

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY
BULLETIN 143

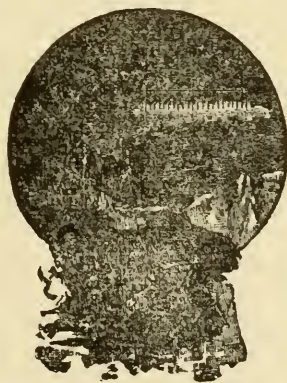
HANDBOOK
OF
SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS

JULIAN H. STEWARD, *Editor*

Volume 4

THE CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN TRIBES

Prepared in Cooperation With the United States Department of State as a Project
of the Interdepartmental Committee for Scientific and Cultural Cooperation



UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1948

THE NORTHERN HIGHLAND TRIBES: THE LENCA

By DORIS STONE

INTRODUCTION

The question of the classification of the *Lenca* language is very important. It is known largely through inadequate data published by Squier (1858) and Membreño (1897). According to different authors, it is related to South or North American languages or is affiliated with unidentified languages, such as the *Xinca*. Some students have postulated that it is unrelated to any known linguistic family. (For a more detailed discussion, see Mason, J. A., 1940; Johnson, 1940; Stone, 1941; and article on languages in Handbook, Vol. 5.)

The *Lenca* area (maps 2 and 5) is marked by a significant variation in dialect, physical type, and political, social, and economic organization. Each township has characteristics which set it off from its neighbors. This heterogeneity obscures the position of the *Lenca* in relation to the rest of Central America.

The *Lenca* are being slowly acculturated and absorbed by people of Mestizo descent. There is, however, some conservatism which seeks to preserve the aboriginal culture, thus increasing the difficulty of adjustment to changing conditions. An example of the desire of groups to maintain their former cultural habits is found among the *Guajiquiro*. Formerly famed as warriors, they now seek employment in the army or the police force.

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

Farming.—The life of the modern *Lenca* village centers around the milpa. The male members of a family generally spend 5 or 6 days a week in a straw hut built near the field. They return bringing food to the village at the end of a week. The principal crops, many of them of European origin, are maize, wheat (which is threshed with flails), plantains, "chatos" and fig-bananas, cacao, a little coffee, varieties of gourds, sugarcane, vegetable pear, squash, beans (black beans are preferred in this section, but various types are planted), a little tobacco, yuca, and chili peppers. In certain places, such as Marcala and Santa Elena, oranges

are an important crop. Around the town of Intibucá peaches are grown in quantities. In parts of El Salvador peanuts are cultivated. (For land tenure and working, see pp. 212–213; and for agricultural ceremonialism, p. 215.)

Wild foods.—The chief noncultivated food of the *Lenca* is the palm. The hearts of the royal and suyate palms and the early sprouts of the pacaya palm (*Chamaedorea* sp.) are favorites. Blackberries, wild guayabos, granadillas, and other fruits are eaten in the season.

Hunting.—All Highland Indians hunt, either singly or in pairs; occasionally larger groups hunt deer. Sometimes dogs are used for pursuing deer and jaguars. Generally, however, a man depends only on his bow and arrow. Songbirds are caught in cane traps.

Fishing.—The *Lenca* are not ardent fishermen. Expeditions to poison fish are organized by the town leader, but women are not permitted to participate. A river is dammed with stones, and a cane net or funnel is placed in an opening of this dam, its mouth facing upstream. The poisonous barbasco vine is broken into lengths and thrown into the water. The stunned and dead fish come to the surface and are carried by the current into the trap. The leader, or his representative, divides the catch according to the amount of work performed by each individual.

Domestic animals.—Dogs, chickens, and a few pigs, ducks, and turkeys are the usual possessions. Very rarely the Indian owns a horse and a cow, and sometimes the town owns a few head of cattle. In Intibucá particularly, goats and some sheep are raised.

Food preparation.—Generally food is boiled in pots placed on a hearth built of three stones. Very rarely a clay oven is found outside the house, either incorporated in the house wall or built separately. New metates have three short feet, but the highly prized old metates brought from ancient sites have four and even five legs. Some metates are simply boulders having a slightly concave surface. The manos vary in length.

The most important foods are maize, salt, chili, and beans. Salt is believed to come from the sun, which the *Lenca* still hold sacred. Chilis are supposed to give strength and to act as a purgative and a stimulant. Whenever a *Lenca* departs on a journey he carries chilis mixed with tortillas or tamales.

