

I

ETHNOGRAPHICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITIONS
IN COLOMBIA 1914-1935

Ethnographical investigations of scientific character were first carried on in Colombia in the year 1914 by The German professor. Th. Preuss, and the Swede, Dr. Gustaf Bolinder. These men dedicated themselves to the study of the so called Arhuaco Tribe of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta; Dr. Preuss worked among the Kagabas on the northern slopes, and Dr. Bolinder among the Ijcas on the southern side. Dr. Preuss gave considerable time to the study of the Huitoto Indians in Southern Colombia and made valuable archaeological investigations at San Augustin on the upper Magdalena River, where he carefully copied those enormous stone statues, the origin of which has not yet been satisfactorily explained. Dr. Bolinder, accompanied by his wife, succeeded in bringing about friendly relationships with the savage Motilone Indians, who up to that time had been the enemies of all white people. Even today, in the south, they remain hostile, now and then attacking and killing the employees of the Colombian Petroleum Company and of the Government Border Commission.

Dr. Bolinder got in touch with these Indians near the small village of Codazzi, which lies at the foot of the mountains. The Motilones occupy the mountain chain which runs along the Colombian-Venezuelan border from Codazzi (Pueblito) to the department, Norte de Santander. (Some time later the American, Dr. Booy, studied the Motilones on the Venezuelan side.) Dr. Bolinder, likewise, found the few survivors of the important Chibcha family living in the region of the Ariguania River and visited the Busintana Tribe in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The latter are more than half civilized and are found near the village of Ataquez in the southeastern part of the mountain complex. The four tribes of the Sierra Nevada (the tribe not mentioned in the eastern part) are peaceful people and have conserved many of their old racial customs. They belong, as do the primitive and warlike Chimilas, to the great Chibcha family. The Motilon Indians are of the Carib family. The works of both Dr. Preuss and Dr. Bolinder have given rich ethnological results. The findings of Dr. Preuss have been published in German and in Spanish and include studies of the Huitoto, Kagaba, and San Augustin Indians. A volume published by Dr. Bolinder (in German) is a treatise of the Sierra Nevada and Motilon Indians. He has also written popular accounts of his travels. His pamphlet about the Chimilas was well received by the Congress of Americanists in Sweden in 1924.

In the year 1920 Dr. Bolinder and his wife returned to Colombia, visiting once again the Indians of the Sierra Nevada, the Motilones, and the chimilas, and later travelling for three months among the Goajiro Indians of the Goajira Peninsula. Among the results of this expedition are about 2000 meters (7000 feet) of valuable moving pictures. The results of this his second expedition to Colombia have only been published in Swedish and the archaeological material is yet to be published.

In the year ? the American, Dr. Mason, carried out an important archaeological investigation on the northern and northwestern slopes of the Sierra Nevada, the territory of the old Faironas, a tribe which became extinct by the sixteenth century. He has published, at least, a great part of his findings. — As will be seen, the Swedes have taken an important part in the ethnological and archaeological research in Colombia, as well as in South America as a whole. (Men prominent in such studies have been; Otto NORDENSKIÖLD, ERLAND NORDENSKIÖLD, E. BOMAN, E. V. ROSEN, C. SKOTTBERG and others)

In 1927, the late Prof. NORDENSKIÖLD started an expedition around the coasts of the Isthmus and Northwestern Colombia in a Swedish fishing boat. He visited the Cuna and Choco Indians and in Panamá he came across an unknown Chibcha Tribe (Bogotá Indians). Especially interesting was the picture-writing and the mythology of the Cunas in the small independent Indian republic of Thule in the San Blas archipelago. N. even took to Sweden an intelligent Cuna Indian, Rubén Kantule, where he was kept busy for several months furnishing material for studies. The Choco Indians, who have an independent language, offered much more interest as a primitive and, in many respects, a curious people. Prof. NORDENSKIÖLD's assistant, S. Linné, made archeological excavations in Panamá and in adjacent parts of Colombia. The results of the expedition are published, some in English and others in Swedish, and some is yet unpublished.

Last year one of Prof. NORDENSKIÖLD 's students, Dr. Wassén, ~~was the first to~~ visited the Choco Indians to make a special study of their spiritual culture.

