

Harvard, Ashdon, Saffron Walden, Essex
Jan. 10 1969

Dear Dr Crabtree:

I read with interest your article on obsidian cores in the October Amer. Antiquity.

I can solve one of your difficulties, that about honing the blades. Torquemada was using the subjunctive and Holmes wrongly translated him: "or as though they should fashion it of iron in a smithy, and then should sharpen it on a grindstone and then should give it very sharp edges on whetstones."

I called attention to this mistranslation in my Excavations at San Jose, British Honduras. Carnegie Inst. Wash, Pub. 506. Washington, 1939. (p.172). I also retranslated the whole passage for Dr Kidder and he reproduced it in Kidder, Jennings and Shook Excavations at ~~San Jose~~ Kaminaljuyu, Guatemala. Carnegie Inst. Wash., Pub. 561. Washington, 1946, p. 135. I also give an interesting quotation from the much earlier writer Motolinia. Torquemada drew a lot on Motolinia, and I suspect he had read this passage when he wrote his own account.

There is a misprint in Kidder - the insertion is from Torquemada bk. 13, ch. 34, not 24 as written.

As you will see, the translation Holmes used came from Tyler and was used also by Wilson and Linne - a lesson in not going back to original sources to verify quotations. Torquemada is long winded and throws in commas as from a pepper pot. In the vital sentence of chest pressure it does not say "press it against the chest but press against (more correctly toward ([h]acia). The sentence runs:

y entonces aprietan acia, el pecho, y con la fuerza que hace, salta de la
and then they press or squeeze toward, the chest, & with the force which it
piedra una navaja
makes, there jumps from the stone a knife blade (or razor).

The comma after "toward" is out of place.

The parallel passage in bk. 17 translates "and then they squeeze or press toward the chest and immediately ~~x~~ there jumps from the stone a knife blade (or razor).

However, if you compare my translation in Kidder with the Tylor-Holmes-Wilson-Linne version you will grasp the differences more than any explanation I can give on this sheet.

If this is of any value to you, I would appreciate a separate of your article. I turn over my copies of Amer. Antiq. to the Haddon Library, Cambridge University which has about four bits a year to subscribe to journals, so if you do have a spare reprint I'd appreciate it; it saves me a 16 mile journey to Cambridge to consult the original.

As to differences in obsidian. Kidder ^o pointed out many years ago that the green obsidian (almost surely from Valley of Mexico and surrounding area) produces straighter blades than the normal black-smoky to near white obsidian from other centers, and that undoubtedly explains its presence in Maya sites; its superiority made it worth bringing in from far more distant sources than the highlands of Guatemala. I make passing reference to it on p. 214 of the second (1966) edition of my Rise and fall of Maya civilization.

Excuse me for butting in,

Yours Sincerely

Eric Thompson

(J, Eric S. Thompson)

OVER.

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Dr Dan E. Crabtree

~~Idaho State Museum,~~

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Torgren and a son capital his best (it's now capital
than original) 1590-1615. I suppose obidian beads
were still in use then, fossils & doll pins. He was in contact
with young girls in at Tlalcala (now part of Mexico, etc.).
and might have learned to write from the best & superior
of the process. Recall
and check records of names of names of names. Grubbe's list. Wash. D.C. 1900.
translated the whole passage for Dr. Kinder and he reproduced it in Kinder, 'Jamaica
Indians. Cambridge, Mass. 1900. No. 1. Washington, 1933. (p. 146). I also re-
I call attention to this misapprehension in my excavations at San Jose, Pinar
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Journal of Archaeology, London, British Museum, Essex
1934, p. 1060