript, stands alone, a lighthouse in the darkness proclaiming that source to be in Egypt, and explaining the means by which that ancient, sacred script came ultimately into these alien lands.

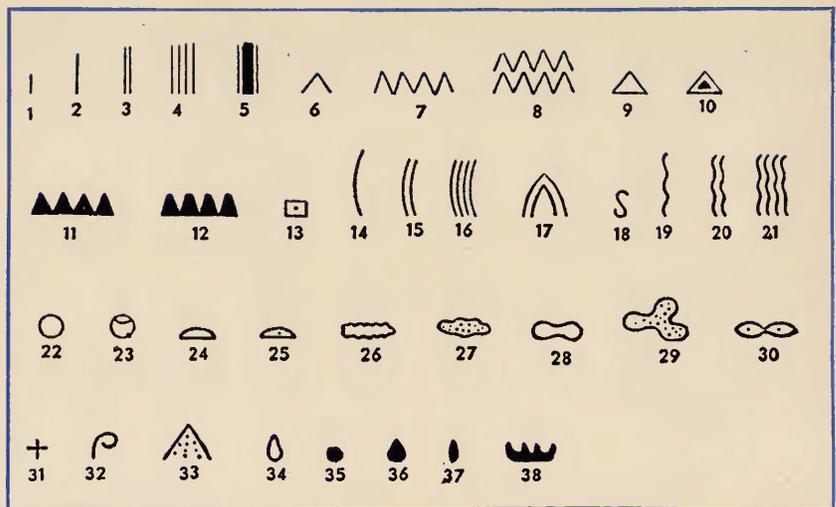


Fig. 3. The essential strokes and curves constituting the basic script upon which the Mayan glyphs may have been made.

Obedience

by Evelyn W. Viner

ONE OFTEN hears the complaint that young people are not as obedient as they were in previous generations. If this is true, there must be a reason for it. Can it be that we, as parents, are partly responsible?

On a warm, sunny, Sunday afternoon not long ago, some friends called on an elderly woman. They invited her to join them in some Sunday recreation. Their invitation was declined with thanks.

"The Church does not approve of doing that on Sunday," she explained in refusing, "and I wish to live in accordance with Church ideals."

"Oh, yes," chattered one member of the party brightly, "the Church has been talking about that ever since I was a child, but I *still* can't see any sense in it."

We are not told that Abraham questioned the sense of the Lord's commandment when he was required to sacrifice his beloved son. He prepared to obey with implicit faith in the ultimate good, obtainable through obedience.

If, when Adam was commanded to offer sacrifice, he asked "Why?" no record remains of that occurrence. We have no reason to doubt that his obedience was immediate and unquestioning.

We have never received any revelation, ancient or modern, to indicate that obedience is no longer necessary to our happiness and salvation.

If we believe in our Church, as we testify by belonging to it; we believe that the instructions which are given us from time-to-time through proper authority express the will of the Lord.

Who of us is wise enough to question the wisdom of God? Our very ability to choose a course of action is a gift from our Heavenly Father. Do we then dare to say one of his commandments lacks sense?

If we question the advice given by the inspired servants of the Lord, how can our children be expected to accept our advice and obey our commandments? Will they not also question us and perhaps decide that there is "no sense" in what we say? If we are willing to obey the Lord in all things, perhaps our children will be more willing to obey us.