Part III The Civilization Of The Old World And New Compared.

Chapter VII.

The Origin Of Our Alphabet

One of the most marvellous inventions for the advancement of mankind is the phonetic alphabet, or a system of signs representing the sounds of human speech. Without it our present civilization could scarcely have been possible.

No solution of the origin of our European alphabet has yet been obtained: we can trace it back from nation to nation, and form to form, until we reach the Egyptians, and the archaic forms of the Phœnicians, Hebrews, and Cushites, but beyond this the light fails us.

The Egyptians spoke of their hieroglyphic system of writing not as their own invention, but as "the language of the gods." (Lenormant and Cheval, "Anc. Hist. of the East," vol. ii., p. 208.) "The gods" were, doubtless, their highly civilized ancestors--the people of Atlantis--who, as we shall hereafter see, became the gods of many of the Mediterranean races.

"According to the Phœnicians, the art of writing was invented by Taautus, or Taut, 'whom the Egyptians call Thouth,' and the Egyptians said it was invented by Thouth, or Thoth, otherwise called 'the first Hermes,' in which we clearly see that both the Phœnicians and Egyptians referred the invention to a period older than their own separate political existence, and to an older nation, from which both peoples received it." (Baldwin's "Prehistoric Nations," p. 91.)

The "first Hermes," here referred to (afterward called Mercury by the Romans), was a son of Zeus and Maia, a daughter of Atlas. This is the same *Maia* whom the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg identifies with the Maya of Central America.

Sir William Drummond, in his "Origines," said:

"There seems to be no way of accounting either for the early use of letters among so many different nations, or for the resemblance which existed

between some of the graphic systems employed by those nations, than by supposing hieroglyphical writing, if I may be allowed the term, to have been in use among the Tsabaists in the first ages after the Flood, when Tsabaisin (planet-worship) was the religion of almost every country that was yet inhabited."

Sir Henry Rawlinson says:

"So great is the analogy between the first principles of the Science of writing, as it appears to have been pursued in Chaldea, and as we can actually trace its progress in Egypt, that we can hardly hesitate to assign the original invention *to a period before the Hamitic race had broken up and divided*."

It is not to be believed that such an extraordinary system of sound-signs could have been the invention of any one man or even of any one age. Like all our other acquisitions, it must have been the slow growth and accretion of ages; it must have risen step by step from picture-writing through an intermediate condition like that of the Chinese, where each word or thing was represented by a separate sign. The fact that so old and enlightened a people as the Chinese have never reached a phonetic alphabet, gives us some indication of the greatness of the people among whom it was invented, and the lapse of time before they attained to it.

Humboldt says:

"According to the views which, since Champollion's great discovery, have been gradually adopted regarding the earlier condition of the development of alphabetical writing, the Phœnician as well as the Semitic characters are to be regarded as a phonetic alphabet that has originated from pictorial writing; as one in which the ideal signification of the symbols is wholly disregarded, and the characters are regarded as mere signs for sounds." ("Cosmos," vol. ii., p. 129.)

Baldwin says (" Prehistoric Nations," p. 93):

"The nation that became mistress of the seas, established communication with every shore, and monopolized the commerce of the known world, must have substituted a phonetic alphabet for the hieroglyphics as it gradually grew to this eminence; while isolated Egypt, less affected by the practical wants and tendencies of commercial enterprise, retained the hieroglyphic system, and carried it to a marvellous height of perfection."

It must be remembered that some of the letters of our alphabet are inventions of the later nations. In the oldest alphabets there was no *c*, the *g* taking its place. The Romans converted the *g* into *c*; and then, finding the necessity for a *g* Sign, made one by adding a tail-piece to the *c* (*C, G*). The Greeks added to the ancient alphabet the *upsilon*, shaped like our V or Y, the two forms being used at first indifferently: they added the X sign; they converted the t of the Phœnicians into *th*, or *theta*; *z* and *s* into signs for double consonants; they turned the Phœnician *y* (*yod*) into *i* (*iota*). The Greeks converted the Phœnician alphabet, which was partly consonantal, into one purely phonetic--"a perfect instrument for the expression of spoken language." The *w* was also added to the Phœnician alphabet. The Romans added the *y*. At first *i* and *j* were both indicated by the same sound; a sign for *j* was afterward added. We have also, in common with other European languages, added a double U, that is, VV, or W, to represent the *w* sound.

