



First Graphic Representation of The Bamboo in The American Continent

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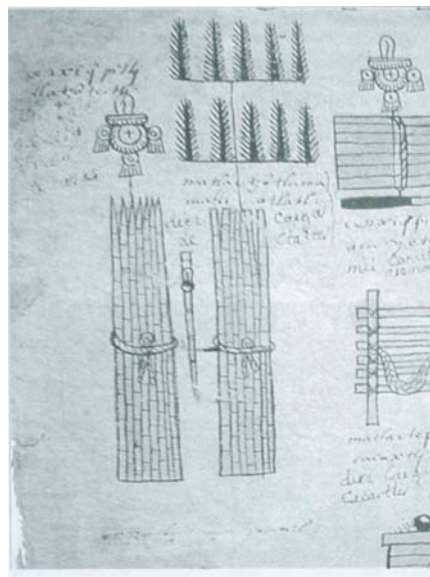
The National Anthropology Museum of Mexico has in its library of old books and codex an original document called *Matricula de Tributos* (Register of Tributes).

This document is a relation of tributes, or taxes, that some peoples should pay to Emperor Montezuma, King of Aztecs before the conquest by the Spaniards.

The codex *Matricula de Tributos* is anonymous; it is written on pieces of paper made from the bark of the tree usually called *amate* (*Ficus* sp.) using dyes or tinctures from plants and minerals of that time (the 1500s).

Page 22 of this Aztec book clearly shows the representation of *otates*, interpreted as *varas de otate* (poles of otate) used in housing construction under a certain system known as *bahareque*, where straw or grass is mixed with clay using otate. The same graphic representations of this bamboo show the otate was used to make arrows, used by the Aztec warriors in their battles against other peoples. This makes me think that it is very probable that these were among the weapons used by the Aztecs against the Spaniards in the time of the conquest of Mexico. While the Spaniards used bullets and gun powder to kill Aztec, the Aztec killed the Spaniards using arrows made with otate bamboo roles.

It is easy to conclude that the bamboo species represented in such codex belongs to the bamboo *Oatea acuminata*, usually known in Mexico with the Spanish name *otate* - from the Nahuatl (Azteca language) *otatl*. Otate is a bamboo abundant in the surroundings of the capital of the Aztec Empire called Tenochtitlan (nowadays Mexico City).



No doubt the diagram shows the first graphic representation of a bamboo in the American Continent and its use.

