



1

GREGORIO AGUILAR BAREA ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM COMICS

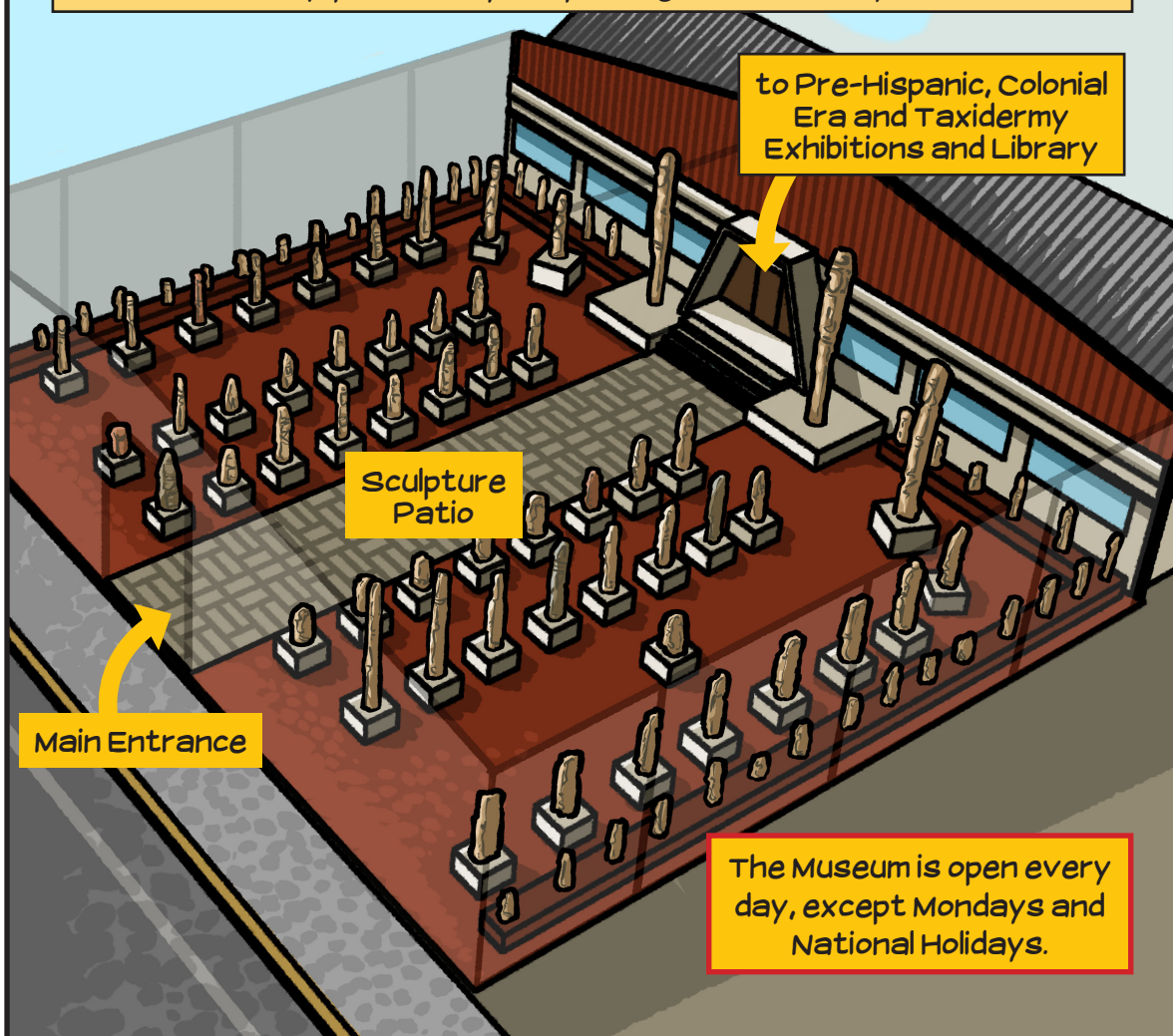
EXPLORING OUR INDIGENOUS PAST



Written and illustrated by
JOHN G. SWOGGER
with ALEX GEURDS

WELCOME TO THE MUSEUM!

