

Indian Chiefs



on Latin American Notes

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More than 500 years ago, in the New World, the *conquistadores* found that Indians had a social structure headed by Indian Chiefs.

The *Cacique* (Indian Chief) was both admired and obeyed. His opinion was the law of the region. He administered justice. The *Cacique* did not usurp power; his rule was legitimate. The Spanish *cacique* had *machismo*—physical courage, native shrewdness, and the strength of character of a natural leader. The obedience of the Indian was, however, the submissiveness of a serf. The distinction between the ancient rule of *caciquismo* in Spain and *caudillismo* in 19th century Spanish America was the difference between men who ruled as acknowledged leaders and men who ruled as a master race. Exposure for two-hundred years to the corrupting influences of Indian serfdom and *negro* slavery destroyed democratic sensitivity in the American-born Spanish aristocracies. For those at the summit, power was an instrument for the preservation of the system.

In this article we will examine the life of some notable Indian chiefs who appear on Latin American notes.

MEXICO

Mexico was the site of highly advanced Indian civilizations 1500 years before *conquistador* Hernan

Cortes conquered the wealthy Aztec empire of Montezuma, 1519-1521 and founded a Spanish colony which lasted for nearly 300 years. During the Spanish period, Mexico, the so-called "New Spain," stretched from Guatemala to the present states of Wyoming and California in the USA.

Recently, on the 100 new pesos note of *Banco de Mexico* appears the Aztec King Nezahualcoyotl (1400-1472) which means "hungry coyote" at right on the face of the note. He was a great warrior and besides he was also called the Poet King because he was a patron of arts and sciences and ancient Mexico's most famous philosopher in the city of Texcoco, on the eastern of Lake Texcoco which was a highly civilized city and the valley's intellectual center.

In addition, in the notes of 50000 pesos issued between 1986-90 appears another leader of the Aztec empire Cuauhtemoc, a 25 year-old, nephew of Montezuma, and he swore that he would fight for every Aztec warrior that had been killed by Hernan Cortes' forces. Subsequently in 1992 Cuauhtemoc appeared on the 50 new pesos note with similar design of the former note.

Also, on the note of 1 peso we can find an important Aztec symbol and it was the Aztec Calendar.

GUATEMALA

The Republic of Guatemala, once

the site of the ancient Mayan civilization, was conquered by Pedro de Alvarado, the lieutenant of Hernan Cortes who undertook the conquest from Mexico. Skilled in strategy and cruelty, he progressed rapidly along the Pacific coastal lowlands to the high plain of Quezaltenango, where the decisive battle for Guatemala was fought. After routing the Mayan forces, he established the first capital of Guatemala in 1524.

The Mayan empire of the colonial period included all of Central America but Panama.

Tecun Unman appears at the right on the face of the 1/2 note quetzal note.

Tecun Uman (1499-1524) was leader and prince of tribe *quiches* which had seven battles against the Spanish forces headed by *conquistador* Pedro Alvarado.

In 1524, in Quetzaltenango plains was the place of the last battle and Tecun attacked three times to Don Pedro and he killed his horse and after Don Pedro with a lance assassinated Tecun Uman who became a national hero in the colonial period.

There are varieties of this note (Q 0.50); the first one was issued between 1972-1983; the second one between 1983-1989 and the last one similar to the note with slight changes was issued 1989-1995. At right Tikal temple on back; the first great Maya city, and oasis civiliza



1 peso 7-VII-43. Aztec calendar at center. (Mexico)



100 nuevos pesos (1994) Nezahualcoyotl at right. (Mexico)



1/2 q. 18.8.96 Tecun Oman at right. (Guatemala)



1 lempir 12.5.96 Arms at left, lempira at right. (Honduras)

tion amid the jungles of Guatemala.

HONDURAS

The Republic of Honduras, also a site of the ancient Mayan empire, was claimed for Spain by Columbus in 1502, during his last voyage to the Americas. The first settlement was made by Cristobal de Olid under orders of Hernan Cortes, then in Mexico. The area, regarded as one of the most promising sources of gold and silver in the new world, was a part of a Captaincy General of Guatemala throughout the colonial period.

On the 1 lempira note appears the portrait of this important Lenca Indian chief. Lempira means "Lord of mountain range" and he fought against Spanish forces headed by Francisco de Montejo and his lieutenant Alonso de Caceres in Camayagua's Valley.

In 1537, Lempira was killed while he was talking with two emissaries sent by Montejo. He was betrayed

and became a legendary hero of Indian resistance.

In 1926, Honduras adopted "Lempira" for its currency unit in honor to this notable Indian chief.

There are varieties of the 1 lempira note: the first one was issued in 1961-1965; the second one between 1968-1972; a new design where Lempira appears without feather was issued in 1974; and in 1980-1994 appeared Lempira at right and the Ruins of Copan on the back in all notes of this denomination.

