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## Mexican Resemblances in the Southeastern Area of the United States

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mounds and their exact locations. Such a map is the first step in scientific investigation, and it is of value otherwise.

The map has been produced by Mr. Rogers Johnson, engineer and surveyor of St. Augustine, formerly on the staff of Carnegie Institution of Washington, who has had much experience in mapping archeological areas. In addition, Mr. Johnson is giving us a tracing from which blueprints can be made, and has generously offered to give us a hachure map of the same area which will show the locations of mounds, trails, and structures, without the contour lines.

The budget for this project, amounting to \$125 has been made possible through Contributing Memberships designated for this purpose.

#### **MEXICAN RESEMBLANCES IN THE SOUTHEASTERN AREA OF THE UNITED STATES**

By Doris Stone

The Indians who have inhabited this region belong to various groups, some of which have migrated hither in historical times (as the Shawnee). The most important are the Muskogian tribes, of which the Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Natchez are members. However, we find isolated tribes belonging to the large northern and eastern groups of Iroquois and Algonquin Indians, as well as Siouan from the Great Plains, and several less important peoples who came into this area from the Ohio valley. So the southeast is a fairly varied and complex territory and we do not know who were

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Note.-This paper was read, with slides, at the district meeting of the Florida Historical Society on Feb. 9 last, at Lake Wales. It supplements a paper which Mrs. Stone read before the annual meeting of the Society in 1938, and which was published in the *Quarterly*, the issue of January, 1939.

the oldest-that is, the really underlying-peoples in this region. This is true particularly in Florida where a host of outside influences are evident.

But there is at least one dominant feature in the southeastern area: the resemblance of certain traits in that sector to those found in the country we now know as Mexico. These association traits, as a whole, do not belong to any single group among the higher nations of Mexico. They appear to have their roots in what usually is considered three distinct cultures : Playa de los Muertos, "Q", and figurines practically identical with those from the Archaic period, as well as figurines which resemble later Mexican pieces, are found in the greater part of the southeastern area-and, in particular, in Florida. Here, both human and animal figures appear, while even among the historical Indians there was the masculine custom of wearing a turban-like headdress made of bark cloth. This is characteristic of Archaic figurines, and might be a carry-over from the original fashion portrayed by these pieces.

The Maya, whose civilization was on the decline at the time of the Spanish arrival in the New World, have a host of culture traits many of which we find picked up by the Archaic, and to continue in two of the higher groups, the Maya and the Aztec. A number of these traits seem somehow to have reached the southeastern area.

The Aztec, a Nahua-speaking tribe, originally were a nomadic, warrior people, who pushed their way into the Valley of Mexico quite late, historically speaking, and absorbed what they could of the already-deteriorating Maya culture. After the Nahua conquest, and the subsequent settling into a sedentary life, the roaming tendency of the Aztec appears to have found an outlet in their intense activity as

itinerant traders. Nahua merchants formed an important league which traversed, and in part economically conquered for the Nahua people, almost all of Central America; and, as we shall see presently, may have been responsible on the other hand for a northeastern migration or diffusion of late Mexican culture traits.

This is a background for an examination of some of the outstanding elements of southeast culture which do not appear to have their roots in any part of the territory of the United States.

Among the historical Indians of the southeast there was the use of the feathered cloak, decidedly a Maya (and, later, an Aztec) habit, and the practice of human sacrifice as is evidenced among the Natchez. Human sacrifice, of course, is an outstanding feature of Aztec religion.

Probably the foremost example of "foreign" or Mexican influence which goes also into the field of archaeology, is the presence of pyramidal mounds, which continued in use among the historical Muskogian tribes. Usually the pyramidal mounds in the southeast supported a temple or a chieftain's house, but occasionally they contained, in addition to this, infant burials beneath the top floor-level. A very Mexican feature of these mounds (see the Etowah group) is that generally they are built around a plaza, with one or two dominating the whole group. This arrangement of mounds around courts was carried out not only by the Muskogians, but also by an earlier people whose identity is unknown, the builders of the Marcos Key site in southwestern Florida (Charlotte Harbor, Pine Island Sound, Caloosa Bay). The excavation of this site by Cushing brought to light both Mexican and Antillean relationships. The outstanding Mexican artifacts from Marcos Key were the two-fingered *atlatl* or throw-

ing-stick, bird and animal effigy masks, and wooden clubs. These last bear a close resemblance both to Aztec clubs and to those on certain copper plates from the Etowah mounds in Georgia. This whole Georgian group has decided Mexican characteristics.