Food is eaten from calabashes or from the vessel in which it was cooked. It may be wrapped in a tortilla or in a flat maize cake. Essential to every meal are tortillas and rounded tamales (also called totapostes), which are made of maize or of maize and chili, wrapped in shucks, and roasted in the ashes of the hearth. Steamed whole ears of roasted maize and beans are staples. These are supplemented by yuca, bananas, plantains, squash, and the other produce of the farm and forest. Boiled or raw eggs are eaten, and on rare occasions fowl is wrapped in banana leaves and

boiled or roasted in the ashes. Meat and fish are generally cut into strips, dried and smoked.

Food storage.—Selected ears of ripe maize in the husk are carefully piled to the ceiling in a corner of a room. These last from one season to another. In sections of the Department of Intibucá, maize kernels are kept in a perpendicular, hollowed log, which is covered with a thick cloth.

VILLAGES AND HOUSES

The villages are laid out as any modern Honduran town. A “cabildo,” which is usually distinguishable by the wooden fence and gate around the porch, often serves both as the “commandancia” and the house of the local authority. All *Lenca* towns have churches.

The typical *Lenca* village house is made of adobe and has a roof thatched with straw or grass or, rarely, covered with tiles. Infrequently, walls are made of wooden slabs. The most modern houses in the larger towns are built of adobe and have tile roofs. The average dwelling has one room, with a front porch that is open on the sides but covered by an extension of the roof supported by three vertical wooden posts (fig. 48).

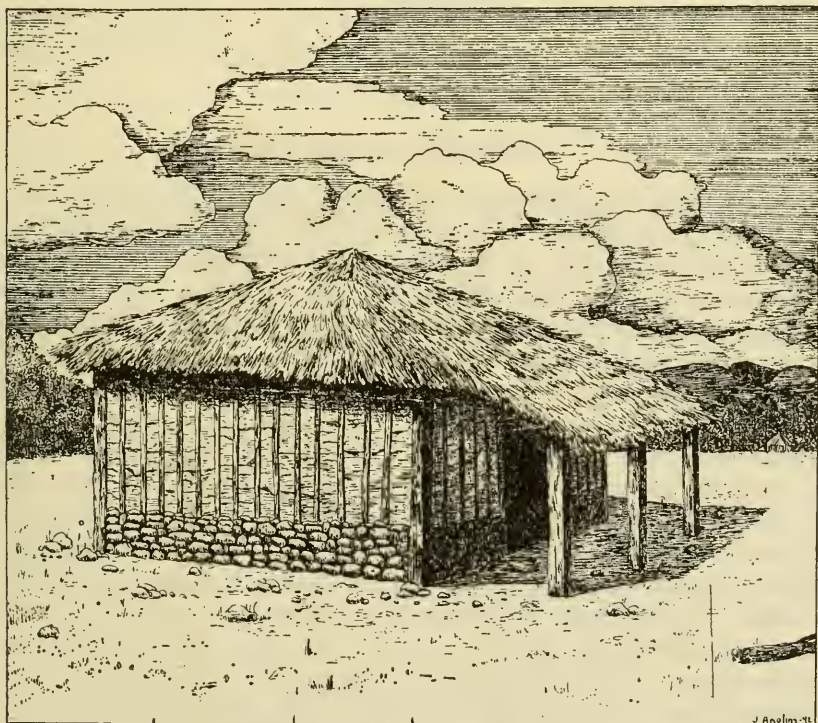


FIGURE 48.—*Lenca* house.

Often, especially when the roof is tile, two additional wooden posts are placed at corners of the house in the adobe and at the inner edge of the extension over the porch. In certain settlements, for example, Santa Elena, there is a porch at the rear, which is sometimes used as a kitchen. The houses are generally very low (a mounted man can reach the edge of the roof). The foundation of the adobe house is a low stone wall plastered with mud. The wall consists of cane or wooden poles set vertically upon this foundation. These vertical poles are laced with horizontal poles or cane and plastered with mud, which generally contains some gravel. Some of the wooden or cane supports protrude on the outside. In making the roof, dried grass or straw is tied to a framework of cane or poles. Dirt floors are usual, except that the porch floor may be covered with cobblestones.

Household furniture.—In the colder regions the hearth is in the center of the room; elsewhere it is in a corner or by a side wall. Beds or shelves are made of wooden frames interlaced with vines and hung from the ceiling by vines. They serve many purposes. The wealthy Indians make frame beds of woven vines supported on sticks and covered with skins. In most houses the family sleeps on the floor around the fire.