In 1934 the Colombian Government collaborated with the Swedish Government in carrying into effect ethnological and archaeological investigations in the republic. The Swedish Academy of Science appointed Dr. Bolinder, the most experienced of ^{Swedish} scientific travelers in Colombia, to represent them in Colombia. In January 1935 Dr. Bolinder, accompanied by a Colombian assistant, R. Goetz, and a few soldiers, made a four months trip by ~~XXXXXXX~~ mule-back and canoe, and many times walking across the territory that lay between the rivers, into ~~Southwestern Colombia~~ Southeastern Colombia. Their route was as follows: to the Guaviare--Uva--Cadá--Vichada--Muco--Meta--and return to Bogotá. Four Indian Tribes about which very little has been known were studied. The expedition returned with a ~~valuable~~ collection of material secured from the Indians and with 1000 meters of film. Upon ~~completing~~ this expedition among the Indians, archaeological research ~~excavations~~ were begun and directed By Dr. Bolinder in the vicinity of Bogotá, and is still being carried on with the help the anthropologist, Dr. del Corral, director of Departmental Education, ~~XXXXXX~~, and assisted by Dr. Doez.

1935 also marked the year of the Guajira expedition sponsored by the Institute of Philadelphia. The party consisted of ~~and~~ Mr. Hernandez de Alba, appointed by the Colombian Government. This expedition also visited the Parajano Indians, the pile-builders to the South of Goajira, formerly, but not ~~thoroughly~~ studied by Dr. Bolinder and Dr. John of Caracas. The Guajira Indians are, without doubt, a very interesting tribe. They belong to the ~~arewak~~ linguistic family and have adopted, without compulsion on the part of anyone, ~~xxxx~~ cattle and horse breeding, and in spite of the dry ~~desertlike~~ climate of the peninsula they have developed it into a place of considerable importance ~~when compared~~ from the economic point of view. The Guajiras have a rare kind of poisoned-arrow which works slowly but ~~with~~ deadly effect. The eminent ~~swedish~~ specialist of poisons, ~~xxxx~~ Prof. Santesson has made careful experiments with the Guajira and even with the Choco ~~poisons~~, having been supplied with material by ~~Norson~~ and Dr. Bolinder. ~~xxxx~~ could inform the American Congress of 1924 that the Guajira poison wasn't real poison but a mass containing great qualities of tetanus germs which infected the wounded with that terrible disease. The Choco Indians use a poison with a cardiac effect. Heretofore, poisons of that kind have been known only in the Old World.

The ethnological and archaeological work in Colombia is still going on. The steps taken by the government to ~~organize~~ ~~further~~ ~~the~~ investigations and create institutions interested for that kind of work are of real and vital interest and will, therefore, be treated in another article.

* The Guayaberos, the Pia pocos, the Guahibos and the Salibas.

II.

Colombian Activities

The interest for science, and especially for ethnology and ethnography, is becoming more and more vivid in the Republic of Colombia. The government has already taken several measures favoring these studies and is now preparing others. In the Department of "Comisariados and Intendencias" (that department of the government which supervises those parts of the country where Indians are principally found) all kinds of investigations are made to determine the actual state and life of the natives. Such investigations are, of course, conducted primarily to secure practical information that will help in the formation of policies for the administration of such regions. The director of this department, Dr. Rueda Vargas, is quite aware of the value of scientific study in determining the best method of governing and defending the natives.

Not only for the sake of science but also for obtaining a right understanding of the natives is it necessary to make a careful study of their habits of living, their religion, and of the evolution and development of the race. The government has realized such a need and, as will be shown, has already been repaid for its progress in these studies.

It ought to be mentioned here that the commissioner of the Guajira Peninsula (the home of a prosperous and strongly organized Indian tribe) has inaugurated a new system for dealing with the Indians. The present system is quite different from the former ones which had as their object the transformation of the Indians into "civilized" people. This was to be accomplished by dressing the natives up in shirts and trousers and by having them adopt the laws and customs of the white people. This, it may be said, presented a very difficult task especially in the case of the Guajira Indians because of their very strong feeling for independence and because the nature of their laws and customs is so very different from ours, although just as good in many respects. To-day the government authorities do not look favorably upon such a system of transformation. Why should the Indians who earn their living in regions where white man cannot exist, be forced to change their lives entirely and thus inevitably forget the valuable handicrafts and arts so common to their race and only to subjugate themselves to a foreign civilization of so little use to them and to a civilization, which at times, is even depreciated by the white people themselves! The authorities to-day are procuring to let the Indians follow their own customs as far as possible and are even trying to animate racial industries and encourage the observance of their better customs. Of course, the government wants to protect the Indians and tries to settle the frequent ~~wars~~ among the different tribes and groups. Such a policy toward the Indians will be followed in the whole republic, whenever and wherever it is considered practicable.

