

American-European affairs volumes II-V of *Wilson* will long be indispensable.

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BACKGROUND

La Clave de los glifos mayas. By WOLFGANG CORDAN. Mérida, 1964. Universidad de Yucatán. Pp. 67. Paper.

Prehistoric Maya Settlements in the Belize Valley. By GORDON R. WILLEY, WILLIAM R. BULLARD, JR., JOHN B. GLASS, and JAMES C. GIFFORD. Cambridge, Mass., 1965. Harvard University. Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. Vol. LIV. Illustrations. Maps. Charts. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 589.

These two works represent two very different approaches to the problems of Maya research. The short book of Wolfgang Cordan further describes a new, personal interpretation of Maya hieroglyphs, claiming the discovery of the "key" to this difficult subject. The longer work of Willey, Bullard, Glass, and Gifford is a cooperative enterprise, the detailed report of archaeological discoveries in British Honduras extending over ten years, with a far more substantial content but making more modest claims. One represents the "breakthrough" theory of scientific advance. The other depends upon systematic accumulations of data and their cautious evaluation.

Cordan postulates an original Macro-Maya language consisting of monosyllables in the form of two consonants separated by a vowel. Survivals or derivations of these are given in modern Maya and related languages. Going back much farther in time, he identifies a common ancestral language for Maya and Chinese, the validity of which he argues in terms of word parallels between the two languages. Maya writing in his system is phonetic, with the omission of the second of the two consonants. The main portion of the book is an enumeration of glyphic elements with new interpretations based on these postulates, in some instances differing sharply from earlier readings. Cordan is making his system known only by degrees (this is his sixth short work on the subject since 1962), and it will presumably receive its test in the actual translation of Maya glyphic writing. In the present book he speaks with much certainty and conviction, but the application of this "key" and the demonstration of how much it will unlock lie in the future.

Prehistoric Maya Settlements in the Belize Valley reports on a series of archaeological finds made by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. The report is oriented about the problems of settlement patterns: the form and function of buildings, the relation of buildings to one another, the composition of villages and towns, the relation of buildings and building clusters to terrain, and the groupings of towns within regions. The main work was conducted along the Belize River in British Honduras, an area of numerous ceremonial centers and house-mound groups. Temple mounds, palace platforms, ball courts, and house mounds stretch out along the river. Detailed investigation was made at the Barton Ramie site, an "arbitrarily defined segment of the continuum of settlement," with 262 mounds of which 65 were excavated. The excavations allow for a reconstruction of some eight chronological periods, beginning with small agricultural hamlets and changing about 100 B.C. into the continuous strip of settlements with much larger population. This population was the one that built the ceremonial centers. Firm connections are made with other Maya sites. After about 600 A.D. the population appears to have reached the limits of food supply, but building and other activity underwent a period of renewed intensity before abating near the end of the Late Classic period. The alluvial plain was the preferred living location. Older house sites were on the middle and upper terraces. Much evidence supports the conclusion that the small mounds were for residential houses. In the most populous period they occurred at a frequency of about one hundred per square kilometer. The book is a model of modern archaeological reporting, and its final pages (561-581) contain an excellent nontechnical summary of the subject.

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Süd-und Mittelamerika I. Die Indianerkulturen Altamerikas und die Spanisch Portugiesische Kolonialherrschaft. By RICHARD KONETZKE. Frankfurt am Main, 1965. Fischer Bücherei KG. Fischer Weltgeschichte. Vol. 22. Maps. Illustrations. Notes. Index. Pp. 390. Paper.

With this book Professor Konetzke wins an honored place for the history of South and Central America under Iberian rule among the volumes of world history which make up the Fischer Series. In the modest dress of a paperback, this volume contains the best summary picture of the colonial era of Latin America as it is now viewed by historians. No other book of similar scope adds to a general presentation