

APPENDIX.

COLLECTION OF RARE AND ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS AND RELATIONS
CONCERNING THE DISCOVERY AND CONQUEST OF AMERICA.
CHIEFLY FROM THE SPANISH ARCHIVES.

PUBLISHED IN THE ORIGINAL, BY E. G. SQUIER, NEW YORK, 1860.

*Carta dirigida al Rey de España, por el Licenciado Dr. Don Diego Garcia de Palacio,
Oydor de la Real Audiencia de Guatemala; Año 1576.*

RUINAS DE COPAN.

CERCA del dicho lugar como van á la ciudad de San Pedro, en el primer lugar de la provincia de Honduras, que se llama Copan, estan unas ruinas i vestijos de gran poblacion i de sobervios edificios, i tales que parece que en ningun tiempo pudo haver, en tan barbaro ingenio como tienen los naturales de aquella provincia, edificio de tanta arte i suntuosidad; es ribera de un hermoso rio, i en unos campos bien situados i estendidos, tierra de mediano temple, harta de fertilidad, é de mucha caza é pesca.

En las ruinas dichas, hai montes que parecen haver sido fechos á manos, i en ellos, muchas cosas de notar. Antes de llegar á ellos, está señal de paredes gruesas i una piedra grandisima en figura de aguila, i fecho en su pecho un quadro de largo de una vara, i en el ciertas letras que no se sabe que sea.

Llegados á las ruinas, está otra piedra en figura de gigante; dicen los Indios antiguas que era la guarda de aquel Santuario; entrando en el se halló una cruz de piedra de tres palmos de alto, con un brazo quebrado.

Mas adelante van ciertas ruinas i algunas piedras en ellas labradas con harto primor; i está una estatua grande de mas que quatro varas de alto, labrada como un obispo vestido de pontifical, con su mitra bien labrada i anillos en las manos. Junto á ella está una plaza muy bien fecha con sus gradas á la forma que escriben del Coliseo Romano, i por algunas partes tiene ochenta gradas, enlosada i labrada por cierto en partes de mui buena piedra é con harto primor; están en ella seis estatuas grandisimas, las tres de hombres armados á lo mosaico con ligagambas, é sembradas muchas labores por las armas, i las otras dos de mugeres con buen ropaje largo i tocaduras á lo Romano; la otra es de obispo que parece tener en las manos un bulto como cofrecito. Devian de ser idolos, porque delante de cada una dellas havia una piedra grande que tenia fecha una pileta con su sumidero donde degollavan los sacrificados i corria la sangre; tambien tenian sendas cazolejas do sacrificavan con sus sahumeries, i en medio de la plaza havia otro pila mayor que parece de bautizar, donde

