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THE SIGUA: SOUTHERNMOST AZTEC OUTPOST

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The fact that an Aztec colony existed in northwestern Panamá in the sixteenth century has been known to scholars for over half a century but the curious history of this group, scattered through various documentary sources, has never been brought together. As the vicissitudes of the Sigua typify larger movements of population and what must have been the fate of many other native tribes during the Colonial period, we shall follow the course of events which carried them from Anahuac to Panamá and ultimately to the Island of Jamaica.

The name Sigua is also spelled Segua, Zegua, or Çigua and it is thought that Xicagua, Chichagua, and Shelaba may be synonyms. Sigua signifies "stranger" in the language of Talamanca and is comparable to the Aztec words Popoloca and Chontal or the Greek βαρβαρος, which were applied indiscriminately to foreigners.

The earlier modern reference we have found to the Sigua is in Gabb's classical work, "On the Indian Tribes and Languages of Costa Rica." He did not, however, recognize their linguistic affiliations and merely states¹ that, when he visited the country, a tribe which he called Shelaba was extinct and that their language was lost. The fact that these Indians spoke the Aztec tongue apparently was first ascertained by the great Costa Rican scholar, León Fernández,² whose publication of a large series of documents has supplied the material on which this study is based. Brinton in 1891 and Peralta in 1893 both classified the Sigua among the Nahua tribes, but as recently as 1911 Thomas and Swanton thought it necessary to state that, although their existence had been denied, the historical evidence did not admit of doubt. This evidence we shall now examine.

The first hint that Mexican Indians were living in Panamá dates from the year 1541, when a soldier named Cristóbal Cansino declared that the cacique Coaza had said to him that Hernán Sánchez de Badajoz was a gentleman but that Rodrigo de Contreras was a *motolín*, a word which means "poor" in the Aztec tongue.³ Coaza had been taken prisoner in the valley known in

¹ Gabb, 1875, p. 487.

² Fernández, 1889, p. 107.

³ Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 6, p. 188.

the sixteenth century as Coaza or Duy, which corresponds to the river basin now known as Tarire or Sixaola, located behind the Atlantic seaboard in north-western Panamá.

From additional testimony regarding the expeditions of Badajoz and Contreras, taken in 1546, we learn that the cacique Coxele, who was second in command to Coaza, spoke the tongue of Nicaragua, presumably meaning Nahuatl.⁴ Another chief was named Tamagaz which is a Nahuatl name. In Nicaragua the creator-god was called Tamagastat and, among the Aztec, priests were known as tlamacasqui.⁵

In 1564, Juan Vázquez de Coronado pacified the region of which we write and received the submission of various chiefs. Among these was the cacique Yztolín who dwelt near the village of Hara in the Coaza valley. This chief is stated to have been "a Mexican, cacique of the Chichimecs" and his words were translated by one Lucas Descobar, who is described as a *naguatato*, a corruption of *nahuatlato*, the Aztec word for interpreter. After Yztolín had submitted, the Spanish general, it was said, "embraced him and spoke to him in his own tongue," which he had learned in México.⁶

The explanation of how the Aztecs happened to have travelled so far from their homes is contained in a description of Costa Rica written in 1572 by Juan de Estrada Rávago. After picturing the wealth of the country in gold, he states that the great King Montezuma sent his armies more than six hun-

⁴ Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 6, p. 294.

⁵ Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 6, p. 263. Lothrop, 1926, pp. 65, 66.

