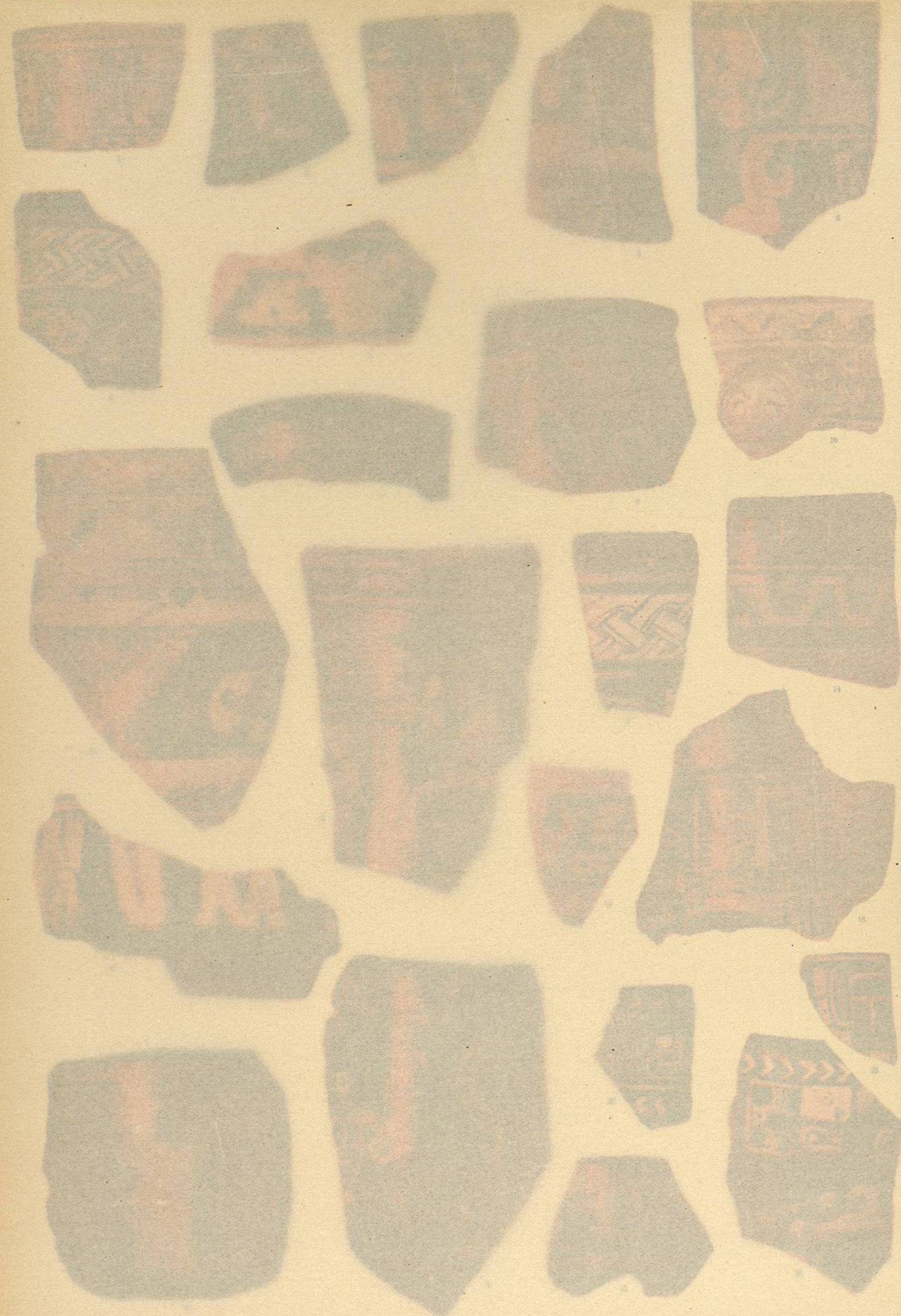


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PEABODY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND  
ETHNOLOGY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

Vol. I.—No. 4.

RESEARCHES IN THE ULOA VALLEY,

HONDURAS.

REPORT ON EXPLORATIONS BY THE MUSEUM, 1896-97.

BY

GEORGE BYRON GORDON.

CAMBRIDGE:

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1898.

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#### EDITORIAL NOTE.