Calabashes are hung on forked sticks, which are stuck in the walls or tied to the shelves. On the floor are the metate, a small pile of firewood, the maize granary, and very occasionally a stool. Frequently, a wooden cross is attached on the outside of the house to the wall or roof to keep off the evil spirits.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Clothing.—*Lenca* dress is highly variable. About 1925, in the villages of Chinacía and Guajiquiro, Department of La Paz, the women had one type of costume for daily use and another for ceremonial occasions. The latter was given to a bride-to-be by her future husband who purchased it in Guatemala, generally in Esquipulas. It consisted of a white huipil, a blue skirt with white or red lines forming large squares, and a red or multicolored belt. It was worn with a quantity of coin and bead necklaces (M. Bonilla, ms.).

This costume is no longer worn. The modern dress everywhere is generally an Indian version of the 19th-century Spanish Colonial style. In the Departments of La Paz and Intibucá many villages still retain their distinctive local style. Trade with El Salvador has stimulated continual changes, however, so that there exists much local freedom in the details of dress. In Guajiquiro, for example, the women wear wide, gay colored skirts with contrasting vertical rows of colored cloth, which are repeated on the blouse. They grease their hair and wear a multitude of silver rings and bead necklaces, often with coins. The men wear dark jackets and pants and, whenever they can afford it, felt hats. On feast days

some add plaits of junco, a palm-leaf fiber, as hatbands, and varicolored ribbons and feathers (M. Bonilla, ms.).



FIGURE 49.—*Lenca* woman's dress, Santa Elena.

The dress of Opatoro women is always very bright, with a preference for red and yellow. The blouse has a series of vertical bands of contrasting colors coming in two lines and reaching from the upper part of the breast to the waist, where they almost meet. This gives the effect of a bodice, the intervening space between the two lines being filled with horizontal bands also of contrasting colors. A yokelike collar, about 3 or 4 inches (7.5 to 10 cm.) wide, of the same color as the blouse encircles the garment, leaving a space between the beginning of the breast and the neck. The dress continues upward and ends in a narrow band a little above the start of the throat, giving to the whole the appearance of an old-fashioned guimpe. The artificial guimpe has vertical bands of contrasting colors. The sleeves are three-quarters length with two horizontal, colored bands below the elbow and a sort of drooping flounce for a cuff. The skirt is wide, with colored bands at the top of a bottom flounce.

The Opatoro women wear their hair in long braids, into which are plaited many gay-colored ribbons, and stick a number of combs set with cheap glass stones in their hair. These combs are bought in El Salvador by the men. The men use pants and shirts of drill, both of the same

color and generally with a narrow blue stripe. They carry a machete at their belt. The Santa Elena women wear the kind of dress shown in figure 49. The skirt is rolled at the waist and is worn higher in the front than in the back. The blouse has a small peplum, almost like a bustle in the rear. The Yarula dress is fairly similar to that of Santa Elena, differing only in a small detail at the neck which ends in a narrow protrusion like a dickey. The skirt has two rows of inverted V's on the bottom. All *Lenca* women are very fond of silver rings, usually made of melted coins, quantities of necklaces of beads and coins, and charms, both the typical church scapulas and those they make themselves of gay-colored thread. These charms supposedly have power to ward off evil. On their heads they wear bright silk shawls, in the manner of the non-Indian women. On special occasions they put a man's hat decorated with a band of ribbon on top of this shawl.

Sandals differ slightly throughout the region. The most common style has a strap between the fourth and the big toe. However, horizontal straps across the toes are frequently seen. A type which comes from Marcala and Santa Elena (pl. 33, *top*) has an outer rim as well as buckles all around the foot. This type is not usual in the more isolated communities.

TRANSPORTATION

Trails.—True *Lenca* country is very wild and grand, with steep rugged mountains, the highest in Honduras. The trails follow the mountain crests with their numerous outcroppings of limestone bedrock and less frequently of volcanic tuffs. The protruding limestone rock, tall pines, and scarce underbrush make travel in the wet season very difficult, for the large rock layers tend to be slippery, and the land washes away quickly. The trails throughout the *Lenca* country are cut into the outcroppings in such a manner as to permit the passage of men and animals. It is impossible to know if these were in use before the Spanish Conquest, but they are found on the modern *Lenca* trails, even on those not intended for beasts of burden.

