

CHAPTER III

AMONG THE INDIANS OF THE TUXTLA MOUNTAINS

At Cuzalapa an Indian was added to our outfit. He was armed with an old muzzle loader, and looked quite dangerous. We ourselves did not carry any firearms whatsoever, as we deemed this a safe course.

Don Juan gave our guide, Enrique, his final instructions, telling him how to make friends with some of the worst Indians, and what to do about getting food for us. Then we mounted and followed by our host, we rode towards the forest. At the end of a long

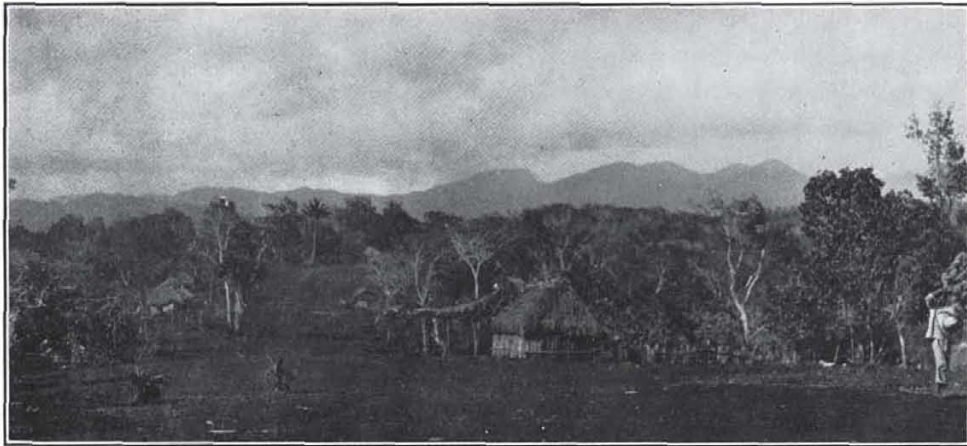


FIG. 28—Ocozotepec, Ver. Principal Street with the Santa Marta Mountains in the background.

mountain spur which gradually ascended towards the heights, Don Juan bade us farewell, and we started our climb. Following the spur, we soon came onto a narrow ridge, and this we followed to the top. On either side of us stood dense semi-tropical forest. Here and there trees had fallen, leaving an opening in the thick vegetation, through which we could look down over the mountainside. We made slow progress as the trail was wet and slippery, and steep as well. In several places we got off our horses in order to lighten their burden. Our boys were driving the pack animals with loud cries, and now and then we had to stop to readjust cargo.

Our guide pointed out the tracks of a tapir which had crossed the trail, and shortly afterwards we met the first family of monkeys,

some of the amusing and inquisitive small, white-bellied spider monkeys. The top of the pass is called the Cerro Bastonal and is part of a chain of volcanic cones which extends from the volcano Santa Marta towards the southeast and forms the western side of the Coatzacoalcos basin. We reached the top (1,050 meters) about noon and made a short stop to rest the animals and ourselves. About two hours later we came out of the tropical forest into low second-growth and open country with a corn field here and there, and finally about 3 o'clock we reached the village of Ocozotepec, two rows of grass-roofed huts on either side of a red earth ridge, the bare ridge forming the main street (fig. 28).

Here we had our first contact with the Indians. It took some time to locate the chief who carries the proud title of Municipal President. This gentleman was not very enthusiastic about our

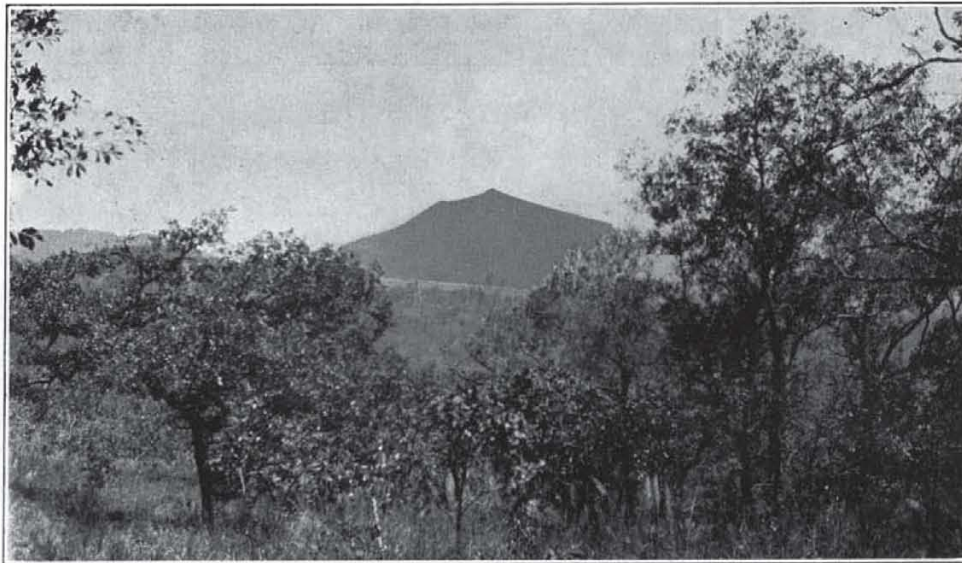


FIG. 29—San Martin Mountain and Oak Forest.