The letters, then, which we owe to the Phœnicians, are A, B, C, D, E, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, Z. If we are to trace out resemblances with the alphabet of any other country, it must be with these signs.

Is there any other country to which we can turn which possessed a phonetic alphabet in any respect kindred to this Phœnician alphabet? It cannot be the Chinese alphabet, which has more signs than words; it cannot be the cuneiform alphabet of Assyria, with its seven hundred arrow-shaped characters, none of which bear the slightest affinity to the Phœnician letters.

It is a surprising fact that *we find in Central America a phonetic alphabet*. This is in the alphabet of the Mayas, the ancient people of the peninsula of Yucatan, who claim that their civilization came to them across the sea in ships from the east, that is, from the direction of Atlantis. The Mayas succeeded to the Colhuas, whose era terminated one thousand years before the time of Christ; from them they received their alphabet. It has come to us through Bishop Landa, one of the early missionary bishops, who confesses to having burnt a great number of Maya books because they contained nothing but the works of the devil. He fortunately, however, preserved for posterity the alphabet of this people. We present it herewith.

###

LANDA'S ALPHABET (From "North Amer. of Antiquity," p. 434.)

Diego de Landa was the first bishop of Yucatan. He wrote a history of the Mayas and their country, which was preserved in manuscript at Madrid in the library of the Royal Academy of History. . . . It contains a description and explanation of the phonetic alphabet of the Mayas. Landa's manuscript seems to have lain neglected in the library, for little or nothing was heard of it until it was discovered by the French priest Brasseur de Bourbourg, who, by means of it, has deciphered some of the old American writings. He says, 'the alphabet and signs explained by Landa have been to me a Rosetta stone.'" (Baldwin's "Ancient America," p. 191.)

When we observe, in the table of alphabets of different European nations which I give herewith, how greatly the forms of the Phœnician letters have been modified, it would surprise us to find any resemblance between the Maya alphabet of two or three centuries since and the ancient European forms. It must, however, be remembered that the Mayas are one of the most conservative peoples in the world. They still adhere with striking pertinacity to the language they spoke when Columbus landed on San Salvador; and it is believed that that language is the same as the one inscribed on the most ancient monuments of their country. Señor Pimental says of them, "The Indians have preserved this idiom with such tenacity that they will speak no other; it is necessary for the whites to address them in their own language to communicate with them." It is therefore probable, as their alphabet did not pass from nation to nation, as did the Phœnician, that it has not departed so widely from the original forms received from the Colhuas.

###

The Alphabet

But when we consider the vast extent of time which has elapsed, and the fact that we are probably without the intermediate stages of the alphabet which preceded the archaic Phœnician, it will be astonishing if we find resemblances between *any* of the Maya letters and the European forms, even though we concede that they are related. If we find decided affinities between two or three letters, we may reasonably presume that similar coincidences existed as to many others which have disappeared under the attrition of centuries.

The first thought that occurs to us on examining the Landa alphabet is the complex and ornate character of the letters. Instead of the two or three strokes with which we indicate a sign for a sound, we have here rude pictures

of objects. And we find that these are themselves simplifications of older forms of a still more complex character. Take, for instance, the letter *pp* in Landa's alphabet, ### : here are evidently the traces of a face. The same appear, but not so plainly, in the sign for *x*, which is ### . Now, if we turn to the ancient hieroglyphics upon the monuments of Central America, we will find the human face appearing in a great many of them, as in the following, which we copy from the Tablet of the Cross at Palenque. We take the hieroglyphs from the left-hand side of the inscription. Here it will be seen that, out of seven hieroglyphical figures, six contain human faces. And we find that in the whole inscription of the Tablet of the Cross there are 33 figures out of 108 that are made up in part of the human countenance.

###

We can see, therefore, in the Landa alphabet a tendency to simplification. And this is what we would naturally expect. When the emblems--which were probably first intended for religious inscriptions, where they could be slowly and carefully elaborated--were placed in the hands of a busy, active, commercial people, such as were the Atlanteans, and afterward the Phœnicians, men with whom time was valuable, the natural tendency would be to simplify and condense them; and when the original meaning of the picture was lost, they would naturally slur it, as we find in the letters *pp* and *x* of the Maya alphabet, where the figure of the human face remains only in rude lines.

