

# INDIAN NOTES

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## STONE SCULPTURES FROM THE FINCA AREVALO, GUATEMALA

ON THE outskirts of the city of Guatemala, southwest of the Guarda Vieja, the road to Mixco and Antigua passes through the ruins of a nameless Indian city covering about two square miles. Although the land has been cultivated for many years, more than one hundred and fifty mounds can be seen, of which the greater part lie within the Finca Arevalo and the Finca Miraflores, two estates separated by the highway. An orderly arrangement of mounds indicates that the ancient city was laid out in parallel streets. Unlike the great historic cities of the Guatemalan highlands—Iximche, Utatlan, and Mixco Viejo—these mounds have a core of earth instead of rubble.

The aboriginal name of this site apparently is lost. As early as 1530 the whole great plain shared

INDIAN NOTES

by the Indian ruins and the present capital of Guatemala was known as the Valle de las Vacas, because

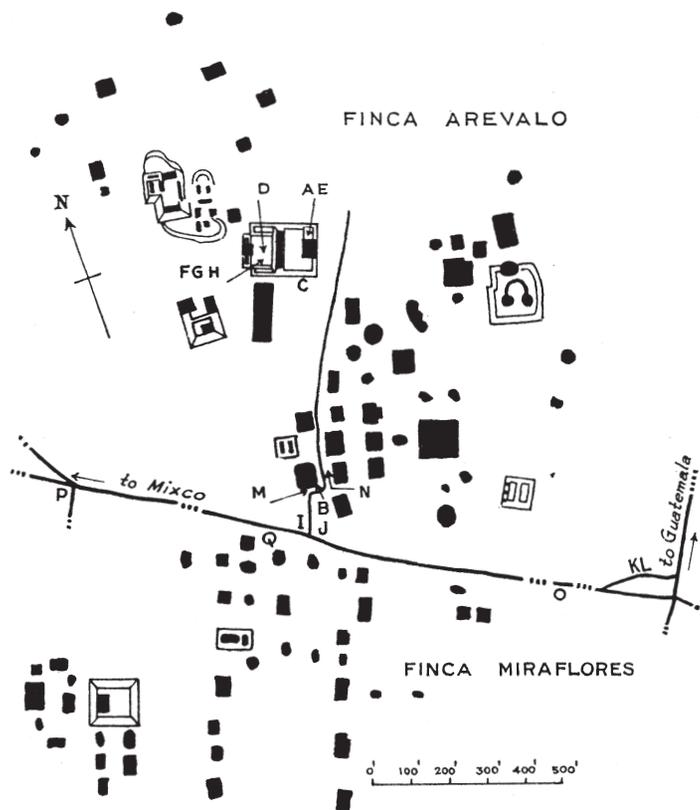


FIG. 45.—Sketch map of the Finca Arevalo ruins. A—Q, Stone sculptures. (After Maudslay)

its owners, the De la Barrera family, imported the first cows seen in the country. Later, his-

INDIAN NOTES

torians such as Juarros and Fuentes y Guzman apply the name Las Vacas to the land south and east of Guatemala city (there is today a small municipality known as Los Encuentros or Las Vacas), and speak of the plains west of the city as the Valle de Mixco. In view of this distinction it seems doubtful that Ayampug,<sup>1</sup> the only aboriginal name recorded in the Valle de las Vacas, can properly be ascribed to the ruins. In modern literature the site has been designated the ruins of the Finca Arevalo.

The first stone carvings to be described from this ruin were discovered by Maudslay,<sup>2</sup> who published a photograph of two stone statues and also a sketch map of the site on which the accompanying fig. 45 is based. In 1916 a visit to the ruins by the writer, accompanied by his wife and Mr. W. H. Holmes, led to the discovery of eight sculptured stones. Subsequent visits by the writer in 1917, 1922, 1924, and 1926, under the auspices of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University and the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, have resulted in the discovery of others, so that a total of eighteen sculptures, designated by the letters A to R, are now known.

<sup>1</sup> Fuentes y Guzman, Recordacion Florida, book XI, chap. II.

<sup>2</sup> Biologia Centrali Americana, vol. II, p. 38, pls. LXXIV, LXXV.