arrival, but finally quartered us in the "Municipal Office," a grass thatched hut with mud walls recently built and not quite so miserable as the other houses of the village. Next to the office was the jail and here we stored our saddles. In front of us we had the church, also a grass thatched house with mud walls, the largest building in the village. These three buildings were lying on the highest part of the ridge. Looking north we saw the vivid red soil of the village street bordered by squalid huts. Beyond were forests, and far away loomed up the San Martín Pajapan volcano which we had planned to ascend (fig. 29).

The male part of the village of Ocozotepec crowded around us next morning to watch our preparations for leaving, and after much touching of hands—one does not shake hands here, but barely lets the hands touch—we finally got away. The trail ran through hilly country covered with open oak forest and here and there a pine. The ground is carpeted with grass and the soil, where it shows, has a deep red color (fig. 30).

An hour and a half brought us to Soteápan, a more bleak and miserable place than Ocozotepec. Rebels and bandits have in turn had their fling at the village with fire brands, so only little was left of the houses. The women were sitting in the huts and the men were loafing around the office.

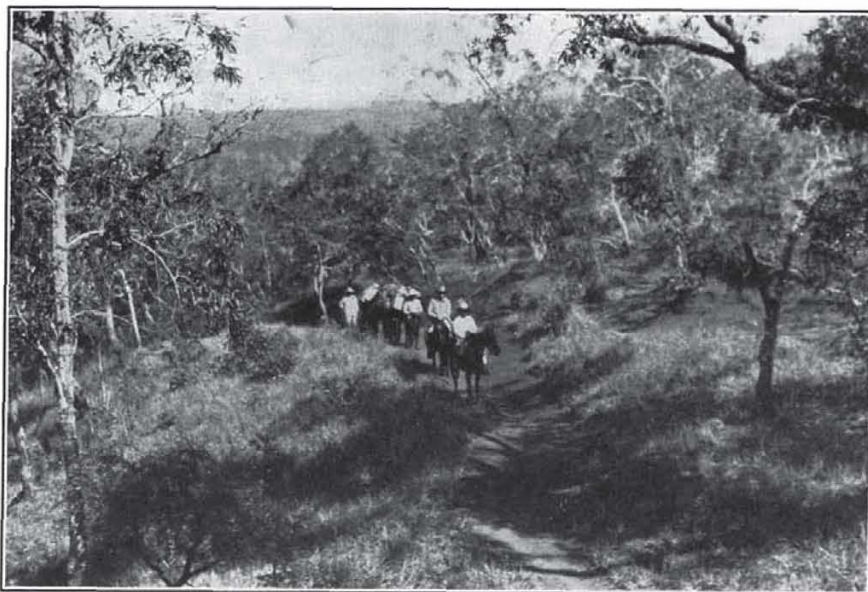


FIG. 30—Mecayapan, Ver. The Tulane Expedition on the Trail.

A friend of the University had advised us that the Indians of Soteápan were supposed to be blonds, having faded blond hair about the color of drying corn silk and dirty blue eyes, and that they all should be at least six feet high. We found the Indians to be of exactly the same stature and type as those of Ocozotepec, and furthermore, that they likewise speak the Popoloca language. The village cannot now contain more than about 20 families, but is undoubtedly the same as the one called Xocotapa by Villa-Señor y Sanchez, and at the time of his writing it contained 358 families of Indians.*

*Villa-Señor y Sanchez. 1746. Vol. I., Page 367.

From Soteápan the trail wound more towards the northeast, and soon we reached the large and prosperous looking town, Mecayápan, a change from the last two villages. All the houses were well built and in the middle of the village lay an immense grass roofed church with adobe walls. Two bronze church bells hung outside the church under a separate little roof (fig. 31). Women were busily engaged around the houses; one was spinning, turning the whorl in a basket; others were weaving. They were dressed only in gay colored skirts and prettily woven belts of cotton.

We stopped to salute the chief who was loafing outside the "office" and had a chat with him. Here the Indians all speak the Nahua tongue and they are of much better physical appearance than our Popoluca friends.



FIG. 31—Mecayápan, Ver. Church and Steeple.