⁶ "En el pueblo de Hara, cordillera de la mar del norte, provincia del Guayamí, comarca del valle de Coaza, ques en las provincias del Nuevo Cartago y Costa Rica, en cinco días del mes de hebrero de mill é quinientos y sesenta é quatro años, antel muy magnífico señor Jhoan Vázquez de Coronado, justicia mayor y capitán general destas provincias del Nuevo Cartago é Costa Rica, justicia mayor, juez de rresidencia y visitador general de la provincia de Nicaragua por su magestad, é á su llamamiento, pareció presente el cacique llamado Yztolín, mexicano, cacique de los Chichimecas, comarca del pueblo de Hara, el qual dixo, por lengua de Lucas Descobar, naguatato, qué'l venía á ver lo que el dicho señor general le mandava; al qual el dicho señor general dixo, por la dicha lengua, que su merced venía, en nonbre de su magestad del rrey don Phelipe nuestro señor, á qué'l fuese christiano é su vasallo y le diese la ovidiencia devida y le tuviese por su rrey é señor, como lo avían hecho todas las demás provincias; y haciendolo así, le tendría el dicho señor general por amigo; al qual el dicho cacique, por el dicho naguatato, dixo que estava presto de ser vasallo de su magestad y de servir al dicho señor general en su rreal nombre é le tener toda amistad; en señal de lo qual el dicho señor general le abrazó é le dió hachas, chaquira, cuchillos y otras muchas cosas; con lo qual el dicho cacique pareció quedar contento é le prometió de servir en lo que le mandase; y el dicho señor general le abraçó é le habló en su lengua é le dixo lo que le avía dicho por lengua del dicho yntérprete, y le rrecibió por vasallo de su magestad; testigos Antonio de Herrera é Francisco de Estrada y Bartolomé Alvarez; y el dicho señor general lo firmó de su nonbre; el qual dicho vasallage dió en su nonbre y de los demás Chichimecas mexicanos questán en el valle de Coaza, é así se le rrecibió = (f.) Ju°. Vázquez de Coronado = Pasó ante mí = (f.) Xpóval de Madrigal, escrivano."—Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 4, pp. 297-98.

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dred leagues to collect tribute consisting of many and very fine pieces of gold. "I have seen," Estrada adds, "the remnants of his soldiers and armies, who are called *Nahuatatos*."⁷

This picture is further amplified by a statement of Yñigo Aranza, governor of Veraguas in 1595. "There are in the land called *Duy*," he says, "more than six thousand Indian warriors, and it is reported that they have traffic with the Indians from México who remained there when word reached them of the first entrance of the Spaniards, they having gone there for the tribute of gold which that province used to give to Montezuma."⁸

The various sources cited indicate clearly that Mexican Indians speaking the Nahua tongue lived in the valley of Duy during the Sixteenth century. Peralta,⁹ on the basis of linguistic analysis, assigns them to the villages of Chicaua, Moyaua, Quequexque, and Corotapa. Fernández Guardia at one time believed that the Sigua perhaps were some of the four hundred "Chichimecs" from Nicaragua who accompanied the expedition of Rodrigo de Contreras in 1540, but later changed his opinion, probably on account of a document stating they were Mangues.¹⁰

In the year 1603, the warriors of Duy embarked on a series of raids against their neighbors which led in the following year to a Spanish punitive expedition and to the founding of a town called Santiago de Talamanca, in which a garrison was maintained. On July 29, 1610, the natives, including the Sigua, attacked the town, captured it and forced the Spaniards to abandon the region completely.¹¹ In spite of repeated attempts at pacification over the course of many years, the Spaniards were unable to reestablish effective control.

Military measures against the Indians during the seventeenth century having failed, the Church endeavored to Christianize them. Dated from 1697, we have a "Report of Fray Francisco de San José, Apostolic Missionary, to the President of the Audiencia of Guatemala, Concerning the Subjection of Talamanca and the Houses and Tribes of the Terrabas Indians."¹² This document is a careful analysis of the Indian population and includes certain information on the Sigua.

⁷ "... el gran rey Montezuma, que envió sus ejércitos, que son mas de seiscientas leguas, antes más que menos, en demanda de dicha provincia, de la cual tuvo muchas y muy especiales piezas de oro en su poder; y así queda hasta hoy día, como V. R. sabe, y ha visto reliquias de sus soldados y ejércitos, que se llaman *Nauatatos*.—Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 3, p. 3.

⁸ Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 5, p. 100. See also a letter from the Bishop of Panamá written in 1620.—*Op. cit.*, p. 243.

⁹ Peralta, 1893, p. XI. See also Gagini, 1917, pp. 37-52.

¹⁰ Fernández Guardia, 1913, p. 11, *fn.* Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 6, p. 308.

¹¹ Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 5, pp. 112, 218, 314.

¹² Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 5, p. 369.

At some time between the year 1610 and 1697, the Sigua had abandoned the interior valley in which they lived and had moved to the Island of Tójar, known today as Isla de Colón, situated off the northern side of Almarante Bay. Fray Francisco states, "The people of the Island are more reasonable [than those of the mainland], of good appearance, and wear their hair down to the waist, both men and women; but they are very fierce, for it is said that this island was settled by a tribe of Mexicans who could not remain in *Talamanca*, being too turbulent; as well as by other similar tribes of the *Térrabas*, and the *Chánguenes*, *Torresques* and *Seguas*, all free-booters. So the language that prevails is *Térraba* mixed with *Chánguen* and some words of *Torresque* and *Segua*."