## INDIAN NOTES

These may be classified as five stelæ, two altars, a multiple head, and ten statues. We shall group them however on a stylistic basis. The present location of each carving, with the exception of R, now in the Batres Jáuregui house in Guatemala city, is given in fig. 45.

Artistically the most important group includes two fragmentary stelæ (fig. 46, *b*, *c*) and an altar (fig. 47, *b*, *b'*) carved in the style of the Maya Old Empire. Fig. 46, *b*, shows a part of a stela now lying near the ranch-house destroyed by the earthquake of 1917, to which it had been carried from a mound on the northeast. The sculpture portrays in profile a human leg, evidently that of a standing male figure. Around the leg is a string of beads suggesting a garter, while behind is an elaborate plumed head-dress reaching below the knees. This presentation of the human figure is well known in Maya art of the Usumacinta-Peten region, dating from the time of the Old Empire. It is most ably depicted in the art of Palenque, but the admirable bas-reliefs of that city do not exhibit the small discs, probably representing jade, attached to the feathers in the example under discussion. Similar discs, however, appear in the reliefs at Naranjo, Seibal, Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan, and other cities of the Old Empire.

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## INDIAN NOTES

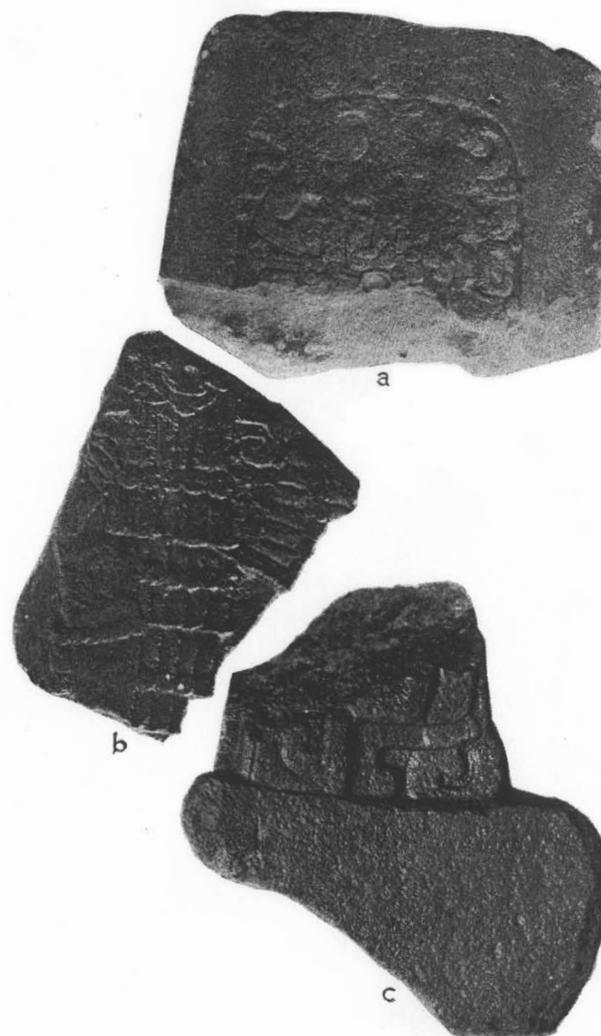


FIG. 46.—Sculptures A, B, C, Finca Arevalo, Guatemala

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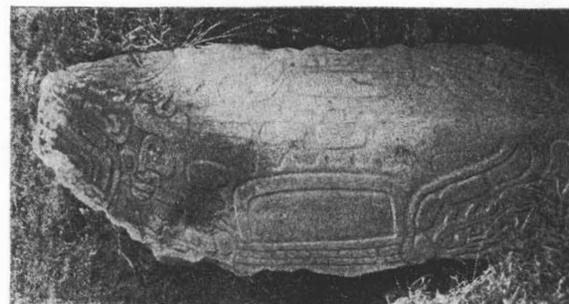
## INDIAN NOTES

A second stela, characterized like the previous example by carving in high relief and curves of Old Empire style, is illustrated in fig. 46, *c*. This fragment is too much shattered to afford a clue as to its original appearance. Its provenience is shown in fig. 57.

