

It was rarely that an entire object was discovered, and the fragments of those that were broken were sometimes scattered. Different fragments of the same vessel were often found several yards apart, while in a few instances nearly all the pieces of a shattered object were found within a radius of two or three feet, all being on the same or nearly the same level. Small fragments of bone were encountered regularly in the same levels with the other objects; and although there were no well-defined burials and nothing of the character of tombs, the fragments of bone, although their evidence is rather meagre, must be regarded as indicating burial-places in which the human remains have all but disappeared. The only point of special interest attaching to these remains is the filing of two front teeth, in a set found at a depth of twenty feet, in a manner similar to those found in the tombs at Copan. In Excavation 4 two skeletons much decomposed lay a few feet below the surface, but no objects were associated with them. In this instance there were several mounds scattered over the surface, and the burials are, I think, to be referred to these, which must have been of later origin than the remains embedded in the banks; for although nothing was found in these mounds themselves, the strata beneath them contained the usual objects, as already described.* At the points where the other excavations were made the surface was perfectly level, and without any indications of a former population. These are the main facts obtained in the excavations; their bearing will be discussed further on, after an examination of the material brought together.

One day I came upon a solitary Indian who lived by himself in the forest. He was held in great terror by the people on the river, being, as they said, a low savage and not a Christian. He was called Nicho, a contraction of Dionicio. After our first encounter I met him so frequently that I suspected he was putting himself in my way; but though he was a surly dog and somewhat irascible, he never showed any hostility toward me. Since it was notoriously his habit to shun his fellow-men, I wondered at this display of sociality. It was explained afterward when he told me that I was better than the people on the river,—a conclusion which indicates a singularly correct knowledge of character. It was not long before we became quite friendly, and as he knew the forest thoroughly I decided to

* These mounds are irregular in shape, and built of water-worn stones and earth. They vary in size from scarcely perceptible elevations a few feet in diameter to as much as thirty or forty feet broad and from four or five to twelve or fifteen feet in height. In this particular locality there may be fifty or sixty such mounds scattered over an area of two or three acres. Groups like this are found here and there over the entire valley. The word used by the Spanish-speaking natives of this region to describe these mounds is *calpulis*, the plural of the Nahuatl word signifying "clan;" and a modern village situated between the Uloa and the Chemilicon is called Los Calpulis on account of its proximity to a group of these mounds. The significance of the word as applied in this way is not apparent, but that Nahuatl words should have found their way to these parts after the conquest is to be expected, since in this very valley the march of Cortez and his Mexican allies to Honduras terminated in 1526.

employ him as my guide. It was under his guidance that I found the only group of mounds of any especial interest that I saw in this vicinity. They are situated about six miles eastward from the river, near the base of the mountains. There are numerous mounds scattered over an area of about ten acres, but the most notable group occupies a much smaller space in the southeastern part of the area (Fig. 3). The southeastern extension of this group consists of a quadrangular enclosure surrounded by a ridge of rough stones raised to a height of about five feet. The eastern part of the enclosed

