



Type: Magazine Article

Old America - Ancient Peru (Continued) (2)

Author(s): G.M. Ottinger

Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 10, No. 25 (11 December 1875), pp. 290–291

Published by: George Q. Cannon & Sons

Abstract: Series of articles dealing with archaeological, anthropological, geographical, societal, religious, and historical aspects of ancient America and their connections to the Book of Mormon, which is the key to understanding “old American” studies.

Old America.

BY G. M. O.

ANCIENT PERU.

(Continued.)

A CLASS of men, called Amautas, was trained to preserve and teach whatever knowledge existed in the country. They understood, and it was their business to keep, the "quip-pus." This was made of cords of wool, twisted and fastened to a base, prepared for the purpose. These cords were of various sizes and colors, every size and color having its peculiar meaning. The record was kept or made by means of an elaborate system of knots and intertwinings. So carefully educated in the business of using and understanding these singular records were the Amautas, that those skilled in it attained the art of recording laws, decrees and historical events to transmit to their descendants, and thus the "quippus" could supply the place of documents. The Amautas committed to memory and transmitted to posterity historical poems, narratives and songs. Tragedies and comedies were also preserved in this way. They were also required to give their attention to the science of medicine and train pupils in knowledge. They were not priests but the learned men of the country, and the government allowed them every facility for study and for communicating instruction.

Although it was believed until within a few years that the art of writing was unknown to the Peruvians, Humboldt mentions books of hieroglyphical writing found among the Panoes on the river Ucayali, which were "bundles of their paper resembling our volumes in quarto." A Franciscan missionary found an old man sitting at the foot of a palm tree and reading one of these books to several young persons. The Franciscan was told that the writing "contained hidden things which no stranger ought to know." It was seen that the pages of the book were "covered with figures of men, animals and isolated characters, deemed hieroglyphical, and arranged in lines with order and symmetry." The Panoes said these books "were transmitted to them by their ancestors, and had relation to wanderings and ancient wars." There is similar writing on a prepared llama skin found among other antiquities on a peninsula in Lake Titicaca, which is now in the museum at La Paz, Bolivia. It appears to be a record of atrocities perpetrated by the Spaniards at the time of the conquest, and shows that some of the Aymaraes could at that time write in hieroglyphics (Baldwin, *Ancient America*, 256). A paper, called "quellea," for writing, was known and could be made by the people. Montesinos says writing and books were common in the "olden times," meaning in ages previous to the Incas. How the art was lost he explains in his history of the country, from which we will quote hereafter. Baldwin says, "It is not improbable that a kind of hieroglyphical writing existed in some of the Peruvian communities, especially among the Aymaraes."

The Peruvian system of government deserves particular attention. It was a paternal government, carried to its utmost limits, acquiesced in and approved by the people, and meeting apparently all their wants. From generation to generation the whole mass of commonality was shut out from any possibility of change; in every privilege and employment of life stringent and immutable rules and laws controlled and guided them. The whole empire was minutely divided and

subdivided into districts, according to the population. Over each department a "euraca," or governor enforced the law. The state prescribed every man's place of residence, the nature and amount of his employment and the provision necessary for his support. The government claimed the entire ownership of the soil, the products of which were divided into three parts. The first was set apart to support the extensive system of religion; the second to sustain the royal court and furnish means for the construction of all public works and to defray the current expenses of the empire; the third was divided yearly among the people, apportionment being made to each family according to its numbers. The public domains were cultivated by the mass, and vigilant care was taken by the officers that no one should be idle, no one overworked and no one in a state of suffering from want. No man had the right to choose his own employment. Artisans were selected and set apart, and instructed in such mechanical sciences as were then known to the country. While the greater part of the population was engaged in agricultural labors, others were employed upon works of public utility. Most exact accounts were kept by officers of the entire population, and the resources of the empire. No birth, marriage, or death passed unrecorded. Thus every year an immense amount of statistical matter was accumulated, relative to the productions of the soil, the extent of the manufactures, and the condition of the people. Every person was required to marry at a certain age (twenty-four in males, eighteen in females). A certain degree of choice was left to the individual when selecting a partner, but it was to be confined within the limits of a specified district. The Inca always married his sister, that the purity of the royal blood might not be contaminated; but such a connection was forbidden between any of the lower ranks. An extensive militia system was enforced, and in time of war troops were drafted from the different districts, regard being had to the hardihood and energy in making the selection. The youth of the nobility and especially the presumptive heir to the throne, were instructed in the art of war, going through a routine of bodily exercise and trials of endurance. Axes, lances, darts, bows and arrows and slings formed the principal weapons, and quilted coats to ward off arrows and sword thrusts, with helmets of skins and wood were worn by the soldiers. Great roads led along the mountain ridges, or along the plain near the sea-coast. One of these roads has been traced for nearly two thousand miles. Stations for couriers were built at regular intervals along the main routes, by means of which light burdens and messages could be conveyed with astonishing celerity to any required distance. Granaries and storehouses, filled with supplies for the army, stood at convenient intervals, under care of appointed officers.