The same tendency is plainly shown in the two forms of the letter *h*, as given in Landa's alphabet; the original form is more elaborate than the variation of it. The original form is ### The variation is given as ### . Now let us suppose this simplification to be carried a step farther: we have seen the upper and lower parts of the first form shrink into a smaller and less elaborate shape; let us imagine that the same tendency does away with them altogether; we would then have the letter H of the Maya alphabet represented by this figure, ### ; now, as it takes less time to make a single stroke than a double one, this would become in time ### . We turn now to the archaic Greek and the old Hebrew, and we find the letter *h* indicated by this sign, ### , precisely the Maya letter *h* simplified. We turn to the archaic Hebrew, and we find ### . Now it is known that the Phœnicians wrote from right to left, and just as we in writing from left to right slope our letters to the right, so did the Phœnicians slope their letters to the left. Hence the Maya sign becomes in the archaic Phœnician this, ### . In some of the Phœnician alphabets we even find the

letter h made with the double strokes above and below, as in the Maya *h*. The Egyptian hieroglyph for *h* is ### while *ch* is ### . In time the Greeks carried the work of simplification still farther, and eliminated the top lines, as we have supposed the Atlanteans to have eliminated the double strokes, and they left the letter as it has come down to us, H.

Now it may be said that all this is coincidence. If it is, it is certainly remarkable. But let us go a step farther:

We have seen in Landa's alphabet that there are two forms of the letter m. The first is ### . But we find also an *m* combined with the letter *o*, *a*, or *e*, says Landa, in this form, ### . The *m* here is certainly indicated by the central part of this combination, the figure ### ; where does that come from? It is clearly taken from the heart of the original figure wherein it appears. What does this prove? That the Atlanteans, or Mayas, when they sought to simplify their letters and combine them with others, took from the centre of the ornate hieroglyphical figure some characteristic mark with which they represented the whole figure. Now let us apply this rule:

We have seen in the table of alphabets that in every language, from our own day to the time of the Phœnicians, *o* has been represented by a circle or a circle within a circle. Now where did the Phœnicians get it? Clearly from the Mayas. There are two figures for *o* in the Maya alphabet; they are ### and ### ; now, if we apply the rule which we have seen to exist in the case of the Maya *m* to these figures, the essential characteristic found in each is the circle, in the first case pendant from the hieroglyph; in the other, in the centre of the lower part of it. And that this circle was withdrawn from the hieroglyph, and used alone, as in the case of the *m*, is proved by the very sign used at the foot of Landa's alphabet, which is, ### Landa calls this *ma*, *me*, or *mo*; it is probably the latter, and in it we have the circle detached from the hieroglyph.

We find the precise Maya *o* a circle in a circle, or a dot within a circle, repeated in the Phœnician forms for *o*, thus, ### and ### , and by exactly the same forms in the Egyptian hieroglyphics; in the Runic we have the circle in the circle; in one form of the Greek o the dot was placed along-side of the circle instead of below it, as in the Maya.

Are these another set of coincidences?

Take another letter:

The letter *n* of the Maya alphabet is represented by this sign, itself probably a simplification of some more ornate form, ### . This is something like our letter S, but quite unlike our N. But let us examine into the pedigree of our *n*. We find in the archaic Ethiopian, a language as old as the Egyptian, and which represents the Cushite branch of the Atlantean stock, the sign for *n* (*na*) is ### ; in archaic Phœnician it comes still closer to the S shape, thus, ### , or in this form, ### ; we have but to curve these angles to approximate it very closely to the Maya *n*; in Troy this form was found, ### . The Samaritan makes it ### ; the old Hebrew ### ; the Moab stone inscription gives it ### ; the later Phœnicians simplified the archaic form still further, until it became ### ; then it passed into ### : the archaic Greek form is ### ; the later Greeks made ### , from which it passed into the present form, N. All these forms seem to be representations of a serpent; we turn to the valley of the Nile, and we find that the Egyptian hieroglyphic for *n* was the serpent, ### ; the Pelasgian *n* was ### ; the Arcadian, ### ; the Etruscan, ### .

Can anything be more significant than to find the serpent the sign for *n* in Central America, and in all these Old World languages?