Again we took the trail, which led up and down stony hills and over cool mountain streams, the path winding through an oak forest looking like a beautiful park. The Guasantla river was forded and shortly before reaching our destination we crossed the Tesisapa and there found a fine hammock bridge newly made of vines slung across the river (fig. 32). Then we rode in among the small huts of Tatahuicapa and up in front of the large brick church which the Indians had built for themselves (fig. 33).

Rumors of our coming had preceded us, and soon the village chief and his council of elders turned up. They took us to an old store behind the church, and we at once started to unpack.

The first things to come out of our boxes were some red handkerchiefs and other trinkets we had brought as presents. Then after

some talking and explaining we invited the most prominent men of the town to take a little drink with us, thus establishing friendly relations. We told them of our wish to find old carved stone monuments, and a host of young fellows at once volunteered to show us one which they said was sitting on the top of the San Martín Pajapan volcano. This we had heard of before. We also asked for guides to go to Piedra Labrada on the north side of San Martín. We questioned them, and the answers came slowly, but apparently they were friendly.

The village has a guard, armed with some old, rusty rifles. They patrol during the night in order to be on the lookout for stray intruders. This guard also made an appearance and, as it is well to



FIG. 32.—Tatahuicapa, Ver. Hammock Bridge Made of Vines.

be in standing with the higher powers, they also were invited to have a drink. Then the captain of this formidable army in a somewhat dispassionate way told us that he, about ten days before our arrival, had killed some Mexicans who had arrived heavily armed to seek shelter. These were rebels against the government and were fleeing. They, however, had made themselves obnoxious and the villagers had simply killed them. That was a fine hint.

We unpacked our folding table. This table, by the way, turned out to be one of our main drawing cards. In every Indian village or hut where we set it up, it caused great joy and admiration. Then by the light of a storm lantern we sat down to write our field notes.

Along the wall stood and squatted the village authorities, smoking and spitting, and with a small hope for another little drink slumbering in their hearts. They conversed in their own Indian (Nahua) language, and now and then questioned us as to what we were doing. One man turned up with a dozen tortillas, another with some eggs, as presents to the strangers. Now and then the guard would appear in the doorway and join in the chatting.

Presently they started to tell us of their hardships, how one party of bandits after another had come plundering, burning, and raping, and how finally when they could stand it no longer, they took matters into their own hands. It seems that they had sought support from the Mexican authorities, but in governmental affairs

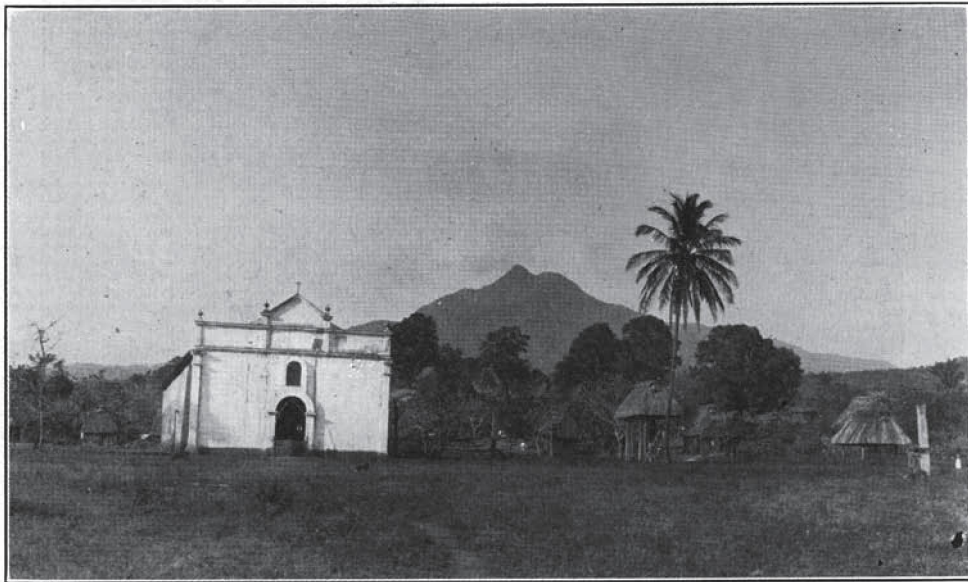


FIG. 33—Tatahuicapa, Ver. View of the Village with the San Martin Pajapa Volcano in the background.

they are subject to the rule of the neighboring town of Pajápan, whose good people graft all they can from Tatahuicapa, so a strong enmity between the two towns, which may break out in fighting at any time, has resulted.

Tatahuicapa must have at least a thousand inhabitants, and is a clean and peaceful place. The roofs of the houses are made of bunches of grass, tied closely together on rafters; the walls are of mud mixed with grass; and the doors are of boards. Windows seem to be unknown, and all doors are on the southern side of the house. This is the warm side, and is protected against the blast of the cold northern winds (fig. 34).