In fig. 47, *b*, *b'*, is part of an altar carved in high relief. Originally there must have been two figures, shown in profile, seated cross-legged, and separated by a band of eighteen glyphs in a double column. An altar, discovered by Prof. M. H. Saville and the writer at Copan in 1917, as yet unpublished, has on the upper surface four comparable figures, and others may be seen on stelæ and altars from the Peten ruins. This type is then definitely associated with Old Empire remains, but it persists throughout the entire course of Mayan art down to the inscribing of the codices.

On the left edge of the altar, fig. 47, *b*, are two numbers written in the Mayan numerical system reading 6 and 9, which are attached to glyphs lying around the corner. A closer view (*b'*) shows that the glyphs are separated by an ornamental band composed of a line flanked by dots. At first glance this element resembles bar-and-dot numerals, but it obviously is not a number because the dots are placed on both sides

## INDIAN NOTES



a



b



b'

FIG. 47.—Fragments of altars, Finca Arevalo, Guatemala.  
*a*, Sculpture D; *b*, *b'*, Sculpture E

of the bar. This inscription clearly is a date, but most unfortunately the glyphs are too much effaced to be read.<sup>3</sup> It represents day and month glyphs with their numerical coefficients, or else an Ahau and Tun or Katun date. To the knowledge of the writer this is the only example of Maya writing in stone yet discovered in the central highland region of Guatemala, though inscriptions on polychrome and molded pottery vessels are not unknown.

The three sculptures presented, all carved in high relief, presumably date from the close of the Old Empire, for fragments B and E exhibit subjects well known in the art of that epoch, while the type of dating on E is in harmony. The execution of the carving, however, is distinctly provincial in style, and falls below the high level of the great artistic centers. From an examination of these fragments we are led to the belief that the Maya had made settlements in the highlands of Guatemala, as was also the case in Yucatan, before the abandonment of the cities of the Usumacinta valley and the Peten. A second important indication of the Finca Arevalo group is that the Maya calendar was introduced into the highlands of Guatemala in a form which can

<sup>3</sup>Mr. S. G. Morley, who saw this inscription in 1916, was unable to suggest a reading.

be deciphered with our present knowledge of Maya writing,—granted inscriptions not too badly effaced,—so that we may therefore expect excavations and further finds of this kind to furnish not only a sequence but an exact chronology for the complex archeological types of this region.

A second type of stone carving, characterized by low relief and the curvilinear technique of late Maya art, is illustrated in fig. 46, *a*, fig. 47, *a*, and fig. 48. The first example is the top of a stela, carved in low relief and badly weathered. From the part of the monument preserved we should judge that an elaborate head-dress is depicted. However, on the left side there apparently is a leg (with the foot in the upper left-hand corner), so it is possible that the subject represented is a manifestation of the Diving god, of whom many examples are seen in the stucco relief at the ruins of Tulum.

Sculpture D, eight feet long and two feet across each sculptured face, as appears in fig. 47, *a*, is only a fragment from a much larger block of stone. The original monument was probably an altar, for the design is intended to be seen in a horizontal position. The subject represented is a two-headed dragon. Of the two heads that on the left has had the jaw and snout broken away, while the one on the right is partly hidden by the

INDIAN NOTES

edge of the excavation. They are joined by a D-shape body fringed with scallops recalling serpent patterns on Luna Ware vessels from Nicaragua. Below the lower edge there probably



FIG. 48.—Fragment R, Finca Miraflores, Guatemala

once were legs, for legs are shown on most representations of this monster. Sculpture D was found buried diagonally in the ground in the west court shown in fig. 57.

Fragment R, seen in fig. 48, together with

INDIAN NOTES

another piece representing the upper part of the figure, was discovered while digging a ditch on the Finca Miraflores. One part disappeared overnight, presumably carried away to be worshipped by Indian (Pokoman) workmen. The other portion is now in the Batres Jáuregui house in the City of Guatemala. Like sculpture B it represents the waist and legs of a standing male figure viewed in profile. However, B and R exhibit wide divergence in style. Fragment R is carved in low relief and the legs are bare, thus recalling the art of Santa Lucia Cosumalhualpa, from which this fragment is stylistically distinct. Around the waist is a broad band with elaborate heads set at the front and rear. The head in front is that of god B, generally identified as Kukulcan, the Feathered Serpent. Below this head is a pouch. Behind the legs of the human figure hangs a snake, of which the broad plates of the belly are outlined by a series of scallops.