THESE two memoirs, issued under one cover, contain an account of the explorations in Honduras by the Peabody Museum in the years 1896 and 1897. During these years the work at the Ruins of Copan was suspended, owing to the unfortunate position taken by the present government of Honduras in relation to the edict granted to the Museum by the former government. Mr. Gordon has therefore turned his attention to other localities in that region, and has been so fortunate as to find much of interest and importance relating to the antiquities of the country.

The Uloa valley, as shown by Mr. Gordon's researches, was at one time well populated, but was not, at least for any length of time, occupied by the people whose ruined buildings of stone are found on various sites from the Copan valley and Guatemala to Yucatan and southern Mexico. That the Uloa valley was a region visited by several distinct peoples in ancient times seems to be shown by the mixture of cultures, as represented by the pottery and other objects found in the great deposits of refuse exposed along the banks of the river. This commingling of cultures, indicative of the various peoples who have occupied this rich valley of the Uloa, is worthy of an extended research, to which this report by Mr. Gordon opens the way.

The stone covered mounds, discovered by Mr. Gordon, comprise a group similar to others that have been referred to by travellers in the region of the headwaters of the Uloa. These mounds should be thoroughly explored, for it seems probable that an extended research would bring to light something of importance in relation to the people who built them. The one rude sculpture of stone discovered by Mr. Gordon and figured in his report, certainly has a closer resemblance to the rude sculptures from Nicaragua than to the elaborately sculptured monoliths of Copan.

Mr. Gordon's explorations in the caves on the hillsides of the Copan valley do not give evidence of extreme antiquity of man in that region; although the caves were undoubtedly used by man many centuries ago. Here again the culture of the people, as indicated by the few objects found

in the caves, is different from that of the builders of the ancient city of Copan not many miles away, unless the pottery vessels were made for special rites connected with the caves.

All the illustrations in the two memoirs are from drawings by Mr. Gordon or reproductions of his photographs. The specimens figured or specially alluded to in the report form only a small portion of the collection made by Mr. Gordon. The entire collection is arranged in the Museum, and is open to all students.

As in former years, the expense of these explorations and of the publication of these memoirs has been met by the contributions of generous patrons of American research. Mr. Charles P. Bowditch and the Honorable Stephen Salisbury have shown a special and substantial interest in the Central American explorations. To Mr. Bowditch I am personally indebted for his unceasing devotion to this research, and for his personal supervision of the many details involved in carrying it on:

F. W. PUTNAM,  
*Curator of the Museum.*

HARVARD UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE,  
JUNE 6, 1898.

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### RESEARCHES IN THE ULOA VALLEY.

In October, 1894, I arrived at San Pedro Sula, on my way from Puerto Cortez to Tegucigalpa in the Republic of Honduras. The rains which had fallen heavily for some weeks still continued, the streams were swollen, and the condition of the roads was discouraging, — a state of affairs that made travelling extremely difficult. It was during the delay caused by the difficulty of obtaining animals for such a journey that I first received intelligence of prehistoric remains on the Uloa. A resident of the town showed me a specimen of painted pottery which resembled specimens from Copan already familiar to me. The owner of this specimen informed me that it was brought to him from the Uloa River by an Indian who claimed to have found it on the bank of the stream where it had been washed out during a flood. The locality where it was found was given as *Playa de los Muertos*, or Shore of the Dead, — a place that would seem to have received its name from circumstances connected with the buried relics of a former population, which are found in this as well as in other localities along the course of the river. It is probable that when the name was first applied, it was common to see human bones as well as pieces of pottery unearthed by the annual floods, which tear away the banks and sometimes change the course of the river for miles. Even at the present day an occasional skull or fragment of bone is exposed by the same cause.

Before proceeding on my journey I rode from San Pedro to Playa de los Muertos, a distance of about twenty-five miles. The way lay over a level country consisting largely of deep bottom lands, very rich and covered with luxuriant vegetation. On arriving at the place I found that the river, overflowing its bounds, had partly inundated the site of the little native village situated upon its bank, driving the inhabitants from their flimsy huts of poles and thatch. It was evident that further investigations would have to be postponed till a different season.

The explorations which form the subject of this report were carried on in May and June, 1896, and from March till June, 1897. These months being in the dry season, the river was then at its lowest, and afforded the best opportunity for making the investigations.