Now turn to the letter *k*. The Maya sign for *k* is ### . This does not look much like our letter K; but let us examine it. Following the precedent established for us by the Mayas in the case of the letter m, let us see what is the distinguishing feature here; it is clearly the figure of a serpent standing erect, with its tail doubled around its middle, forming a circle. It has already been remarked by Savolini that this erect serpent is very much like the Egyptian *Uræus*, an erect serpent with an enlarged body--a sacred emblem found in the hair of their deities. We turn again to the valley of the Nile, and we find that the Egyptian hieroglyphic for *k* was a serpent with a convolution or protuberance in the middle, precisely as in the Maya, thus, ### ; this was transformed into the Egyptian letter ### ; the serpent and the protuberance reappear in one of the Phœnician forms of *k*, to wit, ### ; while in the Punic we have these forms, ### and ### . Now suppose a busy people trying to give this sign: instead of drawing the serpent in all its details they would abbreviate it into something like this, ### ; now we turn to the ancient Ethiopian sign for *k* (*ka*), and we have ### , or the Himyaritic Arabian ### ; while in the Phœnician it becomes ### ; in the archaic Greek, ### ; and in the later Greek, when they changed the writing from left to right, ### . So that the two lines projecting from the upright stroke of our English K are a reminiscence of the convolution of the serpent in the Maya original and the Egyptian copy.

Turn now to the Maya sign for *t*: it is ### , . What is the distinctive mark about this figure? It is the cross composed of two curved lines, thus, ### . It is probable that in the Maya sign the cross is united at the bottom, like a figure *8*. Here again we turn to the valley of the Nile, and we find that the Egyptian hieroglyph for *t* is ### and ### ; and in the Syriac *t* it is ### . We even find the curved lines of the Maya *t* which give it something of the appearance of the numeral *8*, repeated accurately in the Mediterranean alphabets; thus the Punic *t* repeats the Maya form almost exactly as ### and ### . Now suppose a busy people compelled to make this mark every day for a thousand years, and generally in a hurry, and the cross would soon be made without curving the lines; it would become **X**. But before it reached even that simplified form it had crossed the Atlantic, and appeared in the archaic Ethiopian sign for *tsa*, thus, ### . In the archaic Phœnician the sign for ### is ### and ### ; the oldest Greek form is ### or ### and the later Greeks gave it to the Romans ### , and modified this into ### ; the old Hebrew gave it as ### and ### ; the Moab stone as ### ; this became in time ### and ### .

Take the letter *a*. In the Maya there are three forms given for this letter. The first is ### ; the third is ### . The first looks very much like the foot of a lion or tiger; the third is plainly a foot or boot. If one were required to give hurriedly a rude outline of either of these, would he not represent it thus, ### ; and can we not conceive that this could have been in time modified into the Phœnician *a*, which was ### ? The hieratic Egyptian *a* was ### ; the ancient Hebrew, which was ### or ### ; the ancient Greek was the foot reversed, ### ; the later Greek became our A.

Turn next to the Maya sign for *q* (*ku*): it is ### . Now what is the peculiarity of this hieroglyph? The circle below is not significant, for there are many circular figures in the Maya alphabet. Clearly, if one was called upon to simplify this, he would retain the two small circles joined side by side at the top, and would indicate the lower circle with a line or dash. And when we turn to the Egyptian *q* we find it in this shape, ### ; we turn to the Ethiopian *q* (*khua*), and we find it ### , as *qua*, ### ; while the Phœnician comes still nearer the supposed Maya form in ### ; the Moab stone was ### ; the Himyaritic Arabian form became ### ; the Greek form was ### , which graduated into the Roman Q. But a still more striking proof of the descent of the Phœnician alphabet from the Maya is found in the other form of the *q*, the Maya *cu*, which is ### . Now, if we apply the Maya rule to this, and discard the outside circle, we have this left, ### . In time the curved line would be made straight, and the figure would assume this form, ### ; the next

step would be to make the cross on the straight line, thus, ### . One of the ancient Phœnician forms is ### . Can all this be accident?

The letter *c* or *g* (for the two probably gave the same sound as in the Phœnician) is given in the Maya alphabet as follows, ### . This would in time be simplified into a figure representing the two sides of a triangle with the apex upward, thus, ### . This is precisely the form found by Dr. Schliemann in the ruins of Troy, ### . What is the Phœnician form for *g* as found on the Moab stone? It is ### . The Carthaginian Phœnicians gave it more of a rounded form, thus, ### . The hieratic Egyptian figure for *g* was ### ; in the earlier Greek form the left limb of the figure was shortened, thus, ### ; the later Greeks reversed it, and wrote it ### ; the Romans, changed this into ### and it finally became C.