From the same source, we learn that there were four towns on the Island of Tójar: Coronuza, Puinsa, Quenamasa, and Urutisa. These contained ninety-two houses, each inhabited by fifteen or twenty people. Trade was maintained with the mainland, and hatchets and machetes were exchanged for necklaces and belts of shell. Food included plantains, fish, maize, yuca and pejibay, but green vegetables were scarce. Cultivation extended to other islands and to the mainland, as Tójar was not large enough to support the entire population. Little meat was eaten and drinking was carried to excess.

This picture of the Sigua at the end of the seventeenth century is about what we might expect. A group of warriors settling in a foreign land no doubt secured native women, with the result that succeeding generations, although proud of their ancestry, took on the culture of the locality, including the language.

In 1701, Fray Francisco de San José returned to Talamanca and landed at the Island of Tójar on November 21. His party was attacked by the natives who killed two soldiers and two negroes. The missionary, however, "miraculously escaped with a three-pointed spear thrust in the region of the kidneys."¹³ Thereafter the Island of Tójar was left strictly to itself and its inhabitants soon passed into the realm of the fabulous. Writing in 1709, Fray Antonio de Andrade and Fray Pablo de Rebullida solemnly reported¹⁴ that among the *Zeguas*, *Almirantes*, and *Gaymiles* "we believe, there are some that they say have tails."

On September 28 of the year 1709, there was a general Indian uprising in which the Sigua took part. This resulted in the death of the missionaries we have named and also of ten soldiers, a woman and a child. The following year, Governor Lorenzo Antonio de Granda y Balbín proclaimed that the rebels must submit voluntarily or be burned alive. Many submitted and others, defeated in battle, were transported to the vicinity of Cartago, but the inhabitants of Tójar

¹³ Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 5, p. 399.

¹⁴ Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 5, p. 452.

remained unpunished.¹⁵ Yet there had arisen in the Caribbean a new political power which soon was destined to destroy the Sigua, a feat which the Spaniards had failed to accomplish in nearly two centuries of intermittent warfare. This was the Kingdom of the Mosquitos.

The history of the Mosquitos is briefly as follows: In 1641 a shipload of negro slaves under charge of a Portuguese named Lorenzo Gramalxo was wrecked on an island known as Mosquitos off the coast of Nicaragua. Most of the negroes escaped and, organized as an army, they conquered various native tribes. With the women of the conquered the victors rapidly increased in numbers, creating a mixed race. Encouraged by the English in Jamaica, who formally recognized a Mosquito "king," they raided Spanish and Indian settlements, selling the men to the English as slaves and keeping the women for themselves. These depredations were extended as far north as the Petén and southward to Chiriquí and Portobello.¹⁶ Plans for the extermination of the Mosquitos were drawn up as early as 1711 and 1714, but nothing seems to have been accomplished, and in 1720 the King ordered the Spanish Minister in England to make formal protest over the sale of Spanish subjects as slaves in Jamaica.¹⁷

That the Sigua were taken in these raids comes to light as a result of an investigation ordered by the Spanish Crown in 1722. The Governor of Costa Rica, Don Diego de la Haya Fernández, reported on the 30th of September that over two thousand Indians had been taken from the Island of Tójar and the adjacent mainland. The greater part of these had been exchanged in Jamaica for "guns and munitions, iron and steel and coarse clothing, which traffic is current every year."¹⁸

We have found only one more historical reference to the Sigua, in a report on the Missions of Talamanca written in 1763 by Fray Manuel de Urcullu. "The strangest thing in the mountain region of *Talamanca*," he writes, "is that the Indians of the *Segua* tribe, who are upon the islands and shores of the North Sea, all or nearly all of them have a tail more than a third of a yard long; and doubtless on account of this monstrosity they do not mingle with the other tribes, but are only to be met with on the Island of *Thóxar*, whither the other tribes go to trade for cacao, the yield of which is there very good in quality and abundant. This island is very fertile and abounds in fruit such as plantains, pineapples, etc., but as I am informed it is already deserted on account of the repeated invasions which have been made by the *Zambos* and *Mosquitos* in league with the English, who carry away the people selling the men in *Jamaica* and making use of the

¹⁵ Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 5, pp. 468 *et seq.*

¹⁶ Peralta, 1898, pp. 41, 117. Cockburn, 1735, p. 236.

