

**THE GUEGUENCE; A
COMEDY BALLET IN THE
NAHUATL-SPANISH
DIALECT OF NICARAGUA**

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The Gueguence; a comedy ballet in the Nahuatl-Spanish dialect of Nicaragua by Daniel G. Brinton

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DANIEL G. BRINTON

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A MANGUE INDIAN RECITING A LOGA. SEE PAGE XXV.

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NUMBER III.

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GÜEGÜENCE;

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IN THE

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EDITED BY

DANIEL G. BRINTON, A.M., M.D.

D. G. BRINTON,
PHILADELPHIA.

1883.

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PREFACE.

The play which is presented in this volume is the only specimen known to me of the native American comedy. It is of comparatively recent origin, and is composed in a mixed dialect, a jargon of low Spanish and corrupt Aztec (Nahuatl); but, both in its history and spirit, it bears so many marks of native composition, and is so characteristic of the sort of humor popular with the tribes from whom it was obtained, that it fairly merits a place in this series of publications.

The text was obtained in Nicaragua, by the late Dr. Carl Hermann Berendt. But no translation of any part of it and no notes upon it were found among his papers. The responsibility for the rendering rests, therefore, with myself. It has presented extreme difficulty, owing to the imperfect condition of the text, the deterioration of the Nahuatl words and forms, the antiquated and provincial senses of the Spanish words, and the obscure local references introduced. I would rather speak of my work as a loose paraphrase, aimed to give the general sense and humorous tone of the original, than as a faithful translation.

The text has been printed precisely as in the manuscript, even obvious errors in spelling and punctuation having been preserved. Suggestions with reference to these are made in the notes.

For assistance in translating the Spanish text, I would acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor Adolfo Pierra, of Philadelphia, and Dr. F. C. Valentine, of New York, both of whom have passed considerable periods in Central America.

Philadelphia, November, 1883.

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INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. *The Nahuas and Mangués of Nicaragua.*

Among the outlying colonies of that important people whose chief seat was in the Valley of Mexico, and who are variously known as Aztecs, Mexicans or Nahuas, were several in Central America. "One of these," writes Mr. Squier, "occupied the principal islands in the Lake of Nicaragua, the narrow isthmus which intervenes between that lake and the Pacific, and probably a portion of the country to the southward, as far as the gulf of Nicoya. Their country was less than a hundred miles long, by twenty-five broad; yet here they preserved the same language and institutions, and practiced the same religious rites, with the people of the same stock who dwelt more than two thousand miles distant, on the plateau of Anahuac, from whom they were separated by numerous powerful nations, speaking different languages, and having distinct organizations."¹

This Nahuatl tribe gave the name to the Province, *Nicaragua*, this being, according to some early authorities, the personal appellation of their chief at the epoch of their discovery, in 1522, and, according to others, their national name.² For no sufficient reasons, Mr. Squier applied to them the term *Niquirans*, and Dr. Berendt *Nicaraos*, but it seems better to retain, as distinctive for them, the name *Nicaraguans*, or, more specifically, "the Nahuas of Nicaragua." "Nicaragua" is

¹ E. G. Squier, *The States of Central America*, p. 317 (London, 1858).

² The conquest of Nicaragua is described by Oviedo, *Historia General de las Indias*, Lib. XXIX, cap. XXI, and Herrera, *Decadas de Indias*, Dec. III, Lib. IV, and see Dec. IV, Lib. VIII, cap. X.