Carrying devices.—In the *Lenca* area both sexes carry objects in a net bag (pl. 33, *bottom*), which is supported by a tumpline or swung over one shoulder. The size of the bag varies according to need. Babies are carried on the back in a shawl. Commonly, a woman carries a net bag loaded with wood and, on top of it, a child in a shawl. Sometimes large hide sacks are carried by the men.

The *Lenca* travel on foot. In the more isolated sections the laboring men, who make long journeys laden like beasts of burden, practice the old custom of tying stones to their toes in order to enlarge their feet. It is believed that large feet improve their grip on the rough and steep trails. Rarely the *Lenca* ride horseback using saddles made of a single piece of

leather and wooden stirrups copied from the 16th-century Spanish types. The few horses which belong to the Indians are not broken to the bit but are ridden with a rope halter.

MANUFACTURES

Basketry.—Baskets are made of pine needles and of caña brava, a wild cane. Certain villages, e.g., Chinacla, are famous for their baskets. There is no shape or size peculiar to the *Lenca*. Many baskets are copied from gourds; others are smaller and have either separate covers or covers attached to the handles. Sometimes the baskets are colored, the cane being dyed before weaving. Cochineal, achiote, and indigo are the principal tints employed. These are found either wild in the forest or, especially cochineal, are brought from El Salvador. Some of the *Lenca* make hats of leaves, generally of the suyate palm, cut into strips, braided and sewed together.

Weaving and cordage.—The *Lenca* are said to have woven cloth in the past century, but today the industry has disappeared. Cordage for net bags and such is made from the fiber of the suyate palm, pinuela, and maguey. The fibers are spun with wooden whorls operated by two persons who stand 10 to 30 yards apart. Netting needles are made of bamboo, wood, or palm. Rope is made from the same material as the thread, the suyate palm-leaf fiber being in most demand for ropes used in house construction. Rope is also made of twisted hide.

Skin preparation.—The *Lenca* have always used the skins of wild animals. In the past century, jaguar, watusso, and deer skins served as the dress of many men. Today skins are frequently worn as an apron or are used for blankets or bedding. In certain isolated villages they are slung over the shoulders as a cloak or shirt. Skins of wild animals as well as of cows are scraped, then stretched and dried in the sun. No curing agent is used.

Pottery.—The women make coiled pottery. The favorite shape is a rounded jug or bulge-bowl with two handles. Modern painted pottery is not of aboriginal origin. A few vessels are colored, either solidly or half one color, half natural. The paint is of foreign manufacture and comes from El Salvador or Tegucigalpa. Pots are fired in kilns built into the earth and rising only slightly above the surface. The vessels are covered with large slablike broken pieces of baked clay and are fueled with wood.

Gourds.—Gourds of certain types are not only eaten but are utilized as water jugs, as models for baskets, and even as masks for dances. For a water jug the gourd is cleaned through a perforation in the top, and most of the seeds and pulp are extracted. Pebbles or earth with pebbles are then put inside it, and, after drying in the sun, it is shaken so that the stones and earth rub the sides clean.

Fire making.—Fire is made by striking together two white or hard stones so that the sparks fall on dry cotton, which is carried in a short hollowed stick or on dried leaves and pine needles.

Candles are made from the wild waxplant (*Myrica cerifera*), a common forest weed. The berries are crushed and boiled, and the residue is placed in wooden molds with a fiber wick.

Starch.—A yuca starch is used by the Indians for medical purposes, such as plasters, and is sold to non-Indian towns for stiffening clothes. The root is peeled, ground very fine on the metate, and sun-dried on a hollowed plank or log until it is gummy.

Weapons.—The long bow is of palm wood. The arrows are relatively short. "Killing" arrows have an iron point, $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches (about 9 to 11 cm.) long. "Stunning" arrows have rounded cork-shaped wooden butts reinforced with iron bands and very small protruding iron knobs at the ends. The primary arrow release is used. Quivers are narrow hide cylinders.

SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

Formerly, each *Lenca* community maintained its integrity in its relationship to other towns and was strictly endogamous. The cacique and the council (*casicasgo*) controlled the village land. This council was composed of the cacique, the *curandero* (called in many places *inteligente*), the priest or soothsayer (called *hechicero*, "witch"), and the town elders. It officiated in all disputes involving the town. When an intertown problem arose the council of each town met and clarified its position, after which the two councils met together to settle the matter. If no agreement could be reached, the towns went to war. In 1888 disputes concerning the location of the town boundaries of Santa Elena (the ancient *Jocoara*), *Opatoro*, *Polorós*, and *Arambala* arose. The councils of the towns could not reach an agreement and war ensued. The Honduran Government intervened, and now these and nearly all other towns have their own legal title to land.