¹⁷ Peralta, 1898, p. 93.

¹⁸ Arbitration Documents, vol. 1, p. 433.

women. The few that are left have withdrawn into the hills, where they have their settlements or *palenques* . . ." ¹⁹

We have dealt at length with the Sigua because they illustrate two great movements of native populations, one in aboriginal and one in colonial times. The first concerns the expansion of the Aztec.

It is a matter of general knowledge that a great migration of Toltecs from México had taken place several centuries before the Conquest, which brought Mexican settlers to Yucatán, Guatemala, Salvador and Nicaragua. The Aztec, however, although they founded no large colonies when they later rose to power, were ambitious travellers who reached and raided areas far beyond those listed in their tribute rolls.

The earliest of these journeys which has been recorded took place during the reign in México of the Emperor Ahuitzotl (1486-1502), who sent his troops southward to seek an alliance with one of the major tribes of Guatemala, a proposal which was everywhere rejected. It appears that previously there had been a penetration by Aztec "merchants" who had settled all over Guatemala and Salvador in order to act as spies. The Guatemalan chiefs cleaned up this "fifth column," which then moved to Salvador and to a place called Cuilonemihi on the north coast.²⁰ Various Aztec settlements in northern Honduras, dating apparently from just before the Conquest, have also been recorded.²¹

In Nicaragua there was a large Mexican colony of Toltec ancestry on the Pacific coast. "On the North sea and near the Desaguadero (Río San Juan)," wrote Torquemada,²² there is a town of these Indians, and they speak a Mexican dialect not so corrupt as that of Pipiles." The suspicion that this was an Aztec colony is based not only on this statement but also on a royal *cédula*, dated 1535, in which the Queen of Spain ordered the outlet of the San Juan River to be explored because gold was shipped thence to Montezuma by way of Yucatán.²³

Torquemada also wrote of Nahuá-speaking Indians who pushed down the San Juan River and then went to Nombre de Dios in eastern Panamá. Possibly the Sigua were part of this band. It is also possible that they formed the tribe of whom Andagoya²⁴ wrote: "In Nombre de Dios there was a certain race of people called *Chuchures* with a language different from that of the other Indians. They came to settle in this place in canoes from Honduras . . ."

These instances of Aztec penetration to the south from México which we have mentioned are isolated, to be sure, but apparently they represent a consistent

¹⁹ Peralta, 1890, p. 133.

²⁰ Fuentes y Guzmán, 1882, pp. 75-77.

²¹ Strong, Kidder, and Paul, 1938, pp. 9-10.

²² Torquemada, 1723, lib. III, cap. XL.

²³ Peralta, 1883, p. 117.

²⁴ Andagoya, 1865, p. 23.

scheme of expansion, conceived by the Emperor Ahuitzotl and continued under his successor, Montezuma II. Had not the Spaniards arrived, it seems quite possible that the Aztec in course of time might have conquered or made tributary most of Central America, yet it is doubtful that they possessed the political sagacity to consolidate their holdings as did the Inca dynasty. At any rate, the Sigua represent the process of expansion of a strong military state, arrested before it had attained maturity.

We may also note that the Sigua later formed part of a great forced migration from the American continent to the West Indies, where slaves were needed primarily to work in the mines and later on the plantations. The first Spanish settlers were very uneconomical in their treatment of labor and the Antillean population was rapidly exterminated. On the other hand, in parts of the mainland which produced no precious metals there was, from the Spanish point of view, a surplus of labor which could be sold for a profit. The extent of this trade has not been fully recorded, because the Crown soon made it illegal, but it must have been very large. It apparently has left little trace in the present population of the Antilles because the Indians died off rapidly under the combination of strange surroundings, bad food and hard labor conditions, which negro slaves were able to survive.

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²⁵ We have utilized the translations in this series when possible, but it is so rare that we have given also references to the more accessible *Documentos de Costa Rica*.

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DATA ON ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS MADE IN NICARAGUA

DAVID SEQUEIRA

New York, New York

During seven years spent in my native country of Nicaragua I dedicated myself exclusively to the study of our pre-Columbian civilizations or culture. My search for tombs, monuments, vestiges of temples or any form of architecture, pictographs, et cetera, led me into many remote and well-nigh inaccessible places. I travelled by water, paddling a canoe up many of the small streams and rivers of the Atlantic Coast, then over a thousand miles on horse-back through Chontales, Esteli, Jinotega, Segovia, and on through the west; through León, back to Managua, up into the mountains of Jinotepe and Diriamba, then down through Rivas, the Islands of Ometepe, Zapatera, Solentiname, Isla del Muerto, all these islands being on Lake Nicaragua, and finally back to Granada, my starting point.

