



NOT A DANCE CHORUS

The small figures at the upper left are the lithe Indian runners of ancient Peru, each of whom holds a tiny bag. By the theory of the Peruvian archaeologist, Senor Rafael Larco Hoyle, each bag held a message written on beans, as in the other drawings. He has found samples of lima beans with such designs on them on Indian vases.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Who'd Write on Lima Beans? Ancient Indians, Apparently

New Theory of Peruvian Archaeologist Suggests That Bean Writing Was Used to Carry Primitive Messages

WHOD'EVER think of writing on lima beans?

Ancient Americans apparently did, is the conclusion of a noted Peruvian, Senor Rafael Larco Hoyle. He has a theory that clever Chimu Indians of the sandy north coast of Peru actually invented a lima bean writing system by marking the beans with signs that could be recognized.

If Senor Larco's detective reasoning is correct, then it means that ancient American civilization in Peru, which ultimately was welded into the Incan Empire, was not entirely dependent on memory and knot-tying for its important communications. It means that these Indians, like the Mayas and Aztecs of Mexico, were literate in their own fashion. They could read and write.

Senor Larco has detected what he believes to be writing mainly by studying clay vases of these Chimu Indians. He has plenty of these vases to study. His father, famous as a benevolent patron of Peru's archaeology, established on his ranch near Trujillo a museum said to contain over 20,000 vases from graves and ruins along Peru's coast.

No people in the world ever went on record in their art so frankly and vividly as these particular Indians. On smooth

clay vases they painted scenes of everyday life—hunting, fighting, working. They shaped other vases to resemble human figures, plants, and animals, not unlike our Toby jugs, and salt cellars that masquerade as tomatoes, except that the Chimu Indians did their most extensive clay work to put into graves. When an Indian in their country died, his funeral notice was an array of clay art that told his experiences and distinctions.

Senor Larco was particularly attracted to the pictures of the Indian messenger service. These messengers are pictured running fast as legs can carry them, and with one hand outstretched carrying a small bag. It's the bag that interests Senor Larco. What could be in it? Beans, he decided. Beans with signs on them, to make sure the message is right.

First American Telegraph

The first American telegraph system, you might call this way of speeding correspondence by fast runners carrying a briefed message.

What makes him think beans were in the bag is this: He finds lima beans conspicuous in Chimu art, and the curving bean shape was usually decorated with lines, dots, or colors. Pictures of

Indian runners particularly were accompanied by these decorated beans in odd spaces. Even the messengers were sometimes drawn as bean-men with human faces and legs and lima-bean bodies. Putting two and two together, the Peruvian archaeologist deduces that these Indians probably did mark or inscribe real garden beans and gave them to messengers as memorandums to be relayed to a distant receiver.

Beans Still Carried

Even today a vestige of some such ancient practice is found, when Indian farmers and herdsman in Peru tuck away beans or grains in a pouch to keep track of the sacks of grain they harvest or the animals they are herding.

It has been well known that Peru's Indians used knotted cords to represent statistics. But efforts to detect any writing system of theirs have heretofore been discounted by archaeologists. So, the lima bean may have to stand considerable scientific scrutiny before it is accepted as America's most intellectual bean—outranking the bean of Boston.

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METALLURGY—ARCHAEOLOGY

Lead Pipe 2,000 Years Old Shown at Science Museum

PART of ancient Rome's waterway system—a piece of lead pipe 2,000 years old—is now on display at the New York Museum of Science and Industry. Still in good condition, the pipe shows the original inscription identifying its period and the contractor who laid it. It was obtained in excavations for a subcellar under the Palace Hotel, Rome.

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