The right-hand edge of this carving has been not broken but purposely cut away. This technique distinguishes a group of low-relief carvings from which the background has been removed in whole or in part, found at other sites in the highlands of Guatemala. A very beautiful example, now in the Museum, is said to have come from Santa Cruz Quiche. It has been described

INDIAN NOTES

by Saville,<sup>4</sup> who rightly points out approximation to the art of the Dresden codex. The carving delineates a highly conventionalized serpent motive arranged in the form of a cross. It is overlaid with a representation of the serpent deity called god B (fig. 49), drawn in a manner quite similar to the head of god B on fragment R.

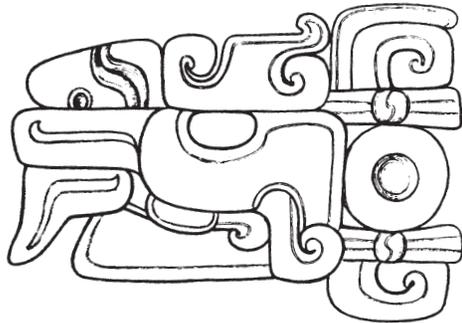


FIG. 49.—Serpent deity on a sculptured stone from Santa Cruz Quiche. (After Saville)

Small objects of stone carved in a style similar to sculptures A, D, and R, are found in southern Guatemala. The example in fig. 50 is one of a group of very thin stone heads, sharp across the top, which are generally believed to be conventionalized celts of ceremonial significance. In

<sup>4</sup> *Mayan Sculpture from Western Guatemala, Indian Notes*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1924.

INDIAN NOTES

several instances they have been discovered, together with stone yokes, accompanying burials.

Another carving, also probably late Mayan but of quite a different style, is the small stela shown in fig. 51, *a*. It is less than two feet wide. Across the upper part of one face a fish has been engraved. Although

this subject is not common, yet it appears over a wide area in both early and late manifestations of Maya art. Maudslay<sup>5</sup> has drawn attention to the fact that the fish is usually represented as nibbling a water plant, and he has published a series of such designs (fig. 52). Spinden has illustrated examples

from Copan, Palenque, Chajar, Nebaj, Ixkun, and Chichen Itza. An example found by the writer at Paraiso in 1917 is shown in fig. 51, *b*. Fish are also seen in the Maya codices and the Tulum and Santa Rita frescoes.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. iv, pl. xciii.

<sup>6</sup> *Memoirs of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University*, vol. vi, fig. 3.

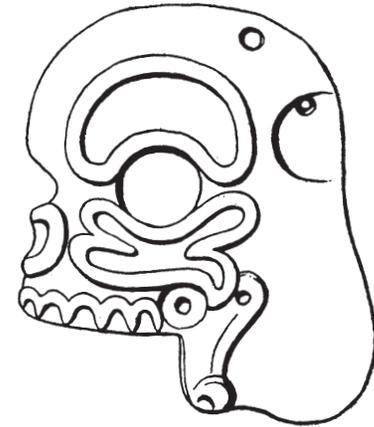


FIG. 50.—Stone head, Hacienda Tasagero, Suchitoto, Salvador. (Length, 9 in.)

INDIAN NOTES

To the remarks of Maudslay and Spinden on the fish and water-plant motive we would add that,



FIG. 51.—*a*, Stela N, Finca Arevalo, Guatemala. *b*, Sculptured trough, Paraiso, Honduras. (Courtesy of Peabody Museum, Harvard University)

except in late examples, it is almost invariably accompanied by some manifestation of death,