I first made my headquarters in the beautiful old Indian town of Juigalpa, and from there I investigated the surrounding country during a period of over one year without returning once to what we are wont to call civilization.

I found only one kind of burial in Chontales. These were mounds of stone, some carefully concealed by large quantities of earth thrown over them, others just huge piles of stone thrown up over the place where the bones and objects lay. These mounds are often difficult to detect as they do not always have any superficial indication of what they are. The surrounding terrain is full of hills and small rolling mounds very similar to the gentle slopes of the sides of the larger cairns. Often on the side which faces the East (the bodies are buried for the most part lying with the head to the east) there is found a marking stone, a sort of pillar sunk well into the ground so that only a few inches are visible. If there are any fragments of pottery, arrows of flint, or stone hatchets near, there is invariably a burial. But many times these cairns contain absolutely nothing but broken pieces of stone and terracotta. I found mounds varying in size from a few feet in circumference to as much as two hundred feet. Their height varied from surface level to as much as twenty feet, some of them which I found near the great "Piedra de Coapa" (which rises ninety-nine feet above the surrounding plains in the northern part of the Department of Chontales) are large enough to permit as many as five horsemen to travel abreast.

Without doubt these Indians of Chontales were very primitive in their customs. They buried the bones of their dead directly in the earth and not in large urns like their neighbors to the east. Small terracotta jugs or bowls often appeared filled with ashes or teeth, sometimes with fine beads of green or bluish stones. The bodies always lay full length and in one grave I found several, the skulls placed together and the bodies stretched out in a star-like formation. Most of these bones completely disintegrate as soon as the air touches them. The teeth however are in fine condition and I do not recall having found any with cavities. For the most part they were in complete sets, though occasionally some were missing. In some graves I found the teeth filed in the middle, in deep grooves.

In the partial burials or places where there are fragments there are occasionally, but not often, some scattered bones. Whether these were tombs that had been despoiled, a most likely thing to have happened, or whether they were just left over from some large burial in the immediate vicinity, I was not able to tell.

In Chontales the graves are lined with myriads of stones. Though apparently carelessly placed, when once removed it is a case of "all the King's horses and all the King's men," for no human hands could ever replace them. These stones were undoubtedly taken from the rivers or streams nearby, for all burials were made in close proximity to water, the lake, river or innumerable brooks which abound throughout the district. The pre-Columbian Indians had two ceremonies for the burial of their dead. The first was when death actually took place and the body was suspended between two trees after it had been carefully wrapped up in a cotton cloth woven around it, similar to a hammock. This was left to dry for twelve moons. At the end of this period, the bones having dried and the flesh disappeared, then they were taken by the high priest to the nearest watering place and carefully washed. Again they were placed in the sun and when completely dried they were buried, being placed in urns or directly in the ground according to the tribal custom.

As there is often almost no superficial indication of the burial places, the phosphorescent lights visible at night over the place where the bones lie often serve as a guiding light. The natives are superstitious about these eerie lights and often are loath to go near them. Many times my efforts were frustrated, for after hours of digging in search of a cairn, only animal bones would appear, some domestic or wild animal having died on the spot.

Near these burials are many large mounds which appear to be a primitive form of pyramid. Although in these I found stone steps carefully cut and laid, I found no evidence of any kind of masonry. These pyramids rose to a height of some thirty or forty feet. In the District of Copelito about two leagues to the south of Juigalpa on the road to the famous mining district of La Libertad, there are many of these mounds. Inclement weather, together

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with the planting season during which no Indian will abandon his "milpa" made it impossible for me to thoroughly investigate these interesting mounds.