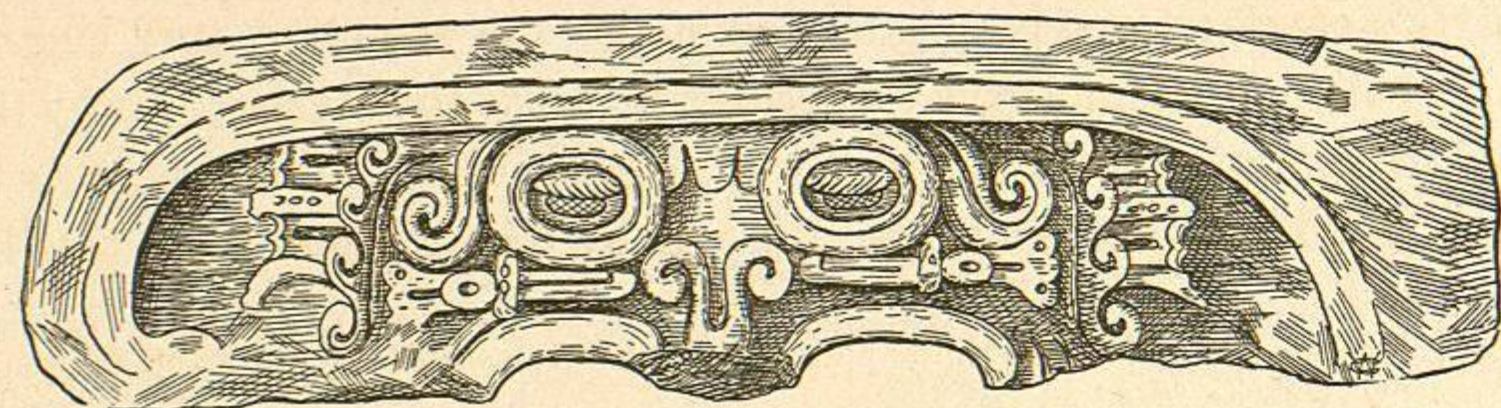
ansimismo devian de hazer en comun sus sacrificios. Pasada esta plaza se sube por muchas gradas á un promontorio alto que devia de ser donde hacian sus *mitotes* i rictos; parece fue fecho i labrado con mucha curiosidad, porque aun siempre se hallan alli piedras muy bien labradas. A un lado deste edificio parece una torre ó terraplano alto que cae sobre el rio, que por alli pasa; hase caido i derrumbado un gran pedazo, i en lo caido se descubrieron dos cuevas debajo del dicho edificio muy largas i angostas, i fecho con harta curiosidad; no he podido averiguar de que servian é para que se hicieron; hay una escalera que baja hasta el rio por muchas gradas. Sin lo dicho hay muchas cosas que demuestran haver havido alli gran poder i concurso de hombres, é pulicia, i mediana arte en la obra de aquellas figuras i edificios. He procurado con el cuidado posible saber por la memoria derivada de los antiguos, que gente vivió alli é que saben é oyeron de sus antepasados, i no he hallado libros de sus antigüedades, ni creo que en todo este distrito hay mas que uno, que yo tengo; dicen que antiguamente havia venido alli i fecho aquellos edificios un gran señor de la provincia de Yucatan, i que al cabo de algunos años se bolvió á su tierra é lo dejó solo i despoblado, i esto parece que de las patrañas que cuentan es la mas cierta, porque por la memoria dicha parece que antiguamente gente de Yucatan conquistó i sujetó las provincias de Ajajal, Lacandon, Verapaz, i la tierra de Chiquimula, i esta de Copan, i ansi la lengua Apay que aqui hablan, corre i se entiende en Yucatan i las provincias dichas. I ansimismo parece quel arte de los dichos edificios es como lo que hallaron en otras los Españoles que primeramente descubrieron la de Yucatan é Tabasco, donde huvo figuras de obispos, hombres armados, i cruces, i pues en ninguna parte se ha hallado tal, si no es en los lugares dichos: parece que se puede creer que fueron de una nacion los que hicieron lo uno i lo otro.

De los lugares dichos me volvi á Guatemala, porque con indisposiciones de algunos del Audiencia fue necesario para el despacho de los negocios, i ansi se mando lo hiciese, pase por lugares bien frios e fragosos donde ay los mayores i mas hermosos pinos i robles, cedros, cipreses, i otros muchos arboles que ay en todas estas provincias.

Estas son las cosas que en el discurso de la visita que hize por orden de V. M. me parecieron dignas de alguna consideracion; no pongo entre ellas la orden i particularidades de su gentilidad por ser muchas i requerir gran escriptura, aunque pudiera por tener hechas memoria de las mas dellas, siempre que V. M. me ocupáre en su servicio procuraré en lo general i en semejantes especialidades de manera que se entienda, que a lo menos tengo buen deseo.

Nuestro Señor la C. i R. persona de V. M. guarde muchos años con aumento de mayores estados i con felicimos sucesos! Desta Vuestra Ciudad de Guatemala, á 8 de Marzo de 1570 [1576] años. C. R. M. humilde i leal criado, que besa las reales manos á V. M.

EL LICENCIADO PALACIO.



SCULPTURE ON STEP OF HIEROGLYPHIC STAIRWAY. (See page 22.)

[TRANSLATION.]

RUINS OF COPAN.

NEAR here, on the road to the city of San Pedro, in the first town within the province of Honduras, called Copan, are certain ruins and vestiges of a great population and of superb edifices, of such skill that it appears they could never have been built by a people as rude as the natives of that province. They are found on the banks of a beautiful river, in an extensive and well-chosen plain, temperate in climate, fertile, and abounding in fish and game.

Among the ruins are trees which appear to have been planted by the hands of men,* as well as many other remarkable things. Before reaching them, we find remains of heavy walls, and a great eagle in stone, having on its breast a tablet a yard square, covered with unknown characters.