In the Maya we have one sign for *p*, and another for *pp*. The first contains a curious figure, precisely like our *r* laid on its back ### . There is, apparently, no *r* in the Maya alphabet; and the Roman *r* grew out of the later Phœnician *r* formed thus, ### ; it would appear that the earliest Phœnician alphabet did not contain the letter *r*. But if we now turn to the Phœnician alphabet, we will find one of the curious forms of the *p* given thus, ### , a very fair representation of an *r* lying upon its face. Is it not another remarkable coincidence that the *p*, in both Maya and Phœnician, should contain this singular sign?

The form of *pp* in the Maya alphabet is this, ### . If we are asked, on the principle already indicated, to reduce this to its elements, we would use a figure like this, ### ; in time the tendency would be to shorten one of these perpendicular lines, thus, and this we find is very much like the Phœnician *p*, ### . The Greek *ph* is ### .

The letter *l* in the Maya is in two forms; one of these is ### , the other is ### . Now, if we again apply the rule which we observed to hold good with the letter *m*--that is, draw from the inside of the hieroglyph some symbol that will briefly indicate the whole letter--we will have one of two forms, either a right-angled figure formed thus, ### , or an acute angle formed by joining the two lines which are unconnected, thus, ### ; and either of these forms brings us quite close to the letter *l* of the Old World. We find *l* on the Moab stone thus formed, ### . The archaic Phœnician form of *l* was ### , or ### ; the archaic Hebrew was ### and ### ; the hieratic Egyptian was ### ; the Greek form was ### --the Roman L.

The Maya letter *b* is shaped thus, ### . Now, if we turn to the Phœnician, we find that *b* is represented by the same crescent-like figure which we find in the middle of this hieroglyph, but reversed in the direction of the writing, thus, ### ; while in the archaic Hebrew we have the same crescent figure as in the Maya, turned in the same direction, but accompanied by a line drawn downward, and to the left, thus, ### ; a similar form is also found in the Phœnician ### , and this in the earliest Greek changed into ### , and in the later Greek into B. One of the Etruscan signs for *b* was ### , while the Pelasgian *b* was represented thus, ### ; the Chaldaic *b* was ### ; the Syriac sign for *b* was ### ; the Illyrian *b* was ### .

The Maya *e* is ### ; this became in time ### ; then ### (we see this form on the Maya monuments); the dots in time were indicated by strokes, and we reach the hieratic Egyptian form, ### : we even find in some of the ancient Phœnician inscriptions the original Maya circles preserved in making the letter *e*, thus, ### ; then we find the old Greek form, ### ; the old Hebrew, ### ; and the later Phœnician, ### : when the direction of the writing was changed this became ### . Dr. Schliemann found a form like this on inscriptions deep in the ruins of Troy, ### . This is exactly the form found on the American monuments.

The Maya *i* is ### ; this became in time ### ; this developed into a still simpler form, ### ; and this passed into the Phœnician form, ### . The Samaritan *i* was formed thus, ### ; the Egyptian letter *i* is ### : gradually in all these the left-hand line was dropped, and we come to the figure used on the stone of Moab, ### and ### ; this in time became the old Hebrew ### , or ### ; and this developed into the Greek ### .

We have seen the complicated symbol for *m* reduced by the Mayas themselves into this figure, ### : if we attempt to write this rapidly, we find it very difficult to always keep the base lines horizontal; naturally we form something like this, ### : the distinctive figure within the sign for *m* in the Maya is ### or ### . We see this repeated in the Egyptian hieroglyphics for *m*, ### , and ### , and ### ; and in the Chaldaic *m*, ### ; and in the Ethiopic ### . We find one form of the Phœnician where the *m* is made thus, ### ; and in the Punic it appears thus, ### ; and this is not unlike the *m* on the stone of Moab, ### , or the ancient Phœnician forms ### , ### , and the old Greek ### , or the ancient Hebrew ### , ### .

The ### , *x*, of the Maya alphabet is a hand pointing downward ### , this, reduced to its elements, would be expressed some thing like this, ### or ### ; and this is very much like the *x* of the archaic Phœnician, ### ; or the Moab stone, ### ; or the later Phœnician ### or the Hebrew ### , ### , or the old Greek, ### : the later Greek form was ### .