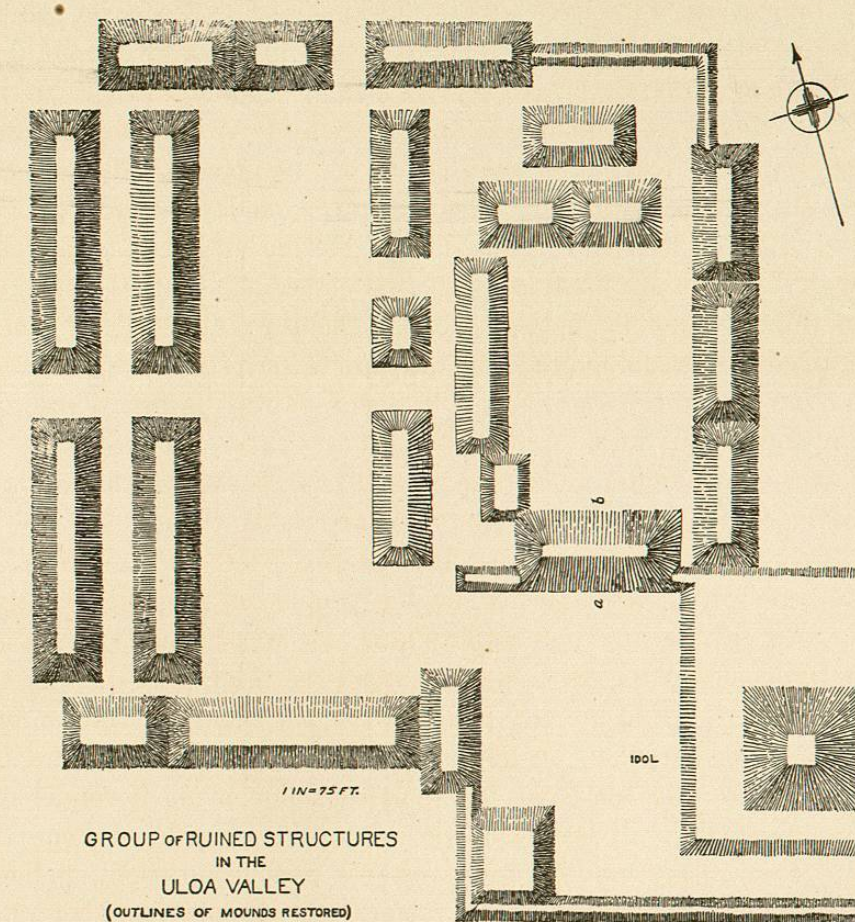


FIG. 3.—PLAN OF RUINS EAST OF THE ULOA RIVER.

area is elevated to the level of the surrounding ridge, and upon this elevation stands a square pyramidal mound, about forty feet in height, terminating in a rounded point. In front of the raised area, opposite the centre of the mound, is an idol, broken in three pieces. The lower part was standing when found, and the other two still retained evidence of the blows by which they had been broken off. A sketch of this idol in its present condition with parts replaced is shown on the next page. It stood about seven feet high, was sixteen inches in diameter, and was rudely carved from

a hard igneous rock, almost black in color (Fig. 4). It would seem to have been the chief object of worship in the community. In fact I saw no other carving at all, and only one other stone in the form of a pillar. In the northwestern corner of the enclosure is another mound about ten feet in height, having a level area about fifty feet square on top; while in the eastern side occupying the place of the enclosing ridge is another mound one hundred and twenty feet in length, sixty feet in width at the base, and about thirty feet in height. An excavation (Plate XII., Fig. 3) was made through the centre of this mound (*a b*, plan), which resulted in nothing more interesting than a knowledge of its interior structure. A few very small fragments of rough pottery were indeed found, but their occurrence was probably accidental and they were of but small interest. In the interior of the mound was a core made of a hard homogeneous mass of red clay. This would seem to have been the original mound. On its top was a smooth floor or platform of hard burnt clay; fires had been built upon it, but the ashes had been swept clean from the hardened floor and lay in masses over the sloping sides of the mound. Afterward the whole had been covered with

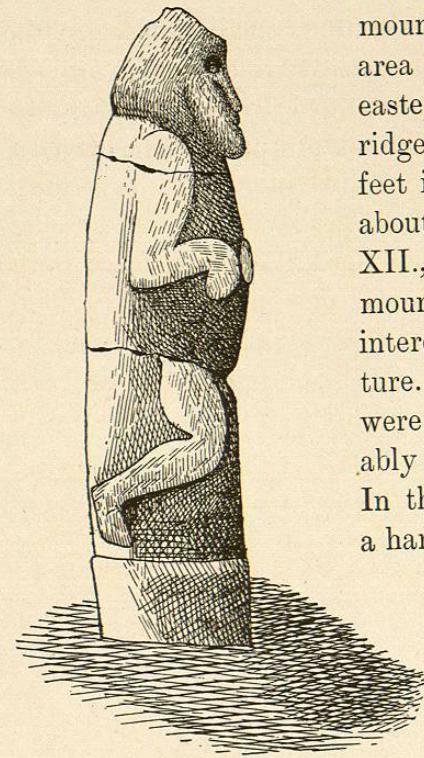
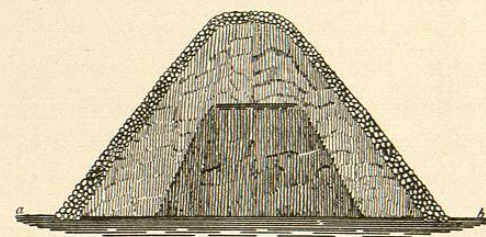


FIG. 4. — STONE IDOL.