In this region of Copelito there are many fine examples of stone carving. Large idols or effigies weighing more than a ton lie grouped here and there unnoticed and unseen, now covered over by underbrush or entirely overgrown by large trees whose roots have wound themselves about them. These are often lying face down. They range from five to seven feet in height and are usually made of round stones of red or blue granite. The lower portions which originally stood in the ground were left rough. The carving of the head-dress and belts is sometimes as fine as lace and of the most beautiful patterns. The insignia of the headbands often indicated authority, spiritual or worldly command. A few are of female figures, the wives of the caciques or princesses. These were either statues of their gods or their chieftains. With great difficulty I removed two of these, each weighing over a ton, to Managua, the capital. Many of the designs show a strong Mayan influence. They are mostly geometrical, with the plumed serpent occasionally appearing. There is much character and expression in the faces. There is dignity and a noble mien.

I did not run across these large idols anywhere else excepting near the "Piedra de Coapa" and those were taller and not so large in circumference or so well carved. They followed the natural line of the stone.

These Indians were very skilful stonemasons. In one large tomb that I opened I found thirteen small statues or effigies, evidently of the thirteen persons whose skeletons I found in this common burial. This tomb was one of the largest I opened. Besides the bones of human beings there were also many of those of deer and small wild animals which had probably been consumed at the feast of death. There were fine stone metates or grinding stones. These have fantastic animal heads over the foreleg while the sides and two hind legs are elaborately carved with intricate and highly artistic designs. Implements of war, arrows of beautifully colored flint, stone hatchets, and rings probably used for throwing, tools of the apothecary, mortars and an instrument for making pills (such as are used today by medicos in the small pueblos), tiny scales for weighing, disks for spinning cotton (spindle wheels), rollers for printing and dyeing cloth, and many fragments of finely painted pottery, as well as many beautiful ornaments of jade and jadeite, malachite, amber, et cetera, were buried near the skulls of women. Thus, almost a complete variety of the work of artisans of the period were buried in the same tomb. These were apparently interspersed throughout the enormous amount of stones, which were mostly uncut and of medium size, though some very large flat slabs usually lie immediately over the body.

Almost no whole pieces of pottery were taken from the tombs in Chontales. They were all broken into bits and it was never possible to assemble

an entire piece. The legs of the tripod plates, so popular with the Indians, were highly colored with yellow, red and black designs. Some of these are allegoric, but they are for the most part geometrical and amazingly symmetrical.

In the mountain range of Amerrique, on a peak, which is in fact a high plateau overlooking much of Lake Nicaragua to the southwest of Juigalpa, there are enormous and important burials, the largest I found anywhere. These are made exactly as the ones in the plains below, but of better construction and on more imposing locations. They are doubtless burials of the high priests and of the most important personages of the Chontals. Here I found no painted pottery, but a few whole and very delicately made bowls of large size and of a dark red clay. They all were geometrical and decorated with chiseled designs, colored with a mineral red.

There were no dragon-heads, eagles, human faces, or any array of colorful arrows such as those I found below. In one large tomb, at a depth of about fifteen feet below the surface, I found a fine hatchet, a ceremonial piece of dark green translucent stone. Everything here in Amerrique abounds in mystery. It is said by the Theosophists that it was here that the first lodge in this hemisphere was formed, and the eminent geographer of the past century, Jules Marcou, believed this range gave its name to the great western continent, that the name *America* comes from the name Amerrique. Many have accepted this theory. Torrential rains prevented my terminating the excavations in Amerrique. Farther down I opened some small burials which contained terracotta dishes and spoons exactly like those used by the Chinese and, most interesting of all, a head of a Pekinese dog perfectly made in clay. There are many small stone statues of idols, as the present natives are wont to call them, about half way down the side of this mountain. I found also many pictographs hidden in the deep woods thereabouts.

These pictographs are found in secluded spots throughout Chontales and the country to the north. Some of them are very primitive, others bear symbols, signs, dots, curves and hieroglyphics. Near the ancient town of Boaco, almost on the border of Matagalpa, there is a field in which there are over fifty huge flat-surfaced rocks upon whose surface many inscriptions are chiseled. There are also figures of monkeys, dragons, and very clearly defined figure writings. Strange to say all the writings are made on the side of the rocks facing the south.

OMETEPE

The Chorotegas inhabited the western coast of Lake Nicaragua and the adjoining islands. The largest, the twin volcanic island known as Ometepe, which in Aztec means Twin Mountain, was the residence of the caciques and royal families.