The Maya alphabet contains no sign for the letter *s*; there is, however, a symbol called *ca* immediately above the letter *k*; it is probable that the sign *ca* stands for the soft sound of *c*, as, in our words *citron*, *circle*, *civil*, *circus*, etc. As it is written in the Maya alphabet *ca*, and not *k*, it evidently represents a different sound. The sign *ca* is this, ### . A somewhat similar sign is found in the body of the symbol for *k*, thus, ### , this would appear to be a simplification of *ca*, but turned downward. If now we turn to the Egyptian letters we find the sign *k* represented by this figure ### , simplified again into ### ; while the sign for *k* in the Phœnician inscription on the stone of Moab is ### . If now we turn to the *s* sound, indicated by the Maya sign *ca*, ### , we find the resemblance still more striking to kindred European letters. The Phœnician *s* is ### ; in the Greek this becomes ### ### ; the Hebrew is ### ### ; the Samaritan, ### . The Egyptian hieroglyph for *s* is ### ; the Egyptian letter *s* is ### ; the Ethiopic, ### ; the Chaldaic, ### ; and the Illyrian *s c* is ### .

We have thus traced back the forms of eighteen of the ancient letters to the Maya alphabet. In some cases the pedigree, is so plain as to be indisputable.

For instance, take the *h*:

Maya, ### ; old Greek, ### ; old Hebrew, ### ; Phœnician, ### .

Or take the letter *o*:

Maya, ### ; old Greek, ### ; old Hebrew, ### ; Phœnician, ### .

Or take the letter *t*:

Maya, ### ; old Greek, ### ; old Phœnician, ### and ### .

Or take the letter *q*:

Maya, ### ; old Phœnician, ### and ### ; Greek, ### .

Or take the letter *k*:

Maya, ### ; Egyptian, ### ; Ethiopian, ### ; Phœnician, ### .

Or take the letter *n*:

Maya, ### ; Egyptian, ### ; Pelasgian ### , Arcadian, ### ; Phœnician, ### .

Surely all this cannot be accident!

But we find another singular proof of the truth of this theory: It will be seen that the Maya alphabet lacks the letter *d* and the letter *r*. The Mexican alphabet possessed a *d*. The sounds *d* and *t* were probably indicated in the Maya tongue by the same sign, called *t* in the Landa alphabet. The Finns and Lapps do not distinguish between these two sounds. In the oldest known form of the Phœnician alphabet, that found on the Moab stone, we find in the same way but one sign to express the *d* and *t*. *D* does not occur on the Etruscan monuments, *t* being used in its place. It would, therefore, appear that after the Maya alphabet passed to the Phœnicians they added two new signs for the letters *d* and *r*; and it is a singular fact that their poverty of invention seems to have been such that they used to express both *d* and *r*, the same sign, with very little modification, which they had already obtained from the Maya alphabet as the symbol for *b*. To illustrate this we place the signs side by side:

###

It thus appears that the very signs *d* and *r*, in the Phœnician, early Greek, and ancient Hebrew, which are lacking in the Maya, were supplied by imitating the Maya sign for *b*; and it is a curious fact that while the Phœnician legends claim that Taaut invented the art of writing, yet they tell us that Taaut made records, and "delivered them to his successors and to foreigners, of whom one was Isiris (Osiris, the Egyptian god), *the inventor of the three letters*." Did these three letters include the *d* and *r*, which they did not receive from the Atlantean alphabet, as represented to us by the Maya alphabet?

In the alphabetical table which we herewith append we have represented the sign V, or vau, or *f*, by the Maya sign for U. "In the present so-called Hebrew, as in the Syriac, Sabæic, Palmyrenic, and some other kindred writings, the *vau* takes the place of F, and indicates the sounds of *v* and *u*. F

occurs in the same place also on the Idalian tablet of Cyprus, in Lycian, also in Tuarik (Berber), and some other writings." ("American Cyclopædia," art. F.)

Since writing the above, I find in the "Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society" for December, 1880, p. 154, an interesting article pointing out other resemblances between the Maya alphabet and the Egyptian. I quote:

It is astonishing to notice that while Landa's first B is, according to Valentini, represented by a footprint, and that path and footprint are pronounced *Be* in the Maya dictionary, the Egyptian sign for B was the human leg.

