

I 1287 - 803

all etched  
9/10/26  
ja. man

Part I

Excavations at Chocolá  
By R. M. Burkhitt

THINGS FOR THE MUSEUM

1/786. In Philadelphia.

787. Given by Mr Augustus Ponce, of Cobán. From the highlands of Yaalihúsh. Yaalihúsh, which may be over five thousand feet above the sea, is in the southern part of the Upper Verapaz, north of the river Polochic, and west of Senahú, and is the eastern extension of mount Shukanép. A rude stone idol, not sculptured below the waist nor on the back. The part below the waist is somewhat in the shape of an ax, and possibly the thing was meant to be stuck upright in the ground. Height, 50 centimetres. Width, 10 to 13.



10952

788/9. From Chocolá, on the Pacific side of Guatemala. The place is about a days journey to the south west of lake Atitlán.

*Start* → Chocolá, where I made a prolonged stay. is a big coffee, sugar, and cattle estate, watered by a stream of the same name; and belongs geographically to what is called the Pacific slope: that is to say, it belongs to that strip of country, twenty or thirty leagues wide, which lies between the volcanos and the sea. Chocolá is in the upper and cooler regions of the slope. The mountains are close above you, and the sea appears as a white streak on the horizon. But the mountains are often in the clouds; and both the sea, and the wide intervening hot-country below you, are usually very much lost in the haze. The actual slope of the ground, in the Chocolá neighbourhood, is a steady easy slope, on the average about six in a hundred. Something has happened to photo number 101, but it gives you an idea of what the ground looks like. In the photo, you are Looking <sup>to the</sup> about north west. The big mountain in front is the volcano of Suní. A little to the left, over the shoulder of Suní, you <sup>can</sup> see the peak of another, and higher volcano, the volcano of Saint Mary: which did so much damage twenty years ago. The face of the country, as you can see, has the general appearance of a waving sheet of bush, with patches of cultivation. But the apparent sheet is in fact

very much broken by deep gullies and ravines, that you dont see til you get to them.

The country iz fertile and wel waterd, and the climat pleazant. The people ar mainly - and hav been since time out ov mind - Indians ov the Nawalá and Ishtawacán tribe (creole spelling, Nahualá, or Nagualá: Ixtahuacán): Indians whoze head quarters ar the villages ov thoze names, in the cold country behind the volcanos. Their language iz a Maya language, a dialect ov Kichechí. The owners ov Chocolá ar a company in Hamburg.

The most conspicuous ancient remains in Chocolá ar certain mounds: which hav long been objects ov speculation, and to the Indians ar objects ov superstition. Thoze mounds, and the kind permission ov the manager ov Chocolá to examin them, wer the chief cauz ov my stay. And though what I am actually sending you from Chocolá iz nothing from the mounds - my work at the mounds, so far az it went, gave me nothing to send you, and in that respect waz work lost - yet I think it wil intrest the Muzeum to hear about thoze mounds, and what I did.

The mounds, which may be about a dozen, in all, ar gathered together, in sight ov each other, in that small part ov the estate, that I send you a map ov. The mounds ar markt on the map with the letters A, B, C, and so on. A couple that hav no letters ar perhaps not artificial: and probably ther ar some small artificial mounds not markt at all. Looking at the mounds az a hole, you see that they ar strung out in a general northerly and southerly direction, which iz more or less the general direction ov the slope ov the ground. Ther iz no vizable systematic arangement amongk the mounds. The tops ov B, C, and D, ar very nearly, if not quite, in a strait line: but that may be mere chance. The biggest mounds, which ar each about forty feet high, ar B, C, D, and J. H iz not quite so high, and the others ar comparatively low.

<sup>Figure 1</sup>  
Foto number 102 iz a view ov mound B, taken from the top ov mound C. In the fore ground, on this side ov the hedge,

you may see some cattle. Mound A, beyond the hedge, is in a meadow. The distance is cut off by the haze

<sup>Figure 2</sup>  
~~Foto 103~~ is a view of mound C and mound D: on the left, mound C: on the right, diminished by perspective, mound D. You are standing in the meadow of mound B, a little east of that mound. Beyond the meadow is the hedge that you saw in <sup>Figure 1</sup> ~~the other picture~~. Of course in this picture you have turned round, and you are looking up hill. The mountains are the same as in foto 101.