The Colombian government, quite interested in carrying on scientific research among these far away tribes, initiated, sometime ago, the idea of the collaboration of the Colombian Historical Academy with the Swedish Academy of Science. The governments of the two countries represented by these societies arranged to jointly share the expenses of all expeditions and furthermore to share equally the collections of relics found. It was agreed, however, that articles of exceptionally rare archaeological value should remain in Colombia and only the copies be sent to Sweden.

As has been stated in a previous article, Dr. Gustaf Bolinder was sent from Sweden to carry out the plan devised by the two countries.----An especially interesting region between the Guaviare and the Meta Rivers has already been explored and at the present time archaeological investigation is being carried on in the Department of Cundinamarca in the vicinity of Bogotá. The Department is bearing the cost of the excavations which are of real importance, especially since no scientific archaeological work has heretofore been undertaken in Cundinamarca.

After finishing the expedition to the Guaviare and Meta districts and after having started the work of excavating in the vicinity of Bogotá Dr. Bolinder was contracted by the Colombian government as professor of ethnology and archaeology in the National University of Bogotá and as government adviser on certain Indian questions. More than thirty students are now taking the course offered by Dr. Bolinder.

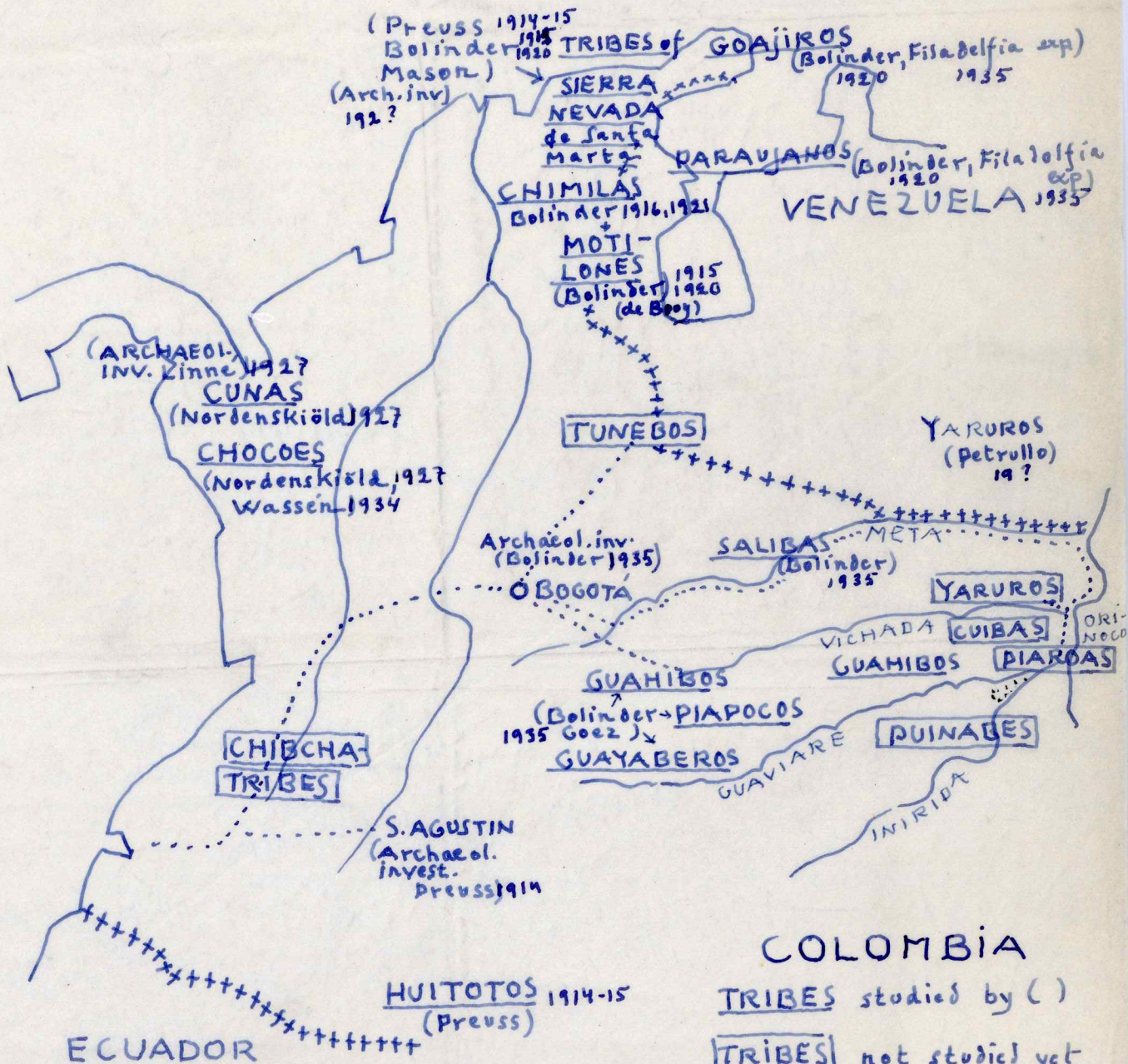
offered by Dr. Bolinder in the University. Some of the students enrolled in the course will take part in several of the expiditons recently planned for the future.