At the initiative of **Gregorio Aguilar Barea**, the museum opened its doors in Juigalpa in 1967 and is the premier regional museum of Nicaragua. It houses a world-renowned and unique collection of indigenous stone sculpture, shows the history of Chontales through its material culture, and contains a library for children. Alongside archaeological objects, the museum displays a collection of Colonial era equipment, weapons, paintings and taxidermy of local animals.



This comic was illustrated by John G. Swogger and written by John G. Swogger and Alex Geurds.

We would like to thank **Laura Van Broekhoven** and all those involved in the fieldwork for helping the comic reach this form. Funding from the **Global Challenges Research Fund - Research England**, and the **Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)** was crucial in realizing this comic.

This publication is licensed under a Creative Commons Licence: You are free to make derivative, non-commercial works based on this comic, but you must attribute its original creators and must distribute it under a similar licence.



We're glad you've come to visit us. I'm **Marta**...

...and I'm **Carlos**. And we're going to show you what we do here at the Museum...

... and why the history and archaeology that we protect and study here is important to everyone in Juigalpa and the Chontales region.

We're also going to introduce you to other people who are helping us tell the story of Juigalpa and the Chontales region...

... including archaeologists from other countries...

... and important people from right here in Juigalpa!

Marta Villanueva
Museum Director

Carlos Villanueva
Museum Assistant

Alex Geurds
Archaeologist from
Oxford University, England



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

To order additional copies, please contact Alex Geurds: alexander.geurds@arch.ox.ac.uk

Here in the museum we care for the heritage of Nicaragua.



Some of this heritage is very **big** and **impressive** -

- like the sculptures in the patio of the museum.

While some of this heritage is **small** and **looks unimportant** -




- like the stone tools and fragments of broken pots we have in our display cases.

But all these things, big and small, help us understand our "**Pre-Hispanic**" heritage...



... the history and culture of Nicaragua before the Spanish came here, **five hundred years ago**.



How can these things tell us about how we used to live five hundred years ago?

Can they really tell us what sort of people our ancestors were?

Were the statues on the patio of kings and priests?

Did they live in farms - or did they live in towns?

Who made them - and what were they for?

What did they eat and drink?

What did they use these pots for?

How were their lives different from ours?

Did the women make them or the men?

But five hundred years is a long time ago - is all this stuff really important today?

These all are **great** questions!

Asking questions like these is how we **learn** about our heritage.



One man who asked all these questions - and more! - was **Gregorio Aguilar Barea**.

He was someone who wanted to know all about the history and heritage of Juigalpa: its people, its plants and animals, its geology and its climate.

We know him as "**Goyo**".

He lived in Juigalpa about fifty years ago - many people still remember him, and this museum is named after him.

He was particularly interested in the **Pre-Hispanic** heritage of Nicaragua.

He explored the Chontales region, searching for clues about our **indigenous ancestors**...

... by talking to the people who **knew** the land:

Goyo starts exploring, 1949.

Our farmers and ranchers.

They showed him sculptures they had found on their land.

Goyo brought these indigenous sculptures back to Juigalpa to preserve them...

...and built this museum so that everyone could come and learn about them.



Museum being built, 1967.

He founded **The Young Explorers** - local school children who would go out with him on his expeditions.

In the countryside of Chontales, they would learn all about the **plants** and the **trees**...



... the **birds** and the **animals**...