Foto 104 is a slightly different view of the same two mounds. The mounds are in the shadow of a cloud: but you can see that the top of mound C is now bare. I was examining that mound, and had had the top scrub cleared off.

On the right of mound C, you see a tree sticking up. In foto ~~104~~ 105 you see the same tree closer to. You are standing at the east of mound C, with the foot of the mound on your left, and mound D next in sight, covered with sugar cane. It is a rainy day, and the solid block of mountains that you saw in foto 103, you now see broken into hills.

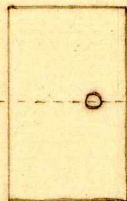
[The Chocolá mounds, big and little, seem to be all made of earth. You walk over them, and the surface is smooth, - no sign anywhere of the usual stone steps. And when you dig in, you still find only earth. The Nebáh mounds, <sup>see page 3</sup> that I once told you of, are also, to all appearances, made of earth. And in their case there seems to be a plain reason: stone is very scarce in Nebáh. But that cannot have been the reason in Chocolá, where loose stone abounds in every gully and water course.

Another and much more remarkable character of the Chocolá mounds is their shape. They are not of the usual square, or oblong shape. There are no straight lines or corners to be seen in them. They are all round.

And it is not that the corners can have been worn away. It is not ~~that~~ a consequence of the mounds being made of earth. The Nebáh mounds, which are made of earth are the usual rectangular pyramids.] Foto 106 is a view of some of the Nebáh mounds.

They dont stick out very wel against the hills behind, but you can see plainly, ~~that~~ at least in the mound next the cow, and the middle mound, that <sup>and</sup> ther ar distinct sides and shoulders. Ther ar none in the Chocolá mounds. The Chocolá mounds ar round: and I hav no dout, hav been round from the beginning.

And that fact ov the mounds being round, waz my great stumbling block. I made no dout, and I make no dout now, that at least all the bigger mounds ar grave mounds: and the contents ov the graves would no dout be ov much intrest. But where should thozе graves be lookt for? The ordinary Guatemala burial mound] - I shal hav good examples to show you in speaking ov Sakishpék - [iz something like this:



an oblong mound, with the principal burial, not in the middle ov the mound, but some where on that middle line which iz at right angles to the face ov the mound. But I look at the Chocolá mounds, and I see no face. They giv me nothing to go by. I wish to open a trench towards the middle ov the mound, starting from some where outside. But which ov the thirty two points ov the compas shal I start from? The mounds ar too big for random experiments.

I determind to experiment, though not quite at random, with one ov the smallest mounds: and then, if I had any success, to aply my new knowledge to one ov the big mounds. The small mound might perhaps not be a burial mound; but it might contain some chamber, or some piece ov stone work, which would tel me how that mound, and probably other mounds, faced: or I should get some other useful knowledge.- But I got none.

I choze for my experiment the mound A, and for the direction ov my trench I choze the east. In my experience, mounds more ofen face east than in any other particular direction: and in the cases ov some ov the Chocolá mounds the lie ov the ground some what favoured the idea ov an eastern facing.

Photo 107 shows you the low mound A, with the trench

Figure 3

dug. The trench iz due east and west, and you ar looking west. The mound, which iz about fifty metres in diameter, and between three and four metres high, stands in the middle ov a flat. I hav had the tall grass and scrub partly cleared off. On the right hand side, at two different levels, you see my dumps. The upper dump iz simply on the side ov the mound. The trench waz first opened at that level. It iz now at the lower level, and the dump iz along the flat. The ground sinks a little, to the right, but so little that the dump advances very fast, and the wheel barrows hav to travel a good distance.

<sup>Figure 2</sup> Foto 108 iz a view in the oppozit direction. You ar in the trench, and looking east. The boards ar for the wheel barrows. The man with the barrow iz turning out towards the dump. The mountain peak far off iz the volcano ov Atitlán.

I carried the trench in, a little further than the middle ov the mound. The artificial nature ov the mound waz continually shown by bits ov pottery, or arrow heads, in the earth, but by nothing else. No stone work waz met with, nor any structure.