The town, though modified by European influences, is practically the only vestige of the ancient tribal organization. In certain towns the cacique still inherits his office; in others he is elected. The village, not the individual, owns the land, but its distribution varies with each settlement. In some villages the local authorities, such as the *alcalde* and the *jefe politico*, give the allotments; in others, the village elders with the *alcalde*; in a few, the cacique; and in still others, as in *Guajiquiro*, the land is communal, that is, it is worked by the town without dividing it into separate portions.

In the cases of communal farming the cacique distributes the produce of the town. What is not consumed locally is saved for trade, which the

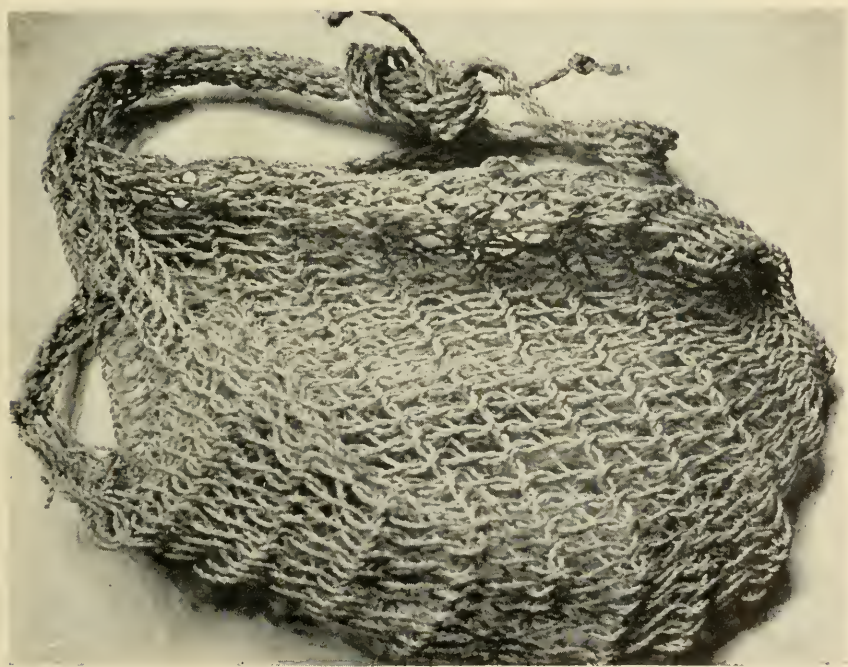


PLATE 33.—Lenca manufactures. *Top:* Santa Elena and Marcala type sandals.
Bottom: Net carrying bag. (Courtesy Doris Stone.)



PLATE 34.—Lenca Indians. *Top:* Typical Intibucá fences. *Bottom:* Wearing a gourd mask at dance of festival of the patron saint of the town. (Courtesy Doris Stone.)

cacique controls. The amount of land given to a person is counted in *tareas*—approximately the amount of land one man can work in a day. Four to eight *tareas* per man is the usual allotment. When the soil grows poor the Indian complains to the authorities and proves that he needs another piece. The land is cultivated by the individual with the help of his sons. In some places, as around Opatoro, laborers are assigned to work with him.

The structure of the aboriginal class system has been modified almost beyond recognition. There appears still to be an upper and a lower class. The first includes the cacique, his immediate family, and the council members and their families. The lower class is composed of the laborers, who seem to take no part in the running of the village affairs.

Personal property excludes land, but consists of one's house and its contents and livestock. In general, a widow retains her husband's property and deeds it over to the son when he is 18 years old, though she may retain the house. If there are no sons, the property goes to the deceased's oldest brother. If there is no brother, the council assigns the property to the nearest male relative.

A woman who commits adultery may be killed by her husband, but the man involved is not punished. Criminals are forced by the council to work 2 or 3 days without food.

CANNIBALISM

Cannibalism was rarely practiced by the *Lenca*. On rare occasions the heart of an enemy was eaten in order that the enemy's valor might be acquired. Such practices are now forbidden by the Honduran authorities.