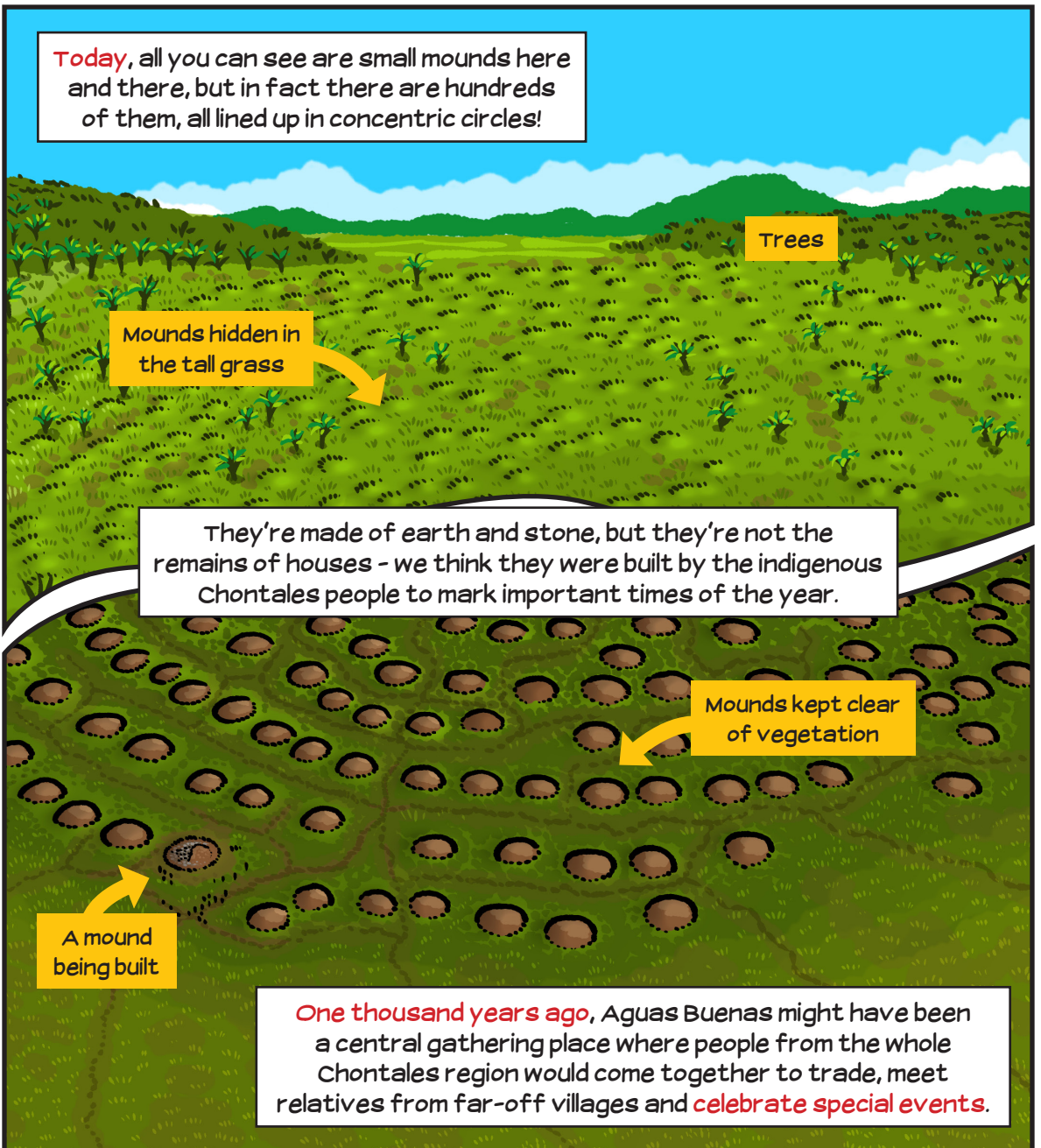
... the **rocks** and the **climate**...

... and the **history** and **archaeology**.

My father, Gustavo Villanueva, was one of the original Explorers - and learning from **him** made **me** want to teach **others** all about the ancient heritage of the Chontales region.

Today, **we** are all following in **Goyo's** footsteps, carrying on the work he started. Experts like **Alex** come to Juigalpa and its museum to run archaeological projects that will tell us **even more** about what Nicaragua was like before the Spanish came here.





1

We've used new archaeological and scientific techniques to investigate Aguas Buenas. We started by making highly accurate and detailed maps using **satellite data**.