A strange but sagacious policy was adopted with a conquered nation. The worship of the sun was immediately introduced; all the laws of the Peruvian empire were enforced and its customs established; to lighten the yoke, the privileges as well as the duties of a subject were extended to the conquered people. It was not uncommon to retain the former nobles and governors in office, and the same paternal care was adopted in the interests of the whole populace. Yet no steps were omitted to completely demoralize the newly acquired country. Large colonies of Peruvians were transplanted from their own country to the new, and their places supplied by a corresponding number whose habitations they occupied. The Peruvian language was every where introduced, and in a few years a complete assimilation was accomplished. The people were contented with their lot and honored their priest and ruler with the utmost reverence. "No man could be rich, no man could be poor," says Prescott. "In Peru all might enjoy and did enjoy

a competence. Ambition, avarice, the love of change, the morbid spirit of discontent, those passions which most agitate the minds of men, found no place in the bosom of the Peruvian. * * * He moved on in the same unbroken circle in which his fathers had moved before him and in which his children were to follow." The people thus lived in peace and quietness, contented with the government and the institutions under whose influence they lived, and by whose care the competencies of life were secured and guaranteed unto them.

The only beast of burden in Peru was the llama, the vast herds of this animal being, without exception, the property of the state. The wool furnished material for clothing the whole population, passing through the hands, during its various preparations, of appointed agents before being distributed among the private families. The manufacture of cloth was especially the work of women and children.

Unlike the Aztecs, no religion requiring the blood of human victims polluted the altars of their temples. Being worshipers of the sun they offered at his shrine but fruits and flowers that his rays had propagated.

(To be Continued.)

"G I L."

A RAGGED, sad-eyed boy, aged nine or ten, stopped me on the street the other day and said:

"I haven't had anything to eat this whole day! Won't you please give me ten cents?"

I gave it to him. I'd have given him the money if it had been necessary to pawn my hat.

"Do you let impostors swindle you in that manner?" inquired an acquaintance.

A journalist who has knocked around for a daily paper a dozen years, has seen every phase of human life. Men, women, and children have swindled him, or sought to; people have lied to him; his money has been given to whining, lying vagrants who told dreadful tales of distress, and he ought to be able to correctly read human nature.

"I'll bet that boy is a professional beggar," continued my friend, chuckling at the idea of my being swindled.

No one cares for the loss of a shiplaster on the street, while every one feels vexed and annoyed at the idea of being swindled out of a single penny. I could not say that the boy was not a swindler, and yet I would have divided my last shilling with him.

"Why?"

I told my friend why, and I will tell you.

One day last year, when the wild wind blew the snow over the house-roofs and around the corners in blinding clouds, and when the frosty air cut one's face like a knife, a boy of ten came up to me as I waited for the car. He was thinly clad, his face betrayed hunger and suffering, and in a mournful voice he pleaded:

"I'm hungry and cold!"

"Why don't you go home?" I asked.

"I haven't any!"

"Haven't you any relatives!"

"Not one."

"How long have you been here?"

"Three weeks."

The boy spoke in that drawl which professional beggars assume. I believed, too, that I had seen his face on the streets time and again. I hardened my heart and said:

"Boy: I know you, and if I catch you asking any one for money again, I'll have you arrested!"

He moved away quickly. I argued that this proved his guilt, forgetting that a homeless, friendless waif might evince fear when entirely innocent.

Five hours later, when night had come, and the wind had grown to a fierce gale, the boy halted me again as I plunged through the snow-drifts. I did not see him until he called out:

"Mister! I'm almost starved, and I'll freeze to death if I can't get some place to sleep!"

The same thin, ragged clothes—hardly comfortable for June weather—the same whine to his voice. I felt like giving him money, but the fear that he had been sent out by his parents to beg restrained and angered me. Catching him by the arm, I yelled out:

"See here, boy! if you don't own up that you are lying to me, I'll take you to the station!"

Through the blinding storm I saw his white face grow paler, and he cried back:

"Don't take me—don't! Yes, I was lying!"

I released him and he hurried away, while I walked on, flattering myself that I had played a sharp game and done the generous public a good turn.

An hour later when the night had grown still wilder and colder, some one knocked at my door. It was a timid knock, and I wondered who could have sent a child abroad on such a night. When I opened the door that same boy was on the step, his face blue with cold, his whole form shivering, and a look of desperation in his eyes.

"Please, Mister——!" he began, but stopped when recognizing me.

I was puzzled to know why he had selected me for a victim and trailed me so persistently. I might have argued that the storm had driven people off the streets, and that the freezing, starving boy had in his desperation called at the house, but I didn't. Had it been any other person or any other boy asking charity I would have given promptly and freely. But I was angry at his trailing me—angered that he thought he could swindle me, and I grabbed at him and inquired:

"Boy, what is your name?"

He leaped back, and, standing where the furious storm almost buried him from sight, he answered:

"Gil!"

"I know you, sir!" I shouted, and he moved away without another word.

May the Lord forgive me for that night's work! But you might have acted the same. When morning came, after a night so bitter that policemen were frozen on their beats, I opened the front door to find the boy dead on the steps, frozen to death! I knew, as the dead white face looked up at me through the snow, that I had wronged him with my suspicions, but it was too late then. Poor Gil! a warm meal or a shilling would have saved his life, and I drove him out to his death.

This is why I give when I am asked now. I know that I sometimes give to the unworthy, but it would be better to give all I possessed to an impostor than to have another homeless waif creep back to die on the spot where I had unjustly accused him.—*M. Quaid in Hearth and Home.*

We learn our virtues from the bosom friend who loves us; our faults from the enemy who hates us. We cannot easily discover our real form from a friend. He is a mirror, on which the warmth of our breath impedes the clearness of the reflection.