In the <sup>Figure 3</sup> picture 107, that you wer looking at, you see before you a little piece ov road. You cant follow the road with your eye, past the middle ov the picture, but it goes off round the left ov the mound. In <sup>Figure 3</sup> foto 109 you see the same mound and the same trench, from nearly the same point ov view: but you ar a little to the right ov where you wer, and on the left ov the picture you now see the continuation ov the road. The road, in the course ov time, haz come to be a little sunk below the level ov the flat, and a few steps beyond what you can see, the bed ov the road runs over what iz evidently an artificial line ov stones. The line ov stones crosses the road, and heads very nearly in the direction ov the middle ov the mound. The line ov stones, az I found by digging, doesnt reach the mound, nor near it. The stones come to an end in the flat, only a few steps from

the road. But I had noticed those stones from the beginning, and of course it had crossed my mind that they might have been the work of those who built the mounds: and in that case might indicate the orientation of the mounds, or at least of the neighbouring Mound A. The mound might be found to face in the direction of that line of stones, or at right angles to it. And now that my trench on the east was a failure, I ran a new trench about <sup>twenty seven degrees</sup> 27 degrees south of east: which was the bearing of the line of stone work. And in this picture <sup>figure 5</sup> (109) you see that new trench, or you see the top line of it, to the left of the first trench: the two trenches meeting in the middle of the mound.

In the far end of the first trench, you can make out that there are steps going up to the surface. As the digging advanced, the working face of my trenches was usually not vertical, but took a stair shape, and the hole stair traveled forward. The left hand side of the mound, where the horse is, is now disfigured by a small dump.

In <sup>figure 6</sup> foto 110 you see the same two trenches, but you are now in front of the second trench, and the first trench is on the right. The road crossing the picture is the same road as before, and on the far side of it you see the little trench I made in getting to the end of the line of stones. The stairs you see in the mound are the same stairs as before, the stairs where the first trench left off.

They are beyond the middle of the mound. The middle of the mound, the point where the middle lines of the two trenches intersect, would be about where you see the upper part of a man. The man is in a pit. At the middle of the mound I expanded the junction of the trenches into a wide excavation which you don't see, though you may be able to guess at it: and carried the excavation down into old ground, a couple of metres below the level of the trenches: so that the two trenches now abut on a pit. The man you see part of is in that pit: the other man is standing on the brink.

*Figure 1*  
 Foto 111 shows a stairway going down into a corner of the pit. The pit goes off to the right. The camera is very much turned down, and everything is out of proportion.

The second trench, and the central excavation, and the pit, gave just the same result as the first trench: that is to say, nothing. I had found neither grave, nor stone work, nor any indication that would be much help to me in attempting the bigger mounds: and much to my regret, I decided that for the time being, at least, I had better not attempt them.

I made some examination of the big mounds B, C, and D. I measured them. ~~And on three separate sheets I send you the~~ resulting profiles. <sup>appear in Plates I, II and III</sup> The two profiles of each mound intersect in the top of the mound: and in all three mounds the two profiles are taken in the same two directions. One direction is that of the straight line in which, as I have told you, those three mounds happen to lie. The direction is about four degrees west of true north, or east of true south. The other direction of the profiles is at right angles to that, and consequently about four degrees north of true east, or south of true west.

I made these profiles, originally, not to send to the Museum, but in order to find out where the middle of the mounds might be. I couldn't tell by looking at them, they were too big. But I now send you these profiles, because they show something else. I had had a suspicion that at least Mound C, was not quite circular: that it was wider north and south than east and west. And the profiles show that that is the fact: and not only with Mound C, but with all three mounds.

You don't easily see it by looking at the mere straddle of the profiles at the bottom. It is not easy to say just where the bottom is, especially in the case of D, which stands on a very sloping ground. But you see the fact plain in looking at the peak. On each of the three sheets you see that in the upper profile, which is the northerly and

788/9, continued

southerly profile, the peak iz blunter and wider than in the lower. The difference iz not enough to catch the eye in walking round the mounds: but you see on paper that the difference exists, and the amount ov it iz about the same in all three mounds.