2

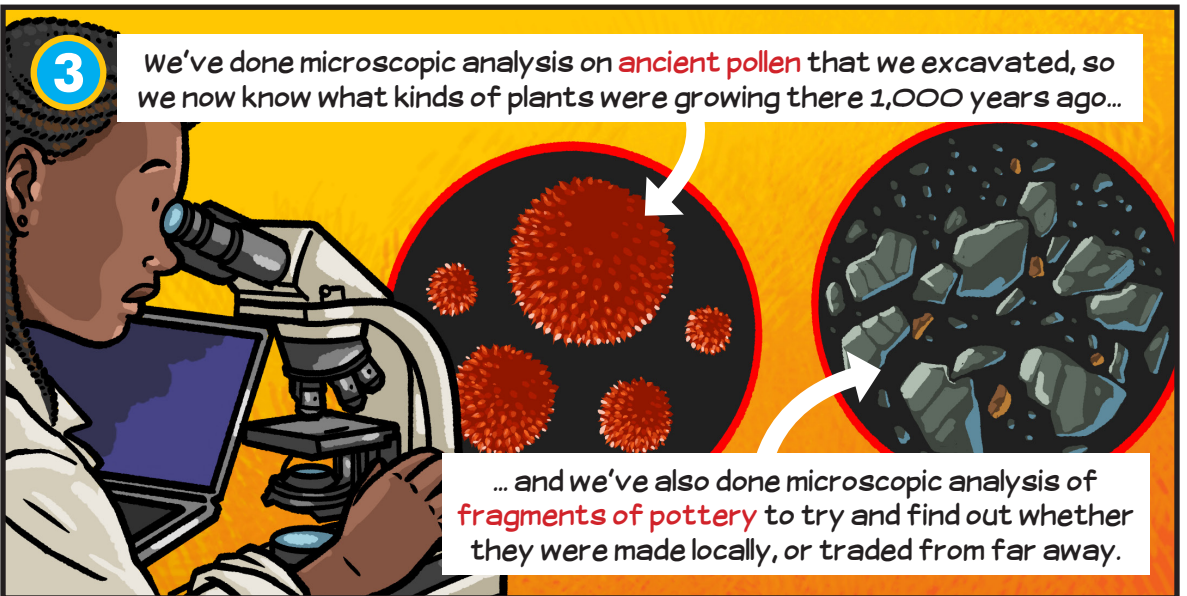
These maps helped us undertake **surveys**...



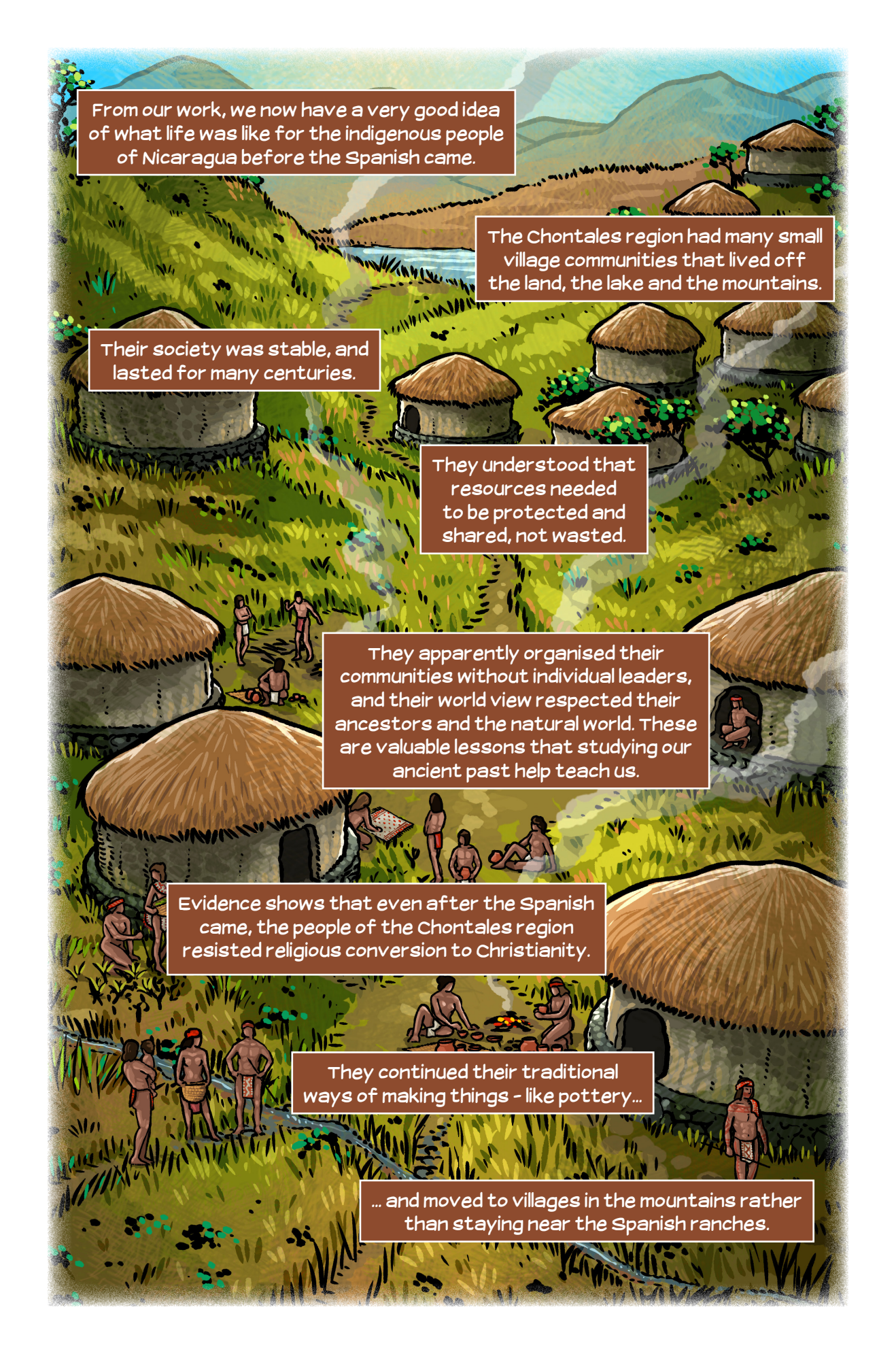
... and **excavate** some of the earth and stone mounds.