The Ruin of Copan in the highlands of Honduras was a serene, well ordered center of intellectual life dedicated to art, science and sacred games.

NICARAGUA

Columbus sighted the coast of Nicaragua in 1502 during the course of his last voyage of discovery. It was first visited in 1522 by the conquistadors from Panama, under command of Gonzalez Davola. After the first

settlements were established in 1524 at Granada and Leon; Nicaragua was incorporated, for administrative purposes, in the Captaincy General of Guatemala.

In 1972, a note of 5 cordobas was issued where appears a notable Indian chief called Nicarao which is the origin of the name of this Central American country.

Now, on another note of 5 cordobas oro appears the portrait of Diriangen who was the other important Indian chief of Nicaragua.

PERU

The Republic of Peru, located on the Pacific Coast of South America, was a site of a great Inca empire which reached from northern Ecuador to central Chile. Peru was conquered in 1531 by Francisco Pizarro.

Desirable as the richest of the Spanish viceroyalties, it was torn by warfare between avaricious Spaniards until the arrival in 1569 of



1000 sucres. 1986-88. Rumanahui at right. (Ecuador)



5 soles de oro. 1969-76. Inca pachutec. (Peru)



50 soles de oro 15-12-77. Tupac Amaru II at right. (Peru)

Francisco de Toledo, who initiated two and half centuries of efficient colonial rule which made Lima the most aristocratic colonial capital and the stronghold of Spain's American possessions.

In this country we can find some notes with two important Inca warriors such as: Inca Pachutec who appears in 5 soles de oro in 1968 and after between 1969-74 and the Sacsahuaman fortress on the back which was constructed by Inca engineers.

And the other of them is Tupac Amaru who appeared on notes of 50 soles de oro in 1968; another one between 1969-74; after in 1975 until 1977 and finally on the 100 soles de oro of 1976.

Tupac Amaru grew up in the Incan convent of Vilcabamba, the so-called religious university of the Incas. He was favored by the native religious and military leaders and Tupac opposed Christianity and the Spanish occupation. For this reason he was captured and sentenced to be beheaded in front of the main cathedral in the central square of Cuzco.

A multitude of Indians, about 15000, were present and saw that lamentable spectacle of their lord and the last Inca leader who was executed on September 21st 1572.

ECUADOR

The Republic of Ecuador is also located on the Pacific Coast of South America. Ecuador was first sighted 1526 by Bartolome Ruiz. Conquest was undertaken by Sebastian de Benalcazar who founded Quito in 1534. Ecuador was part of the province, later the vice-royalty of Peru

until 1739 when it became part of the Vice-royalty of New Grenada.

In this South American country was issued a note of 1000 sucres (1976-82) with the portrait of Indian Ruminahui at right on the face of the note. Years later a new issue of this denomination came out between 1984-1988.

In 1532 the Spanish forces headed by Francisco Pizarro destroyed the Inca civilization and plundered its wealth. They held Inca King Atahualpa hostage, and set his army to work cleaning out the palaces and temples across the Inca empire in a desperate attempt to raise his ransom. Later the Spanish murdered Atahualpa.

An Inca general named Ruminahui fled the marauding Spanish and took with him a large share of the ransom he had been collecting for his king. He disappeared into the remote mountainous region of Ecuador called the Llanganati. The load of gold artifacts he took with him is considered the largest undiscovered treasure in Latin America, valued at two billion dollars.

Since Rumanahui disappearance, generations of adventurers have sought King Atahualpa's gold.

COLOMBIA

The Republic of Colombia is located in the northwestern corner of South America. The northern coast of present Colombia was one of the first parts of the American Continent to be visited by Spanish navigators and



10,000 pesos oro. 1992 "commemorative issue." Youthful woman Mujer emberla at center right. (Columbia)

the site, at Darien in Panama, of the first permanent European settlement on the American mainland in 1510. New Grenada was established as a Spanish colony in 1549 and with this name, Colombia was known until 1861; it stemmed from the settlement of Santa Maria in 1525.

In 1992 Colombia issued a commemorative note of 10000 pesos oro for the Quincentennial of Columbus' voyage October 12th. 1492.

A youthful woman "Mujer Erribera" appears at center right on the face of this note.

BRAZIL

The Federative Republic of Brazil, which comprises half the continent of South America. Brazil was discovered and claimed for Portugal by Admiral Pedro Alvarez Cabral in 1500. Portugal established a settlement in 1532 and proclaimed the area a royal colony in 1549.

Between 1990-91 Brazil issued a note of 1000 cruzeiros. On it appears two Indian children and local food from Amazonia on back. On the face appears the portrait of C. Rondon at right of this note.

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