"Still more surprising is it that the H of Landa's alphabet is a tie of cord, while the Egyptian H is a twisted cord. . . . But the most striking coincidence of all occurs in the coiled or curled line representing Landa's U; *for it is absolutely identical with the Egyptian curled U.* The Mayan word for to wind or bend is Uuc; but why should Egyptians, confined as they were to the valley of the Nile, and abhorring as they did the sea and sailors, write their U precisely like Landa's alphabet U in Central America? There is one other remarkable coincidence between Landa's and the Egyptian alphabets; and, by-the-way, the English and other Teutonic dialects have a curious share in it. Landa's D (T) is a disk with lines inside the four quarters, the allowed Mexican symbol for a day or sun. So far as sound is concerned, the English day represents it; so far as the form is concerned, the Egyptian 'cake,' ideograph for (1) country and (2) the sun's orbit is essentially the same."

It would appear as if both the Phœnicians and Egyptians drew their alphabet from a common source, of which the Maya is a survival, but did not borrow from one another. They followed out different characteristics in the same original hieroglyph, as, for instance, in the letter *b*. And yet I have shown that the closest resemblances exist between the Maya alphabet and the Egyptian signs--in the *c*, *h*, *t*, *i*, *k*, *m*, *n*, *o*, *q*, and *s*--eleven letters in all; in some cases, as in the *n* and *k*, the signs are identical; the *k*, in both alphabets, is not only a serpent, but a serpent with a protuberance or convolution in the middle! If we add to the above the *b* and *u*, referred to in the "Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society," we have thirteen letters out of sixteen in the Maya and Egyptian related to each other. Can any theory of accidental coincidences account for all this? And it must be remembered that these

resemblances are found between the only two phonetic systems of alphabet in the world.

Let us suppose that two men agree that each shall construct apart from the other a phonetic alphabet of sixteen letters; that they shall employ only simple forms--combinations of straight or curved lines--and that their signs shall not in anywise resemble the letters now in use. They go to work apart; they have a multitudinous array of forms to draw from the thousand possible combinations of lines, angles, circles, and curves; when they have finished, they bring their alphabets together for comparison. Under such circumstances it is possible that out of the sixteen signs one sign might appear in both alphabets; there is one chance in one hundred that such might be the case; but there is not one chance in five hundred that this sign should in both cases represent the same sound. It is barely possible that two men working thus apart should bit upon two or three identical forms, but altogether impossible that these forms should have the same significance; and by no stretch of the imagination can it be supposed that in these alphabets so created, without correspondence, thirteen out of sixteen signs should be the same in form and the same in meaning.

It is probable that a full study of the Central American monuments may throw stronger light upon the connection between the Maya and the European alphabets, and that further discoveries of inscriptions in Europe may approximate the alphabets of the New and Old World still more closely by supplying intermediate forms.

We find in the American hieroglyphs peculiar signs which take the place of pictures, and which probably, like the hieratic symbols mingled with the hieroglyphics of Egypt, represent alphabetical sounds. For instance, we find this sign on the walls of the palace of Palenque, ### ; this is not unlike the form of the Phœnician *t* used in writing, ### and ### ; we find also upon these monuments the letter *o* represented by a small circle, and entering into many of the hieroglyphs; we also find the *tau* sign (thus ###) often repeated; also the sign which we have supposed to represent *b*, ### ; also this sign, ### , which we think is the simplification of the letter *k*; also this sign, which we suppose to represent *e*, ### ; also this figure, ### ; and this ### . There is an evident tendency to reduce the complex figures to simple signs whenever the writers proceed to form words.

Although it has so far been found difficult, if not impossible, to translate the compound words formed from the Maya alphabet, yet we can go far enough to see that they used the system of simpler sounds for the whole hieroglyph to which we have referred.

Bishop Landa gives us, in addition to the alphabet, the signs which represent the days and months, and which are evidently compounds of the Maya letters. For instance, we have this figure as the representative of the month *Mol* ### . Here we see very plainly the letter ### for *m*, the sign ### for *o*; and we will possibly find the sign for *l* in the right angle to the right of the *m* sign, and which is derived from the figure in the second sign for *l* in the Maya alphabet.

One of the most ancient races of Central America is the Chiapenec, a branch of the Mayas. They claim to be the first settlers of the country. They came, their legends tell us, from the East, from beyond the sea.

And even after the lapse of so many thousand years most remarkable resemblances have been found to exist between the Chiapenec language and the Hebrew, the living representative of the Phœnician tongue.