And that fact ov the length ov the mounds being about north and south, suggests ov course that they face about either east or west,- and east would be more likely. With so much uncertainty about where to dig, it may be that nobody will ever care to dig, and the secret ov the mounds will never be known. But in case ov atempting them, I should begin with the suppozition that if they faced any where, they faced faced about east PT 1

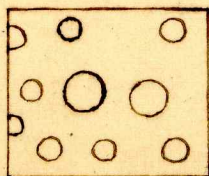
Az for some other antiquities in Chocolá, see 788.

788. Given to the Muzeum by Mr Henry Kummerfeldt, representing the Chocolá Plantation Company, ov Hamburg (see 788/9). 22 pieces fitting together. The face ov the large sculptured stone which iz shown in the fotografs numberd 112, 113, and 114.

14005 I waz acquainted with the mounds ov Chocolá (see 788/9) many years ago. What now newly intrested me waz a discovery that had lately been made ov certain stones. One stone waz a this fine fragment ov relief work, 788, which at once marks Chocolá az an important place. Others ov amore humble character, but stil intresting, included thozе, which/what ever they may hav been, I hav calld on the map, altar stones.

Theze altar stones ar all big stones, the least ov which it would take two or three yoke ov oxen to move. And th they ar all flat stones: which hav been roughly, but artificialy, brought to their prezent shape - which iz either round or oblong.

The stone that lies north west ov Mound E iz an oblong stone: about a metre wide: a metre and two tenths long, and half a metre thick: and the face ov it, that iz to say, the



flat upper side ov it, iz something like this. It haz anumber ov cups, or hollows in it. The biggest ov them, which iz

788, continued

nearest the middle, iz about <sup>twenty</sup> 25 centimetres wide, and half that in depth, with strait up and down sides. The others, especially those <sup>a</sup> round the edge ov the stone, ar comparatively shallow and indistinct. <sup>Fotos 9 and 10</sup> Fotos 115 and 116 ar two opposit views ov that stone. In 115, the near end ov the stone iz what in the sketch iz the right hand end. In the other picture the near end iz the other end. The shallow cups round the edge almost dont show: the sun waz too near over head: but you see the middle cups, and the water standing in them.

An other oblong stone, about the same size, and with cups in it, iz that near Mound D. The other two stones on the map ar decidedly smaller stones, and hav no cups in them: and thoz stones ar round. In the fotos 112, 113, and 114, you see one ov thoz round stones, appearing as a momentary pedestal for the sculptured stone.

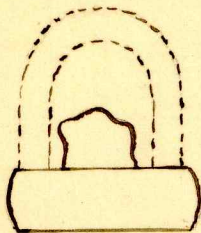
The stones, as I said, might be moved with oxen: and with oxen they hav been moved. Not one ov the stones on the map iz in its original place. The hole area ov the Mounds D, E, F, G, <sup>H</sup> and J, and ov all the stones, iz, and long haz been, a cane field. The stones wer mostly under ground: but some ov them struck the plough, and wer a nuisance. And all the stones on the map, and several not on the map, wer lately dug up and dragd out ov the cane. Some ov the stones dragd out wer carried away and used in building: while others, which wer considerd to be curiosities worth saving, wer dumpt at the sides ov the paths with which the cane field iz intersected. The places on the map ar merely the prezent places ov stones that remain on the cane paths.

An intelligent Indian who helpt at the dragging out ov the stones, haz given me some curious details. The oblong stone now next Mound D waz found some distance to the east, or north east, ov where it iz; and lay face up, a little under ground, where it waz struck by the plough.



788, continued

south ov G and east ov E. The stone lay flat, about half a fathom under ground, and had lying on top ov it a much smaller stone, now lying on the cane path. That smaller stone, which may weigh a quarter ov a ton, iz a shapeless, natural stone, with some od looking conglomerat formations in it, which my man spoke ov az eyes and ears: and in the belief ov my man, and I dare say also ov the ancient Indians, the stone waz not a natural stone at all. The Indians hav a great regard for strange looking stones they find, and ofen burn incense to them.- And the stone ov eyes and ears waz not all. An other



stone stood over it, in the shape ov an arch. The archt stone might hav been something less than breast high. It stood high enough to be struck by the plough, and led to the discovery ov the others. That archt stone, which waz broken up and taken by the masons, waz probably

in the main an other natural stone which had attracted Indian superstition by its peculiar shape.