3

We've done microscopic analysis on **ancient pollen** that we excavated, so we now know what kinds of plants were growing there 1,000 years ago...



... and we've also done microscopic analysis of **fragments of pottery** to try and find out whether they were made locally, or traded from far away.



From our work, we now have a very good idea of what life was like for the indigenous people of Nicaragua before the Spanish came.

The Chontales region had many small village communities that lived off the land, the lake and the mountains.

Their society was stable, and lasted for many centuries.

They understood that resources needed to be protected and shared, not wasted.

They apparently organised their communities without individual leaders, and their world view respected their ancestors and the natural world. These are valuable lessons that studying our ancient past help teach us.

Evidence shows that even after the Spanish came, the people of the Chontales region resisted religious conversion to Christianity.

They continued their traditional ways of making things - like pottery...

... and moved to villages in the mountains rather than staying near the Spanish ranches.

A man wearing a brown hat and a blue shirt under a grey jacket is smiling and talking to a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing an orange tank top. She is holding a blue clipboard. They are standing in front of a background of purple and blue brushstrokes.

Thanks to the work of archaeological researchers like Alex, **we know so much** about our Pre-Hispanic indigenous ancestors.


But there's still so much more to find out! We hope that in the future we will be able to undertake **new investigations!**

Here at the Museum, we want to make sure that the archaeological heritage of Juigalpa and the whole Chontales region belongs to everyone... **and that includes YOU!**

A group of people, including children and adults, are gathered in a museum. In the background, there is a large stone carving of a face. A woman in an orange tank top is talking to a group of children. Another woman in a pink tank top is holding a clipboard and talking to a girl in a light blue shirt. A boy in a grey shirt is looking at a tablet.

The museum has **new information panels** about our Pre-Hispanic heritage...