As will be seen on the map, the tribes of Northern Colombia have been studied by several prominent explorers; the Indians of the "llanos" (the great plains to the east) are now partly known. Plans have been made to visit, during the dry season of the year; namely, from December to March, the Chibcha Tribes of Southern Colombia; the Coconuco, Paez, Cuaguiar, and other tribes. Besides these, the Chibchas in Northern Boyacá, the Tunebos, will be a center of study. These expeditions to the north and to the south will be directed by Dr. Bolinder.

At the same time that these investigations are being made by Dr. Bolinder, his Colombian assistant, Dr. Goetz, will probably ~~make an~~ expedition down the River Tigre, a western tributary of Vichada River, to make further studies of the Goahibo Indians. Plans have also been made for the dry season of 1936-1937 at which time Dr. Bolinder will direct an expedition to study the Guahibos, Cuibas and other Indians found between the lower Meta and Vichada Rivers and to study the Piaroas of the ~~Orinoco~~ as well as the Puinabes of the lower Guaviare and the lower Inirida. When these four expeditions have been carried through all of the Colombian Indian Tribes north of the great forest in the south (Putamayo, Caquetá, Amazonas, and Vanpes) will be known to science. ~~Except in cases where scientific specialists have work before for a considerable length of time,~~ These expeditions can give, of course, no more than a general view of the culture of the various tribes. However, even, such a type of information is very valuable. Our knowledge of the material culture of those tribes will be complete, and we will, at least, have an idea of their spiritual culture. Then, ~~of course,~~ there is always the possibility that additional work can be carried on among those tribes by specialists who will be willing to devote considerable time living with the natives and studying their religion and sociological aspects. The Catholic Missions of the Putamayo are very interested in the ethnological work and are bringing together material which will probably be very valuable as scientific data.

A new law is at the present time under discussion in the Colombian Senate. It treats of a new regulation for ethnological and archaeological survey work in the country. It sets up a new department in the Ministry of Education to supervise and direct all ethnological and archaeological investigation in the country. All archaeological excavations will be ~~controlled~~ as well as foreign expeditions. Colombia will be represented in foreign explorations ^(in the country) and this will be an advantage for all parties concerned. Courses in ethnology and archaeology will be made permanent features of the University curriculum and the National Museum will be provided with funds necessary for sponsoring expeditions and for obtaining interesting collections of relics. As can well be seen, the ethnological collections of the Museum which are still few in number, will be considerably increased by expeditions already planned or now carried out.

The new law is being well received and there is every reason to believe that the new department will begin to funcion on the first of January of next year. In such case, the laws concerning antiquities near completion will be approved by presidential docket. The work of revising the laws is in progress now and it is likely that the new department will give the finishing touches when it starts to funcion. This department will collaborate with the National Museum, the Academy of History, and with the Department of "Comisarios and Intendencias," as well as with other institutions. A Society of Archaeology and Ethnology is now being organized and founded and will, of course, constitute an important addition to the scientific activities of Colombia. Evidently the Colombians are earnestly going in for prehistoric and ethnological study and we may expect interesting results during the next few years.



COLOMBIA

TRIBES studied by ()

TRIBES not studied yet

..... planned expeditions