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THE SIGUA: SOUTHERNMOST AZTEC OUTPOST

S. K. LOTHRROP

Assistant Curator, Middle American Archaeology, Peabody Museum,
Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

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
Popoluca and Chontal or the Greek βοθητας, which were applied indiscrimi-
nately 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 states\(^1\) 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 appar-
etly 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 motolin, a word which means "poor" in
the Aztec tongue.\(^3\) Coaza had been taken prisoner in the valley known in

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\(^1\) Gabb, 1875, p. 487.
\(^3\) Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 6, p. 138.
the sixteenth century as Coaza or Duy, which corresponds to the river basin
now known as Tarire or Siscola, 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. Another chief was named Tamagaz which is a Nahua name. In
Nicaragua the creator-god was called Tamagastat and, among the Aztec, priests
were known as tlamacasqui.

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
Yztolin 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 cor-
rupcion of nahuatlato, the Aztec word for interpreter. After Yztolin had sub-
mitted, the Spanish general, it was said, “embraced him and spoke to him in
his own tongue,” which he had learned in México.

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-

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6 “En el pueblo de Hara, cordillera de la mar del norte, provincia del Guaymí,
comarca del valle de Coaza, que en las provincias del Nuevo Cartago y Costa Rica, en
cinco dias del mes de febrero de mill é quinientos y sesenta é quatro años, antel muy magní-
fico señor Joao Vásquez de Coronado, justicia mayor y capitán general destas provincias
del Nuevo Cartago é Costa Rica, justicia mayor, juez de presidencia y visitador general de
la provincia de Nicaragua por su magestad, é á su llamamiento, pareció presente el cacique
llamado Yztolin, mexicano, cacique de los Chichimecas, comarca del pueblo de Hara, el
qual dixo, por lengua de Lucas Descobar, naguatato, quél venia á ver lo que el dicho
señor general le mandava; al qual el dicho señor general dixo, por la dicha lengua, que
su merced venia, en nombre de su magestad del rey don Phelipe nuestro señor; á qual fuese
christiano é su vasallo y le diese la ovidencia devida y le tuviere por su rey é señor,
como lo avían hecho todas las demás provincias; y hazendo lo así, le tendria 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 reial nombre
é le tener toda amistad; en señal de lo qual el dicho señor general le abrazó é le dió hachas,
chaquiara, cuñillos 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 abrazó
é le habló en su lengua é le dixo lo que le avía dicho por lengua del dicho ynterprete, y le
recivió 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 nombre; el qual dicho
vasallage dió en su nombre y de los demás Chichimecas mexicanos questán en el valle de
Coaza, é asi se le recivió —(r.) Ju. Vásquez de Coronado — Pasó ante mí == (f.) Xpóval
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 Arana, governor of Veragua 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, Quequesque, 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 Tèrrabas 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 más de seiscientos lagunas, 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 Nahuatatos," Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 5, p. 3.
9 Peralta, 1891, p. XI. See also Gagini, 1917, pp. 37-52.
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 Térra-
bas, and the Chánuenes, Torresques and Seguas, all free-booters. So the lan-
guage that prevails is Térraba mixed with Chánuen and some words of Torre-
çue and Segua."

From the same source, we learn that there were four towns on the Island
of Tójar: Coronuza, Puisó, Quenamasa, and Uritisa. These contained
ninety-two houses, each inhabited by fifteen or twenty people. Trade was main-
tained with the mainland, and hatchets and machetes were exchanged for neck-
laces 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, al-
though 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, "miracu-
lously escaped with a three-pointed spear thrust in the region of the kidneys." 18
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 reported 14 that among
the Seguas, 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

remained unpunished.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{18} 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.\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{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 Urculú. “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 Thózar, whether 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

\textsuperscript{15} Documentos de Costa Rica, vol. 5, pp. 468 \textit{et seq.}

\textsuperscript{16} Peralta, 1598, pp. 84, 117. Cockburn, 1735, p. 236.

\textsuperscript{17} Peralta, 1598, p. 93.

\textsuperscript{18} Arbitration Documents, vol. 1, p. 435.
women. The few that are left have withdrawn into the hills, where they have their settlements or *paleques* ...”

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 Cuilonemihí on the north coast. Various Aztec settlements in northern Honduras, dating apparently from just before the Conquest, have also been recorded.

In Nicaragua there was a large Mexican colony of Toltec ancestry on the Pacific coast. “On the North sea and near the Desaguadero (Rio San Juan),” wrote Torquemada, “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.

Torquemada also wrote of Nahua-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 Andagoya 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...

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19 Peralta, 1870, p. 113.
20 Fuente y Guzmán, 1882, pp. 75-77.
22 Torquemada, 1723, lib. III, cap. XL.
23 Peralta, 1871, 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 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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DATA ON ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS MADE IN NICARAGUA

DAVID RQUEIRA
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, etc., 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 Diriramba, 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
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 headdress 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 miem.

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完整 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 Peru.

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, etcetera.

Contrary to the burials in Chontales and elsewhere bear symbols, Icoros of Boaco, almost entirely covered over fifty huge figures were chiseled. There were also figure writings. These are on the rocks facing the

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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, wellgraded 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.