The southerly ov the two round stones iz the one on which it appears as a pedestal for the sculptured stone iz fotograf. You see in the <sup>shown in figure 10</sup> ~~figure 10~~ <sup>illustrated in figure 8</sup> ~~figure 8~~ <sup>picture</sup>

fotos that the sculptured stone iz made up ov three pieces: the big bottom piece, and the two smaller on top. When I first saw them, the pieces wer lying along the cane path, not far from the round stone: and examination showing that the pieces fitted, I had them set up on the round stone to look at.

It now apeard from my Indian informant, that the sculptured stone and the round stone, which I had accidentally put together, had actually been found together: and even some what in the pozition in which I had put them, that iz to say, one above the other. The place they had come from waz a little to the south west, where there iz a slight height ov ground. The plough strusk some stone, perhaps one ov the sculptured pieces: and getting out one stone led to finding an other. One below an other, in the earth, they found the three sculptured pieces, and at the bottom, az deep az a man,



788, continued

see on the stone itself. The hardness ov the stone haz preservd thozе fine lines.

In both theze fotos the rule un<sup>der</sup> the sculptured stone iz half a metre. The three pieces ov the stone made a block, which waz, az you see it, about <sup>eighty</sup> 80 centimetres high, <sup>sixty</sup> 60 wide, and fram <sup>thru</sup> 30 to <sup>across</sup> 60 thick: and weighd I supoze the better part ov a ton. Foto 114 iz a side view, the side next you being what in the other pictures waz on the right. You see how the thickness ov the stone varied. The face ov the stone, excepting for the reliefs, waz a plane surface. The back, az you see in the side view, waz curvd: but with a surface so smooth and even, that you might supoze the stone had been intended to be engraved on that side too.

Damaged and incomplete az the sculpture waz, I thought that no pains should be spared in trying to get it to the muzeum: and I should say that the giver ov the stone also gave me evry help. In any probable method ov exportation from Chocolá, that would be open to me to uze, the weight ov the stone az it stood, or ov any ov its three pieces, would hav been quite unmanageable. The thing waz to see whether I could separate the face.

I first tried sawing. But the sawing that I could do made no headway with this stone. Neither did chizels. Ther waz an emery wheel on the place, driven by power, and the wheel cut the stones quite quickly, but itself waz so quickly worn away that that also had to be dropt. I had to fall back on wedges and splitting. The stone haz a glassy uncertain fracture, and I hav to send you the face ov the stone in many more pieces than the original three. But nothing waz lost, and the new joints wil be almost invizible. The general thickness wil stil be a good many inches. It may be convenient, in ajusting the pieces, to remember that the original face, az I told you, waz a plane.- The pieces ar ticketed with letters from A to X. Ther iz no I nor O.

788, A/N. See 788. The pieces corresponding to what in the fotos

788, A/N, continued

iz the under piece:

A: from behind the legs.

Tassels and hieroglyphics.

Ther iz a piece loosend,  
that may scale off.

B and C: chips from between  
A and D.

D: head and wing ov a bird:

an other head: the greater part ov a fish: several hieroglyphics. The hieroglyphics on the birds neck (which iz partly on E), very delicatly drawn: come out better by wetting. The prezenze ov a fish in the sculpture reminds me of the Chamá pot 377. This piece D haz a drop ov incense gum on it. No dout since the stone waz dug up the Indians hav burnt incense to it. See 788 (p. 11), and see G.

E: a piece off D. Haz parts ov hieroglyphics: see D.

F: an other chip off D.

G: legs and loin cloth, with hieroglyphics. Haz a spot ov incense gum: see D.

H: a chip from D.

J: trunk ov the body: corner ov loin-cloth hieroglyfic.

K: a chip from J.

L: left shoulder and hand: locks ov hair: at the place ov the ear, a big star shaped ornament, probably signifying the sun: delicat dezigns on the tassels below the star.

M; a scale off L. The bigger scale missing, waz missing: az you see in the fotos.