Arriving at the ruins, we find another stone in the form of a giant, which the ancient Indians aver was the guardian of this sanctuary. Entering the ruins, we find a cross of stone, three palms in height, with one of the arms broken off. Further on we encounter ruined edifices, and among them a number of stones sculptured with much skill; also a great statue more than four yards in height, which resembles a bishop in his pontifical robes with a well-wrought mitre on his head, and rings on his fingers. Near this is a well-built plaza or square, with steps or grades, which, from description, resemble those of the Coliseum at Rome. In some places it has eighty steps, paved, and made in part at least of fine stones, well worked. In this square are six great statues; three representing men with armor in mosaic, and garters around their legs. Their arms are loaded with ornaments. Two are of women, with long robes, and with head-dresses in the Roman style. The remaining statue is of a bishop, who holds in his hands a packet resembling a box or small trunk. It seems that these statues were idols; for in front of each of them is a large stone, in which is carved a small reservoir, with its groove, in which the blood was collected from the sacrifices. We find also the little altars on which the perfumes were burned before them. In the centre of the square is a large basin of stone, which appears to have served for baptism; and in which, also, sacrifices may have been made in common. After passing this square, we ascend by a great number of steps to a high place, which appears to have been devoted to *mitotes* and other ceremonies; it seems to have been constructed with the greatest care, for throughout we find the stones excellently well worked. On one side of this structure is a tower or terrace, very high, and dominating the river which flows at its base. Here a large piece of the wall has fallen, exposing the entrance of two caves or passages, extending under the structure, very long and narrow, and well built. I was not able to discover for what they served, or why they were constructed. There is here a grand stairway, descending, by a great number of steps, to the river. Besides these things there are many others which prove that here was

* Maudslay translates, "Mounds that appear to have been built by the hand of man," which is correct.

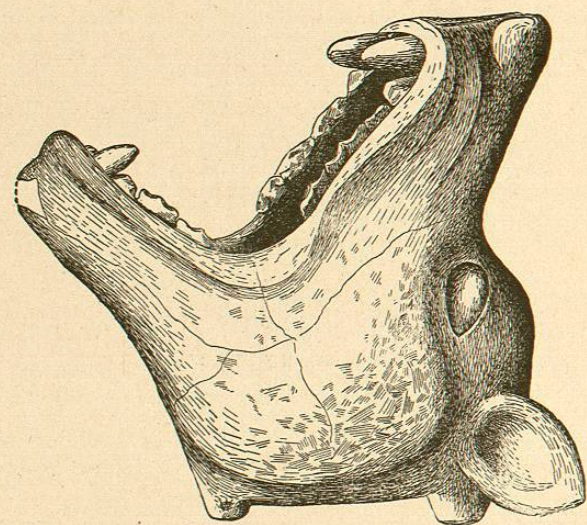
formerly the seat of a great power and a great population, civilized, and considerably advanced in the arts, as is shown in the various figures and buildings. I endeavored, with all possible care, to ascertain from the Indians, through the traditions derived from the ancients, what people lived here, and what they knew or had heard from their ancestors concerning them. But they have no books relating to their antiquities, nor do I believe that in all this district there is more than one, which I possess. They say that in ancient times there came from Yucatan a great lord, who built these edifices, but at the end of some years returned to his native country, leaving them entirely deserted. And this is what appears most likely, for tradition says that the people of Yucatan anciently conquered the provinces of Ayajal, Lacandon, Verapaz, Chiquimula, and Copan; and it is certain that the *Apay* language, which is spoken here, is current and understood in Yucatan and the aforesaid provinces. It appears, also, that these edifices are like those which the first Spaniards discovered in Yucatan and Tobasco, where there were figures of bishops and of armed men, as well as of crosses. And as such things are found nowhere, except in the aforesaid places, it may well be believed that the builders of all were of the same origin.

From the aforesaid places I returned to Guatemala, because some of the members of the Audiencia had fallen sick, and it was necessary for the despatch of business. In returning, I passed through places cold and rough, where there are the largest and most beautiful pines and oaks, cedars, cypresses, and many other varieties of trees, which are to be found in all these provinces.

These are the most remarkable things which I discovered, in the visit which I made, under Your Majesty's orders. I have not recounted all that I learned of the Indians during the time of their infidelity, because it would make volumes; but I can give what I have retained in my memory, if Your Majesty thinks it useful, in such a manner, at least, as to prove my good-will.

May Our Lord preserve Your Royal and Catholic person for many years, with augmentation of dominion, and with happy deeds! From Your city of Guatemala, March 8th, 1576. Your Royal Catholic Majesty's humble and loyal servant,

THE LICENTIATE PALACIO.



TERRA-COTTA VASE (3) FROM TOMB I. (See page 30.)