These burials were not made of stone, though occasionally some *are* found,

but they were more shallow and near the surface. They buried exclusively in large terracotta urns over the mouth of which was placed an inverted plate, painted with symbolic designs. Their pottery was extravagantly decorated and the designs were symbolic, the plumed serpent and lefthanded God of War predominating. There are many fine ceremonial pieces found in these burials, incense burners of fantastic shapes and exotic designs. The jewelry from these urns is beautiful and includes necklaces of turquoise, jade and gold, as well as of seashells, and many miniature, marvelously carved beads of the black coyol. Here I also found bells and rattles of copper with a gold alloy.

There is a curiously shaped burial urn found commonly in these parts, an elongated shoe-shaped urn in which only males were buried; this I knew from the size of the bones as well as from the ornaments or artisan tools found in them. This particular form is said to be found occasionally in Honduras and Perú.

The designs of the pottery from Ometepe and the neighboring shore of Rivas, twelve miles to the west, were so beautiful that I made over a thousand designs copied exactly from the ceramics. I think these speak more eloquently than I can in words, and the collection on exhibition here at the Congress is taken entirely from the pieces I myself excavated.

The only stone idol of importance which I found on this island is on the southern side, and now stands on a spot known as Mérida. It has in all fourteen clearly defined faces carved on its four sides and is the finest of its kind so far found in Nicaragua. Its companion lies at the bottom of the lake; it fell overboard when an unsuccessful attempt was made some years ago to transport them both to the city of Granada. I spent three years and a half on this island, during which time I collected nearly two thousand pieces of pottery, et cetera.

Contrary to the burials in Chontales, here nearly all the ceramics are in a fine state of preservation. The soil is soft and sandy, there are few rocks, and the trees are smaller and not abundant. However, there is not so much stone work in these burials.

Discovering the "materia prima" used by the Indians for coloring their pottery, after three years of work, I finally succeeded in preparing and perfecting it for my own work, so that it is applicable to paper as well as to clay. Since it is vegetable, the Indians baked their pottery, applying to it first what is called a white or cream-colored slip, and after taking it from the kiln it was decorated and painted. These colors—a deep velvety black, glowing red, soft grays, and bright yellow, in variable tones—appear for the most part as bright and lustrous as if they had been painted but yesterday.

The clay used by the Indians was of the finest quality. They used black, a rich cream color, and yellow, as well as several different tones of red, the

deposits of which are found along the shore of the lake just about a mile from the present site of the village of Moyogalpa. The pottery was baked under a high fire and was for the most part of fine quality.

To the south, near the mouth of the San Juan River, lies the group of islands known as Solentiname. Here I found several fine idols of gold, fantastic little figures of phallic origin. The tombs, made like those of Chontales, contained very few entire pieces of pottery.

Near the city of Granada lies the second largest island in the lake, known as "Zapatera," and originally called "Teocalli" by the Indians. This island was non-residential and only burials of priests or the victims of sacrifice are found here. The burials are similar to those of Chontales, containing much stone. Some of the finest ceremonial pieces in my collection I found here.

There are huge stone monoliths still standing in Zapatera and 18 of these were taken from there years ago and placed in the yard of the Jesuit college in Granada. They are all of human figures whose delicate lines show that those artists were serious students of anatomy; many of those in a sitting posture have a huge animal form covering the head and extending down the back. The figures of alligators or wild beasts are reminiscent of the lycanthropy of Tibet.

I found many sacrificial stones, both for animals and human beings. There are vestiges of temples and masonry with broad, well-graded steps leading up to the ruined temple.

While I found few musical instruments in Chontales aside from a few small whistles and several fine percussion instruments, from the islands of Ometepe and Zapatera I took over forty instruments, mostly of the ocarina type, but all of them capable of being played and some having a most beautiful liquid tone. They are of many varieties of form: fantastic birds and animals, many distinct figures on the same small piece in Oriental style mostly in a brilliant black clay. The musical tones produced vary from one to five. The scale used by the Indians was the same as the old Chinese pentatonic scale omitting the first and fourth tones of the scale as we know it. Time has left no traces of the drum in all its variations as the Indians used it.

It was on the "Isla del Muerto," the small Island of the Dead as it is called, adjoining the Island of Zapatera, that I found a most unique musical ceremonial piece, three strata below the surface, under two volcanic eruptions. From this same tomb I took some long, turned blue beads which an eminent authority and erudite archaeologist in Paris believes to be of Phoenician origin.

I do not pretend to put forth any original theories. I tell here only exactly what I myself saw and discovered in the seven years I spent in search of the lost art of a great people which once inhabited this beautiful and fertile land that we now know as Nicaragua.