INDIAN NOTES

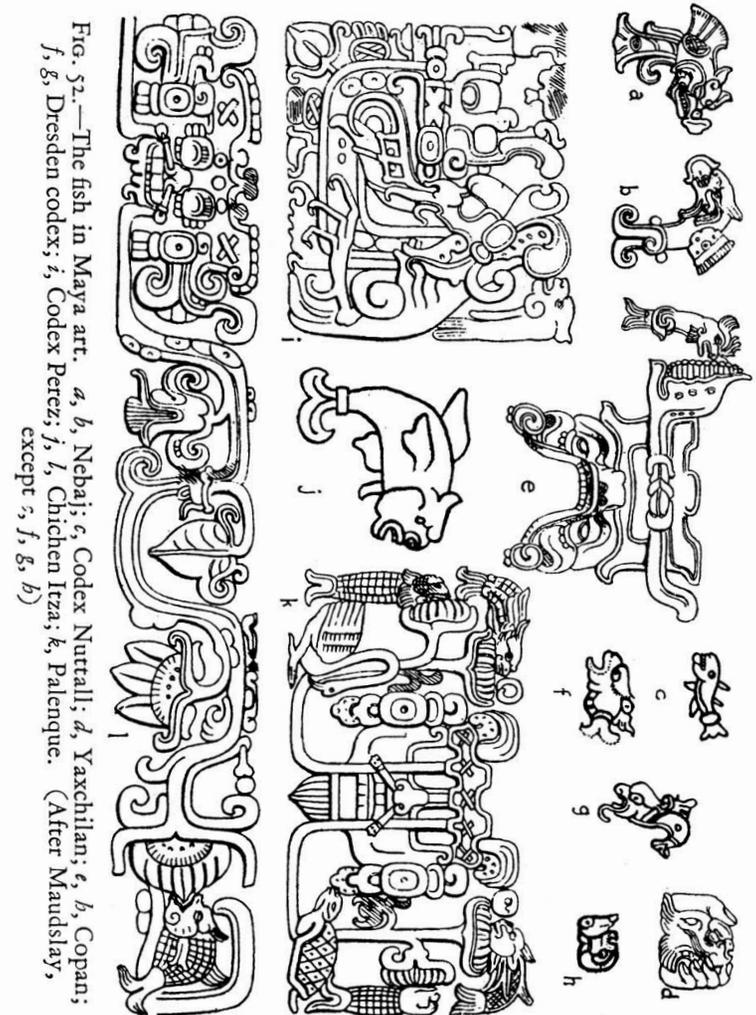


FIG. 52.—The fish in Maya art. *a, b*, Nebaj; *c*, Codex Nuttall; *d*, Yaxchilan; *e, b*, Copan; *f, g*, Dresden codex; *i*, Codex Perez; *j, l*, Chichen Itza; *k*, Palenque. (After Maudslay, except *s, f, g, b*)

INDIAN NOTES

either a skull, as in fig. 51, *b*, or else a head of the Long Nosed god in the aspect of death as in fig. 52, *i*. In the latter case small crosses, such as appear in the eye of the face variant of the numeral 6, are usually seen somewhere in the design (fig. 52, *k*, *l*). These crosses presumably represent two bones, so that the Maya face numeral 6 is therefore the same emblematic device as the piratical Jolly Roger, the skull and cross-bones.

The fish, grasped in the human hand, forms one of the as yet undeciphered Mayan glyphs (fig. 52, *d*, *b*). It occurs in inscriptions at Copan (stela 8 and on a slab from temple 11), Quirigua (altar 12 and great dragon), Tikal (lintel of temple A), Chichen Itza (casa colorada), the Maya codices, and doubtless elsewhere. To the fish and hand glyph a Venus sign is sometimes annexed. There is also a glyph in which a hand grasps, instead of a fish, a small cross such as appears with the fish, water-plant, and death's head motive just described. In addition the fish is seen as an element in the initial series introducing glyph of stelæ C and D at Copan. In this connection it has been suggested that the fish, *cay*, is used as a homophone for twenty, *kal*.

To return to stela N at the Finca Arevalo, the writer believes that this unusual monument is of comparatively late date because the ring around

INDIAN NOTES

the tail does not appear in Old Empire examples but is seen at Chichen Itza and in the Codex Nuttall.

