

*Signposts of Prehistoric Time.*

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How old are the mask-customs of American Indians? How old are their sweat-baths? How old their totemism, their scalping, their drumming, their canoe "eyes," their offerings to root-spirits, the scalp-lock, the warpaint, the costume, the forms of armor, of weaving, of basketry? How far is it possible to estimate the age, or at least the relative ages, of some of the successive waves of their tribal advents in America, by way of the Japan Current, the Aleutians, and possibly other directions? I have not the temerity to attempt answers to such questions as these, which crowd in from that fascinating past—but only to briefly note a few suggestive points, because I know enough of the profound and painstaking work of the students of primitive man to shun the worst form of impertinence. Has not the age of Man upon the earth, from his first prehistoric representative been variously estimated at from a quarter of a million to a million years, and the process of his development been sketched for us in the masterly review of Professor Hill-Tout in 1914 here? From another end it is possible to roughly estimate the age of Egyptian, Akkadian, Cretan, Hittite, and early Aryan, and some other forms of early civilization, in the combined light of history and excavations.

But another form of calculation on the subject, though much less clear and exact, is yet very valuable if it could be carefully studied. This is the estimation of the time taken by the spread of various types or strata of culture throughout the world, especially those which overflowed into America. For example, it is one thing to attempt to estimate the age of man in general calculated by the earliest and crudest forms of stone implements. It is obvious and trite that such an advance as the polished and well-shaped neolithic kfts of tools, represent an immense period of time to develop and spread. Again the presence of forms of large and well-shaped barbarian pottery bowls would indicate another immense advance in point of time—and even the appearance of any pottery at all would mark the lapse of vast ages since the first development of neolithic tools. And when we come to the sacrificial pyramids and handsome rock carvings of Chichen-Itza and compare their resemblance with early Japanese building we can note a wave of culture preceding the six thousand