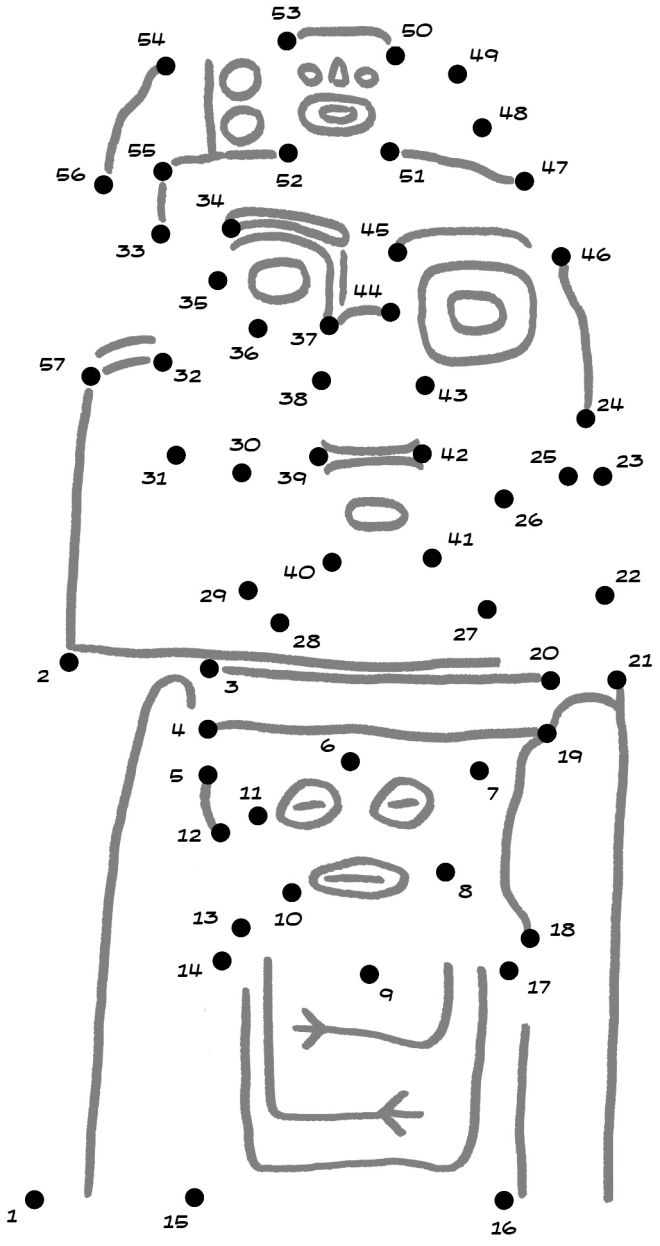
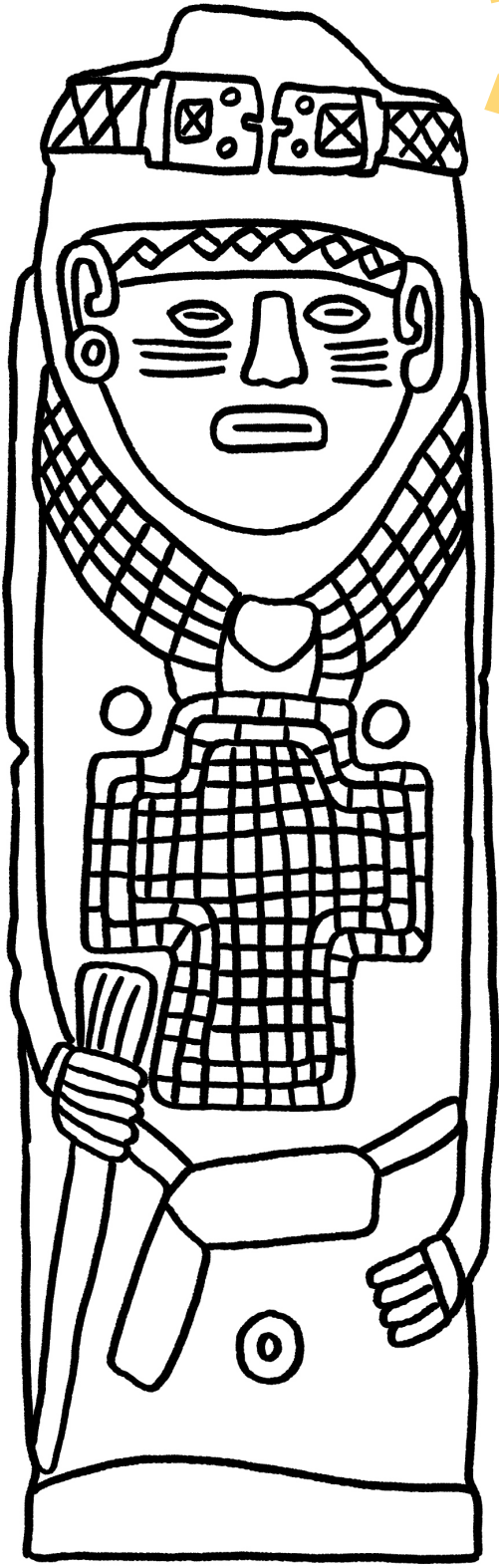
... and we have games and activities to **help you learn!**