Another distinct type of sculpture from the Finca Arevalo is shown in figs. 53-55. Of these

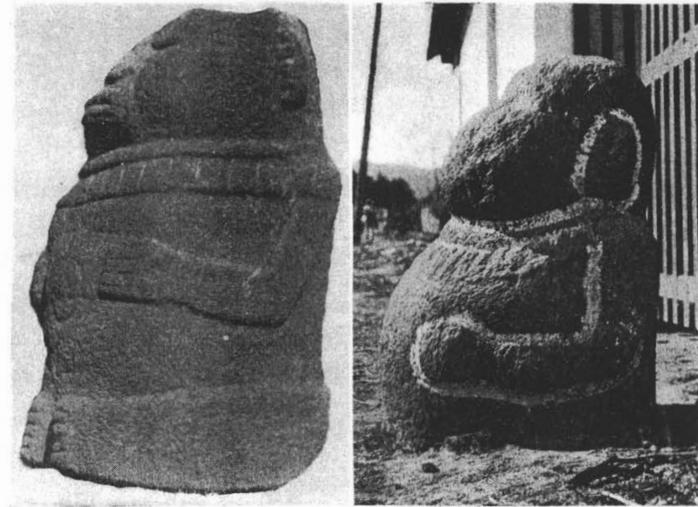


FIG. 53.—Crude stone statues I and K, Finca Arevalo, Guatemala

F, G, and H are *in situ* at the southern end of the west court shown in fig. 57; I and J stand at the principal entrance to the estate and have been pictured by Maudslay;<sup>7</sup> K and L flank a gateway between the Finca Arevalo and Guatemala city.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., pl. LXXV, *a*.

## INDIAN NOTES

The type is characterized by figures sculptured in the round with fat bodies, thick short necks, usually encircled by a broad collar, and with large heads—the whole very crudely yet vigorously carved. The faces are heavy and coarse, and the features are usually indicated by incised lines. The legs often curve around the base of the barrel-

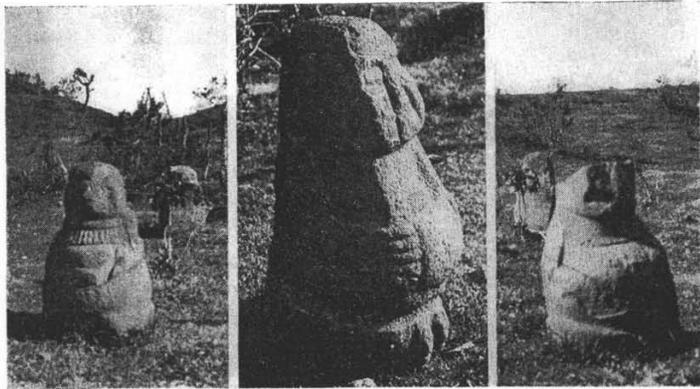


FIG. 54.—Crude stone statues F, G, H, Finca Arevalo, Guatemala

like body, and are parallel to the ground, while the arms are clasped against the sides with elbows bent.

We class the square block of stone bearing four faces, shown in fig. 55, *a*, with this group, although more sophisticated than the others, because the features have been cut with the same

## INDIAN NOTES

technique as on the complete statues. It stands today in front of the ruins of the ranch-house at the Finca Arevalo.

The crude statue shown in fig. 55, *b*, holds a plate across the front of the body, in a manner recalling the Chac Mool figures of Toltec and

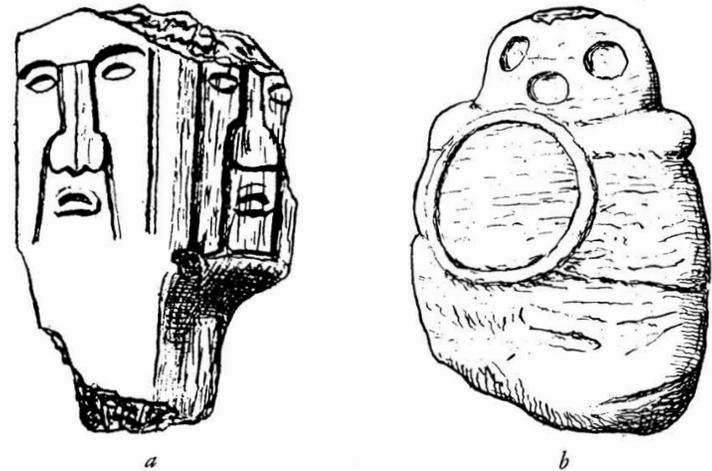


FIG. 55.—Crude stone statues from Finca Arevalo, Guatemala. *a*, M; *b*, L. (Courtesy of W. H. Holmes)