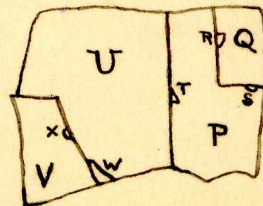
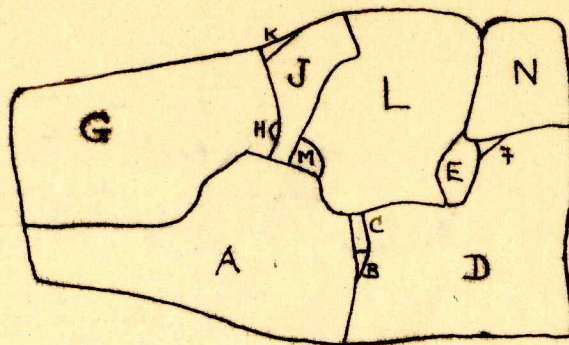
N: part ov head dress: involving hieroglyphics.

788, P/T. See 788. The pieces corresponding to the old right hand upper piece:

P: head: part ov the star ornament (see L): head dress: hieroglyphics. Much defaced: the headk shows the eye, the cheek, and a delicat pattern on the cheek.

Q: a little ov the head dress.

R and S: chips from between P and Q. The little bit missing



788, P/T, continued

from the bottom ov R waz lost by the masons,- I believ the only bit they lost.


T: a chip off P. T iz not in the fotos. It iz part ov a chip which came off in getting the stones together. The other part, which waz lost, had nothing on it: it had the same surface az T.

788, U/X. See 788. The pieces corresponding to ~~ix~~ the old left hand upper piece:

U: right arm and hand: tassels and other ornaments, and hieroglyphics. The defaced thing held in the hand might be thought to hav points ov rezemblance to the defaced thing next to the left hand. This slab U split off very thick, and had to be brought down with the chizel: a job which took the mason a week.


V: fel off U. Tassels and hieroglyphics.

W and X: chips from between U and V. W haz part ov a hieroglyphic.

789. Picket up by a Chocolá Indian in farm work. A cylindrical  stone: hard, smooth, with a bulge round the middle, and with convex ends. Perhaps a rubbing or grinding tool. Length,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  cm. Thickness, 2.

790/802. From the neighbourhood ov Ishtawakán (see 788/9, p. 2). Picket up by Indians in farm work.

790/4. Obsidian lance heads or arrow heads.

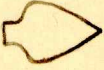
790/3. More or less this shape: 

11012 790. Length,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  cm.

11013 791. "  $6\frac{1}{2}$  "

11014 792. "  $7\frac{1}{2}$  "

11015 793. "  $10\frac{1}{2}$  "

11016 794. Ace ov spades shape. Length, 7 cm. 

795/8. Ax heads: bluish black stone: polisht.

11008 795/6. Length, each,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cm.

11009 797. Length, 6cm.

11010 798. "  $7\frac{1}{2}$  cm. Haz an unusualy good edge.

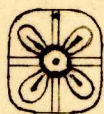
11011 799/801. Stone beads.

799. Soft brown stone. A big cylindrical bead, like a breast bead,  
 11007 with coarse geometrical ornament. Length, 6 cm. Thickness,  
 about 3.

800/1. Greenish stone.

11018 800. Globular. Diameter, about 2 cm.

11017 801. A pendant. Flat, square, with rounded corners. Translucent,  
 polisht, and one side with a geometrical engraving.



A hole in the middle, and on top.

Height,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  cm. Width, 4. Thickness, 3 mm.

11017 802. A little coarse brown stone image of a squatting figure, with  
 the hands folded on the breast. Height, 6 cm.

803. Lent to the Muzeum by Mr Henry Kummerfeldt (see 788). From  
 the neighbourhood of Kiché. The rude stone idol of foto 117.  
 The stone is a soft, cream coloured tufa which abounds in  
 Kiché. The outside is dark and dirty, and no doubt the image  
 has been kept and worshipt with incense by the modern Indians,  
 as their custom is. See 788, A/N, under D. Damaged: a big  
 piece broken from one corner of the head: and the feet want-  
 ing: but possibly the thing never had feet. Height, about  
 56 cm. Width at the shoulders, about 24.

=====

*loan  
not catalogued  
L-149-1*