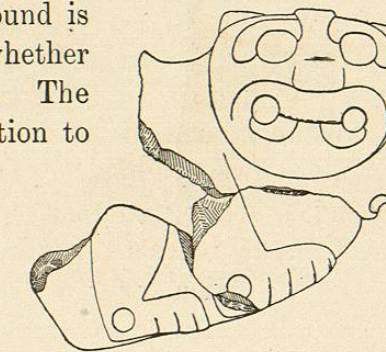
earth, and the mound, thus raised to nearly twice the original height, had been covered with rough stones (Fig. 5). An excavation was also made into the side of the large square mound, and its structure was found to

FIG. 5. — CROSS SECTION OF MOUND.
a b, plan.

be the same. At some distance north of the principal group of ruins is a smaller group consisting of a square enclosed by long mounds. In this square was a small mound not more than three feet high. In its centre was set a small plain pillar, a column of schistose rock formed by natural cleavage. It stood about four feet in height above the surface of the mound, while two feet of it were beneath. I had the entire mound removed, and dug beneath the column to the natural level, but found nothing. Other excavations were made in mounds of various shapes and sizes, in the hope of finding tombs, but none could be located.

While clearing away the debris at the base of the carved idol, I found three rude beads, a broken pendant (Fig. 6), and some fragments of a small tablet, all of crystalline limestone. This stone is almost pure white, with streaks and touches of delicate green, owing to the presence of chrome muscovite, flakes of which are distributed through the limestone crystals, giving the mineral the appearance of certain varieties of jadeite.

During the three weeks which I spent in camp at these ruins, I made several excursions along the lower slopes of the mountains. The object of one of these journeys was to visit a wonderful enchanted pool in a deep ravine that Nicho was acquainted with. I had heard of this interesting place from others, but no one except Nicho had seen it, although all were familiar with its magic echoes. This ravine sometimes sends forth a loud melodious sound which may be heard many miles away and is regarded by the people of the region as an infallible sign that it is going to rain. In fact it is a regular weather bureau, with this peculiarity, that it is always reliable; for the sound is so modulated as to indicate by its pitch whether the coming storm is to be heavy or light. The amount of promised rain is in exact proportion to the volume of sound, and thus it proclaims to the accustomed ear with unerring precision the approach of a passing shower or heralds the terrific thunder-storm of the tropics; and this is no fiction, but a fact which any one may demonstrate for himself by going and listening to it. On account of these phenomena the place is called *La Quebrada Encantada*, The Enchanted Ravine.

FIG. 6. — PORTION OF BROKEN ORNAMENT CARVED FROM CRYSTALLINE LIMESTONE. $\frac{1}{2}$.

The account which I obtained from Nicho was not told in sequence as it is given here. Nicho was neither romantic nor communicative, and I had to draw his story from him almost word for word by dint of much cross-questioning and systematic prompting. But granting, if necessary, that my suggestive solicitations may have stimulated his imagination rather than his memory, there can be no doubt that what he had to say indicates the general drift of some old tradition of which some scattered remnants still survived in his unreceptive and unmindful brain.

It was while cutting our way through the tangled undergrowth in the forest in search of the Quebrada Encantada and its mysterious pool, that I learned in the manner I have described the secret of its strange behavior. According to Nicho, this pool is the abode of a golden dragon. In former times, before the Spaniards came, it was lined with golden pebbles and the sands at its margin were grains of gold, and it was the custom of the golden dragon to rise occasionally to the margins of the pool and receive the offerings