Maya art. In fact, in the Finca Arevalo image we may have the prototype of the Chac Mool, although it lacks the characteristic position of the head and legs, as well as the breast ornament, seen in the fully developed type. At the Finca Arevalo another statue (fig. 53, *a*) exhibits the plate

(well defined in fig. 55, *b*) reduced to a mere circle. Similar circles or plates held against the abdomen may be seen in the stone sculptures of western Nicaragua, eastern Costa Rica, and in the pottery of northwestern Costa Rica.<sup>8</sup>

Of the other sculptures at the Finca Arevalo, J stands beside the portal and has been figured by Maudslay. It and its companion piece (I) were discovered on the Finca Miraflores in the mound on which the house now stands. They were presented many years ago to General Salvador Arevalo, who broke off the head of one (J) in the belief that it contained a treasure. Statues O and P, both badly battered, stand by the side of the Mixco road. Statue Q, which has been set up in front of the house on the Hacienda Miraflores, is a crude stone column with human features faintly indicated on it. All of these carvings are too much mutilated to serve the purposes of this study.

The writer has elsewhere<sup>9</sup> called attention to

<sup>8</sup> E. G. Squier, *Nicaragua; its People, Scenery, Monuments, vol. 1, p. 319.* Walter Hough, *Censers and Incense Burners of Mexico and Central America, Proc. U. S. Nat. Museum, vol. XLII, pl. 3, c.* (Other examples from Costa Rica are in the American Museum of Natural History and in the park in Puerto Limón.) S. K. Lothrop, *Pottery of Costa Rica and Nicaragua, Contr. Mus. Amer. Indian, Heye Foundation, vol. VII, pl. cx, a.*

<sup>9</sup> *The Stone Statues of Nicaragua, Amer. Anthr., N. S., vol. XXIII.*

the resemblance of the Finca Arevalo group to two statues found at Copan under stelæ 4 and 5, dated respectively 9.17.12.13.0 and 9.14.0.0.0, or Oct. 10, 523, and Feb. 3, 452, A.D. It has been pointed out that the Copan statues are also related to the Tuxtla statuette and to certain Nicaraguan figures of Chorotegan workmanship. Some of the Nicaraguan sculptures also show direct stylistic affinity with the Tuxtla statuette. From this evidence it seems that an early date must be assigned to at least part of the group to which the crude Finca Arevalo statues belong, if not actually to those statues themselves.

Further light on the affinities and age of the Finca Arevalo sculpture is shed by an inspection of the pottery. The writer recently was permitted to inspect the Batres Jáuregui collection, which was obtained on the Finca Miraflores through the excavation incident to agriculture. The chief pottery types in this collection were: 1, "Archaic"; 2, Maya; 3, plumbate ware with late types of design; 4, a dark-brown ware, incised after firing, with shapes in part suggesting southern Central America, and to a lesser degree Toltec pottery from the Valley of Mexico. Types 2, 3, and 4 apparently are contemporaneous with the stone carvings of Mayan style, so that it seems safe to assume that the "Archaic" pottery

(fig. 56) is associated with the crude group of sculptures.

The dating of the "Archaic" remains<sup>10</sup> is one of the chief problems of Middle American archeology. In Mexico this culture, although probably not the first, is the earliest yet discovered, but in a modified form it persisted among such tribes

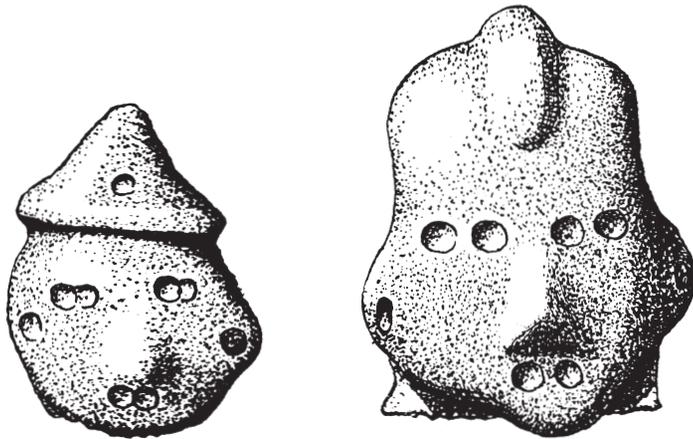


FIG. 56.—Pottery heads of "Archaic" type, Finca Arevalo, Guatemala

as the Tarascans until the coming of the Spaniards. In Salvador the writer recently discovered stratified remains which revealed the same conditions:

<sup>10</sup> The term "Archaic" is most unfortunate because it must be applied to remains which differ greatly in age. The name of the originators of this culture is unknown, and none of the historic tribes can be associated with its early phases.

