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The Importance of Sitio Conte

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Source: *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1949), pp. 514-517

Published by: [Wiley](#) on behalf of the [American Anthropological Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/664570>

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familiar spirit by dreaming of some animal . . .”<sup>5</sup> Training following dreaming is also reported for the Chinook.<sup>6</sup> Formerly the youths of all Carrier groups sought a guardian spirit. Among the Bulkley River people, however, “probably through the influence of the Gitksan,” a notion developed “that guardian spirits were not amenable to search, but came to man unheralded.” The visitation produced an illness curable by shamans, whereupon the patient “acquired the power and status of medicine men.”<sup>7</sup> One is left to wonder what determined whether a man would have a vision. The long period of curing that was necessary to relieve “power sickness” may have provided the teaching essential for achieving the status of shaman. “Moreover, whether a patient regained his health quickly or slowly, he needed several months of training before he was ready to graduate as a fully qualified medicine man.”<sup>8</sup> It seems likely that the phenomenon described by Underhill and in this present note appeared independently in both areas.

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<sup>5</sup> Murdock, 1934, p. 258.

<sup>6</sup> Ray, 1938, p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> Jenness, 1943, pp. 542-543.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 564.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF SITIO CONTE

Seldom has a single archeological site received the detailed study that has been accorded the Sitio Conte in the Province of Coclé, Panama; and seldom has a site been honored with as voluminous and luxurious a publication as the richly illustrated two volume set that constitutes the subject of these comments. This fact is all the more remarkable when it is considered that the Sitio Conte is in most respects a small and inconspicuous site and that still further publications on it are scheduled by Dr. Mason of the University of Pennsylvania. The fact that two of our largest archeological organizations have spent a total of four seasons of intensive work here is explained by the exceptional esthetic merit, if not sheer monetary value, of the materials recovered. In this respect the Sitio Conte has proved probably the richest archeological site as yet scientifically excavated in the New World. Furthermore it is the first site to receive scientific field study in Panama despite the fact that many Museums are loaded with Panamanian pottery, the byproduct of a century of systematic grave looting in search of gold.

As a result of three seasons of work by the Peabody Museum, Dr. Lothrop with his collaborators, has produced an outstanding pioneer work which opens up an important

new area in a particularly strategic location in the Americas.<sup>1</sup> Lothrop's work is considerably more than a specific report on the Sitio Conte, although the description and study of the latter constitutes the bulk of the material. Utilizing the materials in the National Museum of Panama and in many private collections and with a full review of the archeological and historical literature, he has brought up to date about all that is known on Panamanian archeology and subjected the published material to critical analysis. Particularly valuable and interesting are the pertinent quotations from obscure sources of the 16th and 17th centuries. As a result of Lothrop's historical researches it can be said that the basic background work for Panamanian prehistory has now been done. The province of Coclé and the surrounding region had been visited by the Spaniards several years before the ships of Grijalva and Cortez reached Mexico, and their descriptions of the natives constitute an interesting point of departure for the archeologist.

Lothrop considers that while the culture of Coclé was brilliant in many respects it ranks definitely below such civilizations as those of the Aztec, Toltec, Maya, Chimú, Nasca, Tiahuanaco, Chavín or Inca.

This conclusion is probably based largely on the fact that the political units were smaller and that conspicuous stone architecture and pyramids were lacking. Likewise existing ethnological information on the Coclé cultures is scanty but it is enough to establish the fact that here existed political organization of a rather high order and a well advanced material culture, based on agricultural communities.

Lothrop has demonstrated that in Coclé times, the cultural flow was almost completely from south to north, as indicated by trade goods and similarities in material culture.

Little is known as yet of the earlier archeology of Panama, but during Coclé times, subsequent to the year 1200, it is probable that all the tribes of Costa Rica and Panama excepting the Chorotegans and Nahuas were of South American stock and language. Most of this South American invasion consisted of the Chibchan stock but there may have been some Arawakan influence. Lothrop gives an impressive list of items in use at Coclé that are of South American origin, although no evidence has been found that definitely demonstrates commercial contact.

Among the typical things indicating general South American connections are manioc and cocoa, the beaded pubic apron, pig tusk necklace, ear rods, 1 hole spear thrower, whistling arrows, signal drums, hammocks, rubber ball, South American style ball court, bark cloth and mummification by fire. Among the Pan-Peruvian items are the dragon motive (crocodile god), metallurgy, gold headbands, hollow gold beads, gold discs with cat faces and N-shaped incisors, V-shaped nose plaques, metal cuffs, crab designs and litters for chiefs. While Sitio Conte was contemporaneous with Late Chimú, it is nevertheless a fact that the closest parallels are with Early Chimú. That the tribes of Panama had knowledge of Peru at the time of the conquest is pointed out by Lothrop, since the Panama natives described llamas and large rafts with sails to the Spaniards

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<sup>1</sup> Lothrop, Samuel K., *Coclé, An Archeological Study of Central Panama*. Part I. *Historical Background, Excavations at the Sitio Conte, Artifacts and Ornaments*. (Memoirs of the Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol. 7, 1937.) Part II. *Pottery of the Sitio Conte and other Archeological Sites*. (Ibid., Vol. 8, 1942.)

before the latter had visited Peru or Ecuador. Lothrop believes that the emeralds found at the Sitio Conte were trade objects from Ecuador.

