

Hoping to throw light upon the still more important question as to the kind of pictorial representations still made by these Indians and whether they are of a hieroglyphic character, I looked about me very carefully in Māx's huts, but of course without exciting the suspicion of the people. I regret to say that nothing bearing upon this matter could be found. The fact that the Indians of Pethá live so scattered that each family is about one league (or an hour's journey) from the other adds much to the difficulty of solving this question. It would be necessary to ascertain whether these people are anywhere grouped in villages, for in that case there would be more prospect of obtaining specimens of drawings.

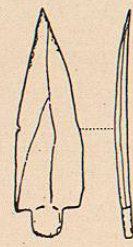


FIG. 14.—FLINT ARROW-POINT,
LACANTUN INDIANS. §.

In the mean time my men had deliciously prepared the crax, and the women supplied us with the necessary tortillas, which, made of new maize and half roasted, were especially palatable. At my special request, which I had also made on the preceding evening, they brought us large gourds full of balché (*balché*), a refreshing beverage made from the bark of a tree.

While we were satisfying our hunger with this food and drinking with it the national drink, balché, the men, having adorned their heads with bands dyed pink with chacavanté, withdrew into the huts containing the incense-vessels, to pray. The prayer consisted of monotonous, unintelligible cries, its purpose doubtless being to entreat the gods not to regard with anger the reception of strangers, and to avert any evil consequences that might arise from our visit. The women took no part in this religious ceremony.

At last the time came for us to depart, and we accordingly took leave of Māx and the other Indians. Before doing so, however, I administered to a young girl very ill with fever a small dose of quinine, which she took tearfully. To an older woman covered with ulcers (elephantiasis?) we could only recommend a draught which she could make herself of the sarsaparilla occurring in that region. With these exceptions the people were all in good health.

We remained four days more (September 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th) on the shore of that beautiful lake, over whose waters we never grew weary of rowing. The Indians made us several visits, bringing us food and enabling us to buy of them several additional sets of their handsome bows and arrows.

Māx, whose name means "howling-monkey" (*Stenor niger*), was not a frank, kindly-disposed man. He very evidently exercised a certain repressing influence over the others, who showed much greater openness in their

intercourse with us when Māx was not present, and willingly gave me all the information I desired.

I questioned the people very closely as to whether they knew of any ruins in the forests of this region. Unfortunately, absolute ignorance seemed to prevail among them in regard to the matter. Indeed, I had already convinced myself of the fact that cities built of stone had never existed in the neighborhood of Pethá. I only learned that at no great distance there were other smaller lakes: Hopethá to the southeast; the lake called Sib to the southwest, and between Pethá and Tinieblas another called Chichan-pethá, or "little round water."

To my question as to how many kinds of fish were to be found in the lake of Pethá, they answered five,—

1. Lú = el pezado bobo, bagre.
2. Sohóm = una especie de mojarra.
3. Sactan = "sardina" (sactan = white-colored).
4. Chaclau = mulula of the Spaniards (chacil-au? [tsakil-au?] = with red dots, or red collar).
5. Dsibal, said to be quite a large fish (dsibal means "marking").

During the last days of our stay Heaven favored us with the most glorious weather. On the 12th of September we began our return march, without however taking leave of our Lacantun friends, since they had expressed their intention of accompanying us as far as Tinieblas. Arrived at the Paso del Chocollá, we made ourselves comfortable in the large champa belonging to the Indians, who likewise arrived toward evening. We had killed another crax, and the Indians immediately after their arrival had very dexterously caught some fish, so that we had plenty of food. In addition, Māx had made me a present of a gourd full of honey.

One of the Indians, while he was cooking the fish, became confidential and said to me in broken Maya-Spanish: "I am sorry that you did not come also to my house—that you only went to see Māx, where I could not serve you. I too have maize at my house—you should have wanted for nothing at my house. Now that your heart is friendly towards me, I will tell you—that I also have a wife. Since you gave pretty ear-rings to all the women, but not to my wife—because she was not there—I will now ask you to give me a pair of ear-rings for my wife—that her heart may be made glad!"

I was very glad to learn, in this way, that the things I had given the people had evidently pleased them. Of course I picked out a pretty pair of ear-rings from what was left, and added a red silk handkerchief to make glad the wife of so excellent a husband.