A group of people are outdoors in a rural setting. A man in a blue shirt and a hat is talking to a woman with long blonde hair and glasses. A boy in a grey shirt is pointing towards the background. A white horse is visible in the background. The scene is set against a backdrop of green trees and blue mountains.

You could even be like Goyo and the Young Explorers and visit Aguas Buenas to see the site for yourself. There's no signposting and no trails, but Don Juan Duarte who lives near the site may be able to show you around.
Remember: Our heritage is part of who we are, and so it is up to us to preserve and protect it for ourselves and future generations of Nicaraguans!

Colour in!

Can you recognise this sculpture?
Where in the museum is it?



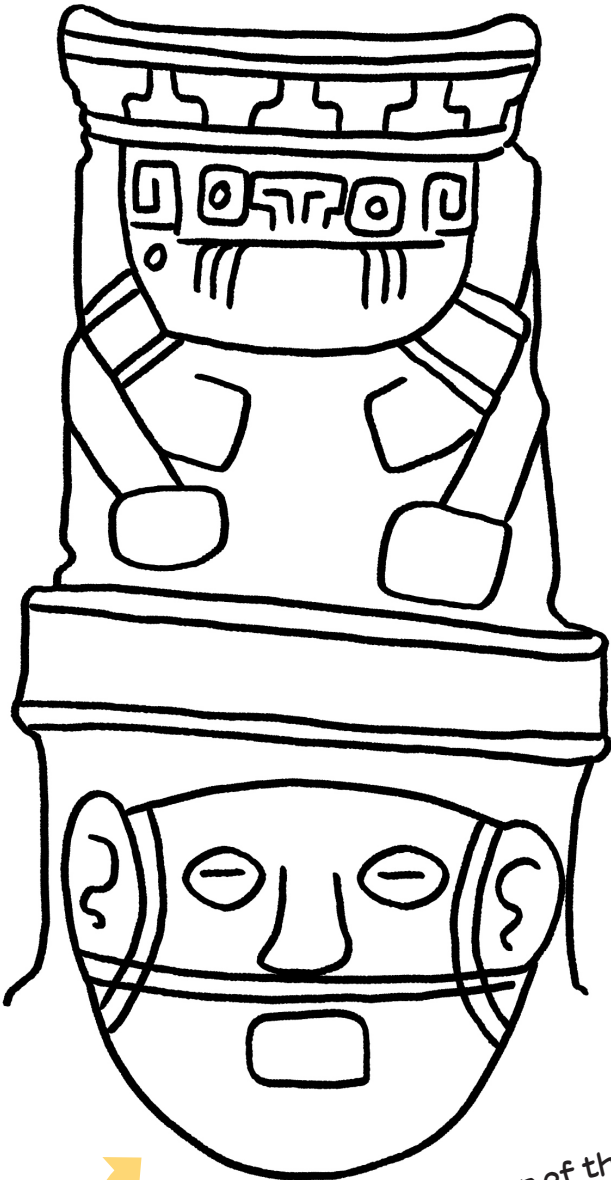
Join the dots!

Can you find me on the patio?

ACTIVITIES!

Which statue has a head like this?
What animal do you think that is
sitting on top?

Draw the
sculpture's
head!



Colour in!

The top of this sculpture has
no head! What do you think it
might have looked like?
Draw it in!