"Archaic" pottery far under ground and also on the surface mixed with Pipil and possibly European remains. Now, at the Finca Arevalo the "Archaic" pottery is found just under the surface, in fact is brought up in quantity by plowing. However, there is reason to believe, as we shall show presently, that chronologically distinct rubbish at this site is separated not vertically but horizontally; in other words it is not depth but relative position of refuse which furnishes a criterion of age.

To date the Finca Arevalo "Archaic" pottery it is therefore necessary to seek parallelism in the early and late "Archaic" remains of Mexico and Salvador, a subject which will be treated in a subsequent paper. It may be stated here, however, that certain sherds from the Guatemalan ruins are almost identical with early "Archaic" pottery from Mexico and Salvador, thereby indicating that this site was settled in the earliest times to which our knowledge now extends. Thus the weight of evidence is that the crude stone sculptures at the Finca Arevalo ruins are of great age.

Of the carvings here presented no fewer than seven have been found on an acropolis (fig. 57) which stands in the center of the three acropolises shown on Maudslay's map. All these pieces must

have been standing when the city was abandoned, because in each case they had been covered merely by a little soil washed from a higher level. Of these seven carvings F, G, and H belong to the

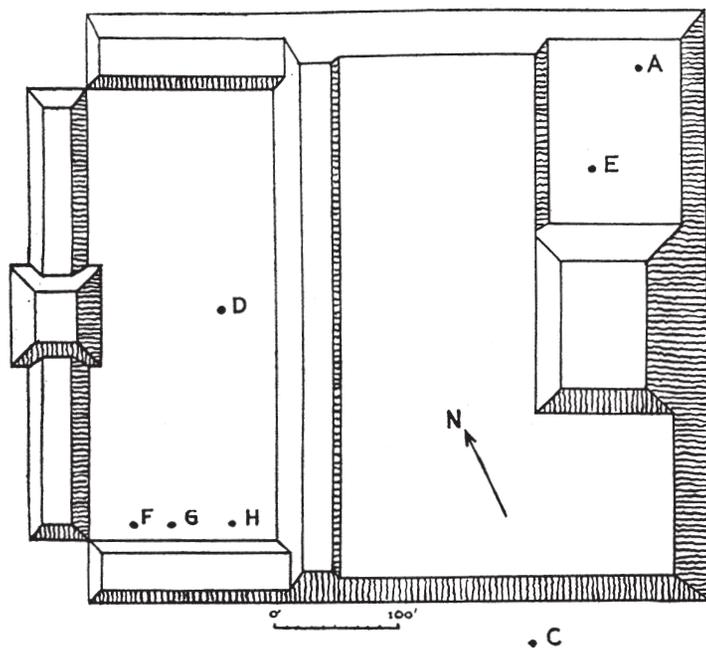


FIG. 57.—Acropolis, showing location of sculptures, Finca Arevalo, Guatemala

crude group, A and C to the early Maya group, and D and E to the late Maya group. As they all seem to have been standing at the same time, it appears that addition and enlargement, rather

than destruction and rebuilding, had taken place. The nature of the monuments suggests that the earliest structure was the western court containing the crude statues F, G, and H. After the occupancy of the city by the Maya at the end of the Old Empire period, a large platform mound was built against the east side of the court, as is indicated by the presence of fragments C and E. In later times Maya builders raised truncated pyramids on opposite sides of the whole construction, placing in front of one an altar (D) and before the other a stela (A). It thus appears that the growth of the acropolis was horizontal rather than vertical, and that chronological determination of pottery and other objects must be worked out on this basis.

The stone carvings at the Finca Arevalo represent three of the four major groups found in the highlands of Guatemala. The remaining type, highly developed at Santa Lucia Cozumalhualpa and elsewhere, is proved by the system of writing and dating employed to be the handiwork of Nahua tribes.

S. K. LOTHROP