I noted in my talk before this body two years ago the striking similarity pointed out by Zelia Nuttall between the copper ornaments from here and Mexican copper work. These finds included also long ceremonial flints, monolithic stone and copper axes, human effigy vessels, and interesting decorated shells. All of these artifacts show Mexican and Middle American relationships.

Artificial flattening of the frontal portion of skulls was prevalent among the historical Muskogians, and is found in ancient graves in Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama. This was a common Mexican practice. This deformation, which is very Maya, applied not only to actual human skulls but also to clay figurines; which is, again, a Mexican characteristic.

Decorated shells with strong Mexican influences appear in southern Mississippi and in Florida. Incised bone, though not so common as shell, is another Mexican trait. In this southeastern section both decorated shell and bone have also been found.

Although the use of stone is limited in the southeast, nevertheless there are carved stone pipes, often made in animal form, and occasionally in human shape, a few sculptured heads, and carved serpent images, all of which suggest Mexican affiliations.

The pottery of the southeast offers strong Mexican ties. Throughout this section, pots with attached animal or human features, funnel-necked jars, tripod vessels, and spouted vessels are prevalent. All are evidence of a spread of the "Q" and Playa de los Muertos complexes. Recent work

by Holder and others around Lake Pontchartrain near New Orleans has shown that tetrapodal wedge-leg and mammiform vessel supports appear in the earliest horizons from that area.

At Moundville, Alabama, a complex of Mexican traits has been pointed out. From this site, alone, come objects showing men with masks resembling Aztec codex figures, pottery decorated with the hand symbol (a Maya-Aztec feature), and death heads (mostly associated with the Aztec) ; there are even flint knives. \*

There are, then, all through the southeast, certain definitely Mexican traits both in the customs of the historical Indians and in the artifacts of pre-history, both of which ( *i.e.*, the historical and the archaeological) point to a complicated beginning. Naturally, there have been numerous theories as to the origin of the peoples responsible for these influences.

It seems to the writer, however, that there must have been two distinct culture pushes into the southeast as well as two avenues of approach,

One route undoubtedly was by water, both directly from the Mexican region following the Gulf coastline, and via Cuba over to Florida in large trading canoes. Objects from Marcos Key, and occasional examples of obsidian artifacts generally found on river borders near the Gulf, help to support such a theory.

The other avenue was the equally plausible route overland, up through the southwest Mississippi drainage area to the eastern sea.

The first culture push may have come from the people responsible for the Playa de los Muertos, "Q", and Archaic cultures. These people were

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\* Obsidian knives, for example, have been reported by Dr. J. C. Gifford of the University of Miami, as coming from Key Largo, Fla. They have also been found by the writer in a mound on Wall River, Miss.

among the oldest in Central America and Mexico, and may have extended as a contemporaneous unit into Peru and the Mississippi valley, including portions of the southeastern area. Indeed it may well be that the Maya are an outgrowth of one of these people. Later, with the rise of the Nahuatl-speaking tribes, other traits appeared. These may have been the result of direct migration, such as has been suggested by Zelia Nuttall with regard to the Eto-wah mounds, or they may have been the result of trading routes, such as outlined above. And there is, of course, a possibility of both the trade-routes and a migration being responsible for many of these influences connected with the later cultures.

In the southeast, then, is an early culture type which extends over parts of Middle America into Peru. It is this group which conceivably is the ancestor of the Maya. Later influences from Mexico came either as the result of migration or trade, or as a combination of the two.

Nahuatl-speaking people most probably were responsible for this later cultural push, as is evidenced by the close resemblances to Aztec traits.

However, we must remember that no evidence based (as all archaeology and most ethnology must be based) on logic is either conclusive or irrefutable. The object of the present paper has been to point out what its title implies, Mexican resemblances in the southeastern area of the United States; and perhaps to suggest that the proof should come, eventually, as a result of intensive work by archaeologists in all the cultures of the southeastern region.

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#### **THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA**

The organization and activities of this Association were described in the last number of the Quarterly. Mr. Gaines R. Wilson, secretary, announces