The Mexican scholar, Señor Melgar ("North Americans of Antiquity," p. 475) gives the following list of words taken from the Chiapenec and the Hebrew:

English.	*Chiapenec.*	*Hebrew.*
Son	Been	Ben.
Daughter	Batz	Bath.
Father	Abagh	Abba.
Star in Zodiac	Chimax	Chimah.
King	Molo	Maloc.
Name applied to Adam	Abagh	Abah.
Afflicted	Chanam	Chanan.
God	Elab	Elab.
September	Tsiquin	Tischiri.
More	Chic	Chi.
Rich	Chabin	Chabic.
Son of Seth	Enot	Enos.
To give	Votan	Votan.

Thus, while we find such extraordinary resemblances between the Maya alphabet and the Phœnician alphabet, we find equally surprising coincidences between the Chiapenec tongue, a branch of the Mayas, and the Hebrew, a branch of the Phœnician.

Attempts have been repeatedly made by European scholars to trace the letters of the Phœnician alphabet back to the elaborate hieroglyphics from which all authorities agree they must have been developed, but all such attempts have been failures. But here, in the Maya alphabet, we are not only able to extract from the heart of the hieroglyphic the typical sign for the sound, but we are able to go a step farther, and, by means of the inscriptions upon the monuments of Copan and Palenque, deduce the alphabetical hieroglyph itself from an older and more ornate figure; we thus not Only discover the relationship of the European alphabet to the American, but we

trace its descent in the very mode in which reason tells us it must have been developed. All this proves that the similarities in question did not come from Phœnicians having accidentally visited the shores of America, but that we have before us the origin, the source, the very matrix in which the Phœnician alphabet was formed. In the light of such a discovery the inscriptions upon the monuments of Central America assume incalculable importance; they take us back to a civilization far anterior to the oldest known in Europe; they represent the language of antediluvian times.

It may be said that it is improbable that the use of an alphabet could have ascended to antediluvian times, or to that prehistoric age when intercourse existed between ancient Europe and America; but it must be remembered that if the Flood legends of Europe and Asia are worth anything they prove that the art of writing existed at the date of the Deluge, and that records of antediluvian learning were preserved by those who escaped the Flood; while Plato tells us that the people of Atlantis engraved their laws upon columns of bronze and plates of gold.

There was a general belief among the ancient nations that the art of writing was known to the antediluvians. The Druids believed in books more ancient than the Flood. They styled them "the books of Pheryllt," and "the writings of Pridian or Hu." "Ceridwen consults them before she prepares the mysterious caldron which shadows out the awful catastrophe of the Deluge." (Faber's "Pagan Idolatry," vol. ii., pp. 150, 151.) In the first *Avatar* of Vishnu we are told that "the divine ordinances were stolen by the demon Haya-Griva. Vishnu became a fish; and after the Deluge, when the waters had subsided, he recovered the holy books *from the bottom of the ocean*." Berosus, speaking of the time before the Deluge, says: "Oannes wrote concerning the generations of mankind and their civil polity." The Hebrew commentators on Genesis say, "Our rabbins assert that Adam, our father of blessed memory, composed a book of precepts, which were delivered to him by God in Paradise." (Smith's "Sacred Annals," p. 49.) That is to say, the Hebrews preserved a tradition that the Ad-ami, the people of Ad, or Adlantis, possessed, while yet dwelling in Paradise, the art of writing. It has been suggested that without the use of letters it would have been impossible to preserve the many details as to dates, ages, and measurements, as of the ark, handed down to us in Genesis. Josephus, quoting Jewish traditions, says, "The births and deaths of illustrious men, between Adam and Noah, were noted down at the time with great accuracy." (Ant., lib. 1, cap. iii., see. 3.) Suidas, a Greek lexicographer of the eleventh century, expresses tradition when he

says, "Adam was the author of arts and letters." The Egyptians said that their god Anubis was an antediluvian, and it "wrote annals *before* the Flood." The Chinese have traditions that the earliest race of their nation, prior to history, "taught all the arts of life and wrote books." "The Goths always had the use of letters;" and Le Grand affirms that before or soon after the Flood "there were found the acts of great men engraved in letters on large stones." (Fosbroke's "Encyclopædia of Antiquity," vol. i., p. 355.) Pliny says, "Letters were always in use." Strabo says, "The inhabitants of Spain possessed records *written before the Deluge*." (Jackson's "Chronicles of Antiquity," vol. iii., p. 85.) Mitford ("History of Greece," vol. i, p. 121) says, "Nothing appears to us so probable as that it (the alphabet) was derived from the antediluvian world."