LIFE CYCLE

Childbirth.—*Lenca* childbirth involves little ceremony. A woman delivers her child into a bed of leaves on the floor of the house, using a stooping position during delivery. She may give birth alone, cutting the cord with a bamboo or steel knife and burning it, or her husband may cut the cord. In cases of prolonged labor, her husband or another woman may burn certain leaves under her. This simple ceremony is called *zahumería*.

Very infrequently today the old custom of providing the newborn with a "nagual" is practiced. The maternal grandmother presents the baby with an animal, such as a snake, frog, or toad, and with *chicha*, maize, beans, and other foodstuffs. The "nagual" is, or was, an important quasi-religious object which the child always kept, even taking it to bed.

Pregnant women are believed to possess extraordinarily strong eyes, that is, their own combined with those of the fetus. They are not allowed

to witness the birth of either human beings or animals, for these eyes are reputed to kill the newborn.

Marriage.—Girls marry when they are between 12 and 14 years of age, boys between 14 and 18. Marriages are usually prearranged by the parents of the couple, although there is no set rule. When the boy does the courting, he throws pebbles at his prospective sweetheart when she is washing clothes by a stream or bathing and leaves a load of wood in front of her house. If the girl and her family approve the match, they bring the wood into the house. At the age of puberty the boy lives with his family-in-law-to-be for several months or longer, while the girl lives with the boy's family. If the parents approve of the boy and girl, the latter returns to her parents' house and lives with the boy. Should this period of trial marriage turn out satisfactorily, it may be terminated and the marriage made permanent by a feast and merrymaking. Otherwise both parties are free to separate and choose other mates. Usually the newly married couple stays with the girl's family for 1 or 2 years before establishing a home for themselves. The *Lenca* are polygynous, and a family head may have three or four wives. When a man is through with a woman he may arrange for her to live with her children in a separate house, but he is responsible for her food.

Death.—When a man dies his widow walks around the house moaning and singing for 1 day. A feast is held, and quantities of chicha are drunk for 9 days. Formerly, the deceased was placed on one of the hanging beds or shelves throughout the merrymaking, but the law now requires burial on the day of death. Feasting, drinking, and sometimes music may, however, go on for the full 9 days.

ESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Masks and dances.—Calabash masks are painted, but wooden masks are not. The latter are very simply carved, and human teeth are added to them. Occasionally they are named, e.g., in Intibucá one mask is called "Capitán Mayor." All masks are used in ceremonial dances, which are performed by the councilmen, generally at the festival of the patron saint of the town (pl. 34, *bottom*). Sons learn the dance steps from their fathers. The hechicero is in charge of the ritual which accompanies the dancing. Marcelina Bonilla (ms.) describes a dance at Santa Elena in which the men wore feathered caps over their painted calabash masks and cotton clothes (*manta*)—a shirt and pants with a cow's tail sewed to them. The dancers circled, the steps being interspersed with much knee bending. In another dance of the same village a large lancelike stick is thrown into the air and caught with much dexterity, mimicking, and contortion. In some dances, such as those in Intibucá, flags are carried, as well as tall bastions of the church with small silver crosses on the ends.

Musical instruments.—*Lenca* drums are of wood with hide heads, which are tuned with quills. Bamboo flutes have three or four stops. Rattles are made of gourds attached to a stick.

Alcoholic beverages.—Chicha, an intoxicating drink made from maize, is supposedly purifying and ritualistic. The kernels are boiled with water and brown sugar in a clay pot, which is then covered with a cloth and left to ferment. The excrement of goats or sheep wrapped in a rag may be added after fermentation has begun in order to strengthen its flavor. This custom, however, is slowly disappearing. In parts of El Salvador chicha may be flavored with peanuts, and in Honduras with pineapple peelings.

RELIGION

Many *Lenca*, although nominally Catholic, still retain certain aboriginal beliefs. Sacred mountains and hills, considered as holy places in pre-Conquest times, now have wooden crosses on their summits. The *Lenca* still have a profound respect, or even adoration, for the sun.

Their life, which depends on agriculture, is marked by periodical offerings to the seasons or to the crops. Planting and harvesting ceremonies are celebrated throughout the *Lenca* area. When it is time to clear the land, chicha is drunk, copal is burned to the four directions, and straw or corn-shuck crosses are put in the centers of the fields. At sowing time chicha is drunk, copal is burned, and bonfires are built outside the fields. Drunkenness is explained by the belief that chicha purified the soul and expels bad thoughts. The soul is thus purified for the sacred business of planting. Throughout the *Lenca* country men abstain from sexual intercourse at this time. They stay at the milpas, and women live in the towns. When maize is in the silk, copal is burned and chicha is drunk. At this time also the women are forbidden to visit the milpa, for it is feared that they might contaminate the crops.