There was a tremendously heavy fall of rain during the night, but early in the morning we succeeded in crossing the Chocollá by means

of the cayuco. Allowing ourselves but little time for rest, in spite of the soaked condition of the trails, we arrived late in the afternoon at Tinieblas, where the people regarded us with great respect and thought it wonderful that we, coming from a distance in the middle of the rainy season, had found the lake which they had never even seen.

The Indians made various purchases in the montería, and the very next day returned to their wilderness. We rested a day, and then set out on our return to La Reforma, where, when at last we arrived, we were, as always, most courteously received by Mr. Molina and the other gentlemen.

Here I dismissed my men from Tenosique, who had shown discontent during the whole expedition, and accepted Mr. Molina's kind invitation to go down the Chacamáx in one of the cayucos of the firm of Romano, as far as the Usumatsintla and to Montecristo, lying just below the confluence of the two rivers. Thence the return by steamer to my little house at our station in Tenosique offered no further difficulties.

VI.

PIEDRAS NEGRAS.*

AFTER I had traversed the entire peninsula of Yucatan in 1895 and had rested in Flores — the ancient Peten-Itza — I took the route to the upper Usumatsintla by way of Sacluc, in order to return to Mérida by water *via* Tenosique and Cármen. Accordingly I came down from El Paso Real in a cayuco as far as the ruins of Yáxchilan, but from that point, owing to dangerous rapids, I was obliged once more to make use of forest trails in order to reach Tenosique, whence the journey to the sea was easily accomplished.

On the way, while spending the night at the montería El Cayo (on the left shore of the Usumatsintla) I made inquiries of the *Encargado*, Don Tránsito Mejenes, and of his people as to whether ruins of any kind whatever had been met with in the forests of this region, and I was successful in gaining information regarding the sites of several ruined cities, of which Piedras Negras proved to be the most important.

The distance from El Cayo to Tenosique is reckoned at twenty Mexican leagues. The first five bring one to the site of the ruins, where, until recently, there had been a montería under the management of Sr. D. Emiliano Palma, who by this time, however, had gone deeper into the forest with his men.

* For plan of the ruins see Plate XXXIII.

As it is impossible to undertake any serious explorations without having previously engaged some men and procured the necessary provisions, I contented myself for the time being with the information I had gathered, and passed by the ruins without inspecting them, fully determined to organize an expedition thither, as soon as I arrived in Tenosique.

On the 23d of July, 1895, I reached Tenosique in safety, and could then say that the most difficult part of my great journey of exploration had been overcome. I succeeded in coming to an agreement with a certain Luciano Sanchez, who was the owner of pack-animals and had several men at his disposal. He expressed his willingness to accompany me with three men and the necessary animals. I was to pay one peso a day for each man and each beast and to maintain them. Owing to the wood-cutting establishments in the neighborhood, which absorb all the available men, wages are very high in Tenosique. But as Sanchez and his men showed a willing disposition and behaved well, I did not regret paying them high wages. On the 12th of August our arrangements were completed and we left Tenosique.

For about two leagues our way led us through savánas adorned with numerous *nantsin*-trees, which were just unfolding the splendor of their yellow blossoms. This meadow-land comes to an end not far from the little river Plevá, which, in spite of its apparent insignificance, is regarded with much apprehension, because it often rises suddenly to such a height that it can be crossed only with great difficulty, or not at all. Afterward the trail runs mostly over low mountain ranges, where it is shaded by high forest-trees and is at times very difficult. On the first day we reached the station Los Callejones, that is, "the place of the wood-roads," where we spent the night.

On the second day we proceeded as far as the Tres Champas, "the place of the three leaf huts," — *chican*, *chan* = little; *pa* = shelter; *champa* (*tšampa*) = little shelter, leaf huts. The huts of the montería, once established here and long since abandoned, have entirely disappeared; but an open hut still stands on the bank of the brook and affords some shelter to the traveller.

Soon after we had left Los Callejones and had ascended the hills, we saw a little lake on the right, far below us in a hollow, surrounded by walls of rock. The view of these cliffs, crowned by towering trees, with the water far below at their feet, is very impressive. This spot of natural beauty has no name, but in Mexico formations of this kind are called in general *hollos*, and I therefore called this particular spot *El Hollo*.

Some time later, about three leagues beyond Tres Champas, we found an obelisk set up to mark the boundary, bearing the name MEXICO on one side and GUATEMALA on the other, which will in future put an end