Many of the gold objects from Coclé are in the style of those from Quimbaya in Colombia, but analysis shows that they were locally made. One specimen is definitely Venezuelan in style.

In contrast to this plethora of South American connections, influences traceable to Mexico and Central America are extremely rare. Among the few items in this category are mosaic mirrors. Such basic northern elements as jade, mounds, and stone architecture are lacking. Lothrop also lists human sacrifice but this is not literally true, since numerous individuals were killed and buried with prominent caciques much in the same fashion as among the Natchez. Elaborate sacrificial ritual as among the Mexicans was indeed lacking.

Lothrop considers that the occupation of Coclé began two or three centuries before the conquest but that the site was probably abandoned shortly before the Spaniards came. The grave furniture and the methods of burial fit perfectly the descriptions given by the Spaniards at the beginning of the 16th century.

Stratigraphic studies at Sitio Conte were difficult because of the scarcity of occupational debris. The principal method used was that of overlapping tombs.

Lothrop describes Sitio Conte pottery as of two major types: "Polychrome and other painted wares with which we associate smoked ware and the various red wares. These have shapes characteristic of the locality. In contrast monochrome, or unpainted pottery, is dependent for decoration on modelling, filleting, bas relief and incising. At certain sites the second group exists almost to the exclusion of the first."

The polychrome ware occurs characteristically in graves, while the second type is found mainly as refuse. Monochrome ware also has foreign affiliations that are not necessarily in accord with the polychrome group. This fact would appear to indicate that the polychrome was a later and more localized development. Coclé polychrome is an unusually specialized and elaborate ware. The designs are skilfully wrought and almost gaudy in their brilliance. Typical colors are red, black and purple on white or buff.

The stratigraphic studies at Coclé indicate that after an initial and brilliant period, the occupants of Sitio Conte dropped to a much lower scale of living, culminating in a phase of almost complete collapse. The latest graves are small with poor offerings. There are no accompanying human sacrifices and jewelry is almost completely absent.

With the aid of unusually full and excellent illustrations Lothrop undertakes a rather detailed analysis of the designs on the polychrome ware, the majority of which are highly elaborated animal designs, the designs in many instances being so stylized as to become merely symbols.

Many of the same designs are found on the nonceramic work—in metallurgy, bone, stone and whale tooth carving. While utensils such as axes, knives, projectile points and metates are simple and undecorated, such things as spear throwers, mosaic mirrors and articles of personal adornment are unsurpassed works of art.

Later work by the writer and Gordon Willey in the vicinity of Parita indicates that the chronology at Sitio Conte may not hold for the entire region. Two sites of the Coclé culture excavated here are probably more typical of the culture in general, insomuch

as they were average village sites and not burial places for prominent caciques. At Parita the pottery was up to the highest Sitio Conte level, but elaborate jewelry and specialized grave furniture was almost entirely lacking.

Furthermore the tombs instead of being of the open pit type as at Sitio Conte were shoe-shaped chambers connected with the surface by a cylindrical shaft in the style of Veraguas. Ceramic offerings in these tombs frequently held both early and late Sitio Conte types in the same tomb.

Lothrop's work constitutes at present one of the most important links in the chain of evidence connecting the important high culture areas of Northwestern South America on the one hand and Southern Mexico and Central America on the other. It demonstrates conclusively that as far as the later periods of Panama are concerned these connections belong almost exclusively with South America.

In developing this difficult problem Lothrop has produced a work which will stand as a classic and which is essential reading for any student of the broad problems of the high culture areas of the New World.

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#### SOME PROBLEMS OF GRADUATE TRAINING IN ANTHROPOLOGY

The typical occupational history of the anthropologist in the United States today differs strikingly from that of the prewar period. The aspiring anthropologist does not now have to repeat the characteristic routine of earlier years—the introduction to anthropology as a graduate student; the achievement of the doctorate, with no permanent position open; the precarious existence as a member of his profession through two or three years or more of research awards or as holder of a postdoctoral fellowship; the eventual placement as the lone representative of his discipline in a college or university department of sociology or history or zoology.

The student now almost invariably comes to his graduate work with some undergraduate training in anthropology, and increasingly with an undergraduate major. The demand for undergraduate instruction in the larger centers has made many more graduate assistantships available to students in obtaining their professional training than ever before. So great is this demand in the colleges, indeed, that we are now witnessing the appointment to instructorships, and even in rare cases to assistant professorships, of men and women who are not even at the point where they are ready to write their doctoral theses—a situation not without some unfortunate implications for the future of our discipline. Often a student devoted to research must refuse a tempting offer of such a post in order to take advantage of the research fellowship that, only a decade ago, was the instrument that had to be looked to in order to maintain him until a permanent position in his chosen field became available.

Many problems arise from this changed situation. The numbers of students who are entering departments of anthropology for training are such that the question of how many to accept, never before raised, is frequently posed. The more adequate