When the fields are harvested and it is time to divide the produce, masked men dance around the piles of grain to the music of drums, rattles, and whistles. Offers of food are made to the sun. The hechicero is in charge of this ceremony. At this time he promises the cacique to defend the council.

Many of these Highland Indians make a yearly pilgrimage on April 24, the day of San Gaspar, the patron of Taubelve, to Taubelve in the relatively low hills south of Lake Yojoa. There is not much doubt that this visit has its roots in pre-Conquest days. Taubelve is supposed to mean in *Lenca* "House of the Tiger" (Squier, 1858). Here many years ago a cache of what may have been pre-Colombian copper bells was discovered in a cave. The *Lenca* go to mass at the nearby church of La Misión and then visit the cave, where they hold their own secret communion with the spirits within. They remain 2 to 4 days at Taubelve, sleeping in the roads and fields or wherever they can and drinking great quantities of chicha.

In all *Lenca* communities the most sacred day of the year is that of the patron saint of the village. Often the saint is carried on a visit to the patron of a friendly neighboring town. Such excursions are always the occasion for heavy chicha drinking by both sexes, for dancing by the men under the leadership of the hechicero, and usually for feasting.

SHAMANISM AND MEDICINE

The shaman (inteligente or curandero) occupies an important place in the life of the village. He is charged with the curing of the sick through both ritual means and the application of practical remedies. When he has a patient to be cured he offers white chickens and copal at the crosses on the sacred hilltops, after which he returns to the ailing person and gives him certain curative drinks.

Formerly some soothsayers were women. They prophesied the future by throwing different-colored beans from calabashes as one would throw dice.

Certain general cures are usually given by the inteligente, but others may be prepared by anyone. For indigestion every portion of the body is massaged, pulled, and stretched. For fevers the patient is wrapped in as much cloth as possible to produce sweating, or a cure called ruda is administered. Certain leaves are heated and rubbed on the sick person. Excrement, burned to a powder, is sometimes taken internally. Of the many plants and herbs used as medicine by the *Lenca*, the most popular ones are listed below:

- Hoja del aire (*Bryophyllum pinnatum*). The leaves are boiled and taken for colic.
- Malba and pavana. The leaves of these low bushes are covered with oil and placed on afflicted parts in order to reduce inflammation.
- Tuna, or nopal. The leaves of this member of the cactus family are rubbed with oil or grease, heated, and then used as a plaster for cases of colic.
- Siguapate. The leaves of this bush are placed on the forehead to cure headache.
- Pasote and ipacina. A tea made of the leaves of this plant combined with manzanilla and a variety of mint is used as a vermifuge.
- Gramma, maize milk, and cañafistola (*Cassia* sp.). Teas made of these are used to cure kidney trouble.
- Sauco (usually *Salix chilensis*). An infusion of the leaves and flowers of this willow is set in the sun for 2 days and used to cure coughs.

MYTHOLOGY

Herrera y Tordesillas (1730, vol. 3) recorded a legend of a goddess named Comicahual. The tale is still told around Puringla and Guajjiuro, but the name of the deity has been modified to Comitzahual.

In certain communities, such as Opatoro, the belief is held that people can change themselves into animals and back again into people. The inhabitants claim that this has actually happened to a woman from this

village. They say she turned herself into a pig, and the whole town, infuriated, kicked her and beat her, as a pig, until she was black and blue. The pig ran into the forest and changed back to the woman, who was found the next day in her house, bruised from head to foot.

LORE AND LEARNING

Ordinary products are measured by baskets, which carry the equivalent of 4 pounds. This is the standard medium in the interior of Honduras, and the *Lenca* do not use any other measure. Time is measured by the amount necessary to accomplish a certain task (tarea) and is stated in terms of tareas and fractions thereof. Space is measured by the distance that can be covered in a day's walk, but the Spanish measure, vara (32 inches), is also used in certain places for smaller distances.

The year is divided into 54 moons and has 336 days. It is divided into the seasons of sowing, harvesting, preparing the soil, the time of the appearance of the young corn, the blossoming, etc. Each of these periods has its own meaning and is often celebrated by ceremonies held in the fields.

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