We made up our minds to leave some of our equipment here while we rode out along the coast to Piedra Labrada, where the monument which was the chief object of this part of the expedition was supposed to be located. Then having examined that place, we planned to return to Tatahuicapa, and from there to ascend the San Martín Pajápan.

One by one the spectators disappeared into the dark, to go home and tell the women about the sensational arrival of the friendly strangers. The guard passed once more, and we gave them some cigars with which to pass away the night. Closing the door we went to sleep in our hammocks. It was somewhat of a triumph for us to be sleeping peacefully among these Indians considered by all out-

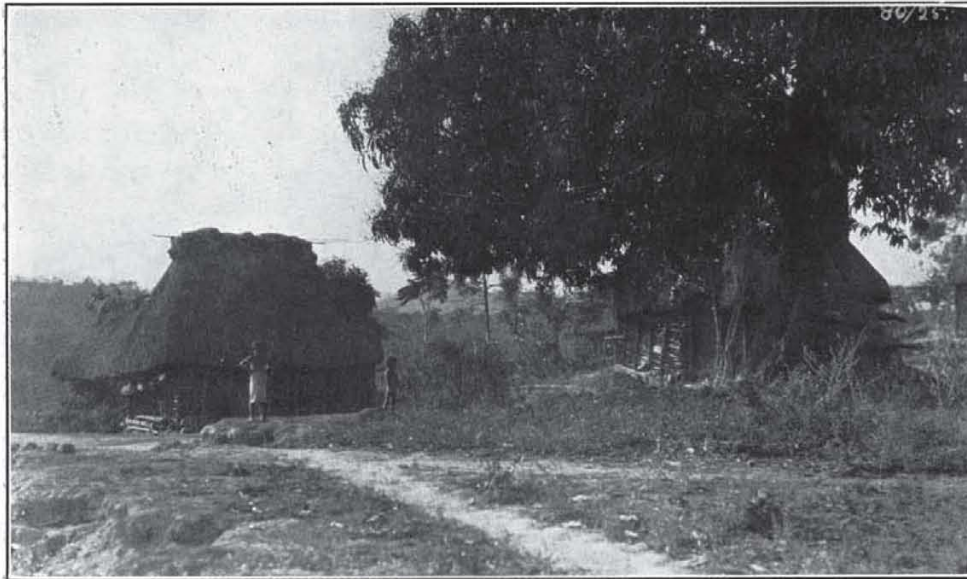


FIG. 34—Tatahuicapa, Ver. Indian Huts under Mango Tree.

siders to be so warlike and unfriendly, but really a peaceful community when left alone, and a kind people when treated the right way.

The men here all wear straw hats, shirts, and long trousers of cotton, with sandals on their feet. They tend to the cornfields and do the hunting. Most of their time is spent in front of the office discussing their all-important local politics.

The women dress in gaudy coloured striped skirts held up by finely woven white belts. Shoulders and breasts are naked, and as they are well built they certainly gave a pleasant impression, especially the young women when they passed by our hut on their way to the river, walking straight and willowy with a large earthen jar

or basket of corn on their heads (fig. 35). Many wear flowers or leaves as a crown in their hair. The small girl children are carried astride the hip of their mothers, and as soon as they can walk they trail along after them, always with flowers in their hair, shiny glass bead chains around their necks, and dressed in small skirts—an exact miniature of their mothers (fig. 36). The young boys run around stark naked.

The town was preparing for a "fiesta," a great celebration in honor of its patron saint. These "fiestas" rarely take place without much noise and shooting of rockets imported from the Mexican towns along the Tehuantepec railroad. We were, therefore, not astonished when awakened about two o'clock in the morning by some shots, rockets going off to tell the world that Tatahuicápa would be celebrating before long.

Reducing our packs to two cargoes, we set out the next morning towards the Gulf coast.

Where the territory of Tatahuicápa and of Pajápan meets, the Indians have erected a cross, and this is constantly kept decorated with flowers.

First we reached Pajápan, a place more sophisticated than Tatahuicápa, with several houses built in Spanish style, and a huge old Spanish Colonial

church. As we passed through we, as usual, presented our respects to the chief, an old white-haired Indian, who looked perfectly unreliable. He glanced at our government papers and called for his secretary, saying that he could not see very well. That is the excuse always used when the good chief cannot read and write.

Pajápan lies on the eastern slopes of the San Martín Pajápan volcano, and from the village Plaza is a fine view both of the mountain towards the west and over the Laguna de Ostiones (the Oyster Lagoon) in the lowlands of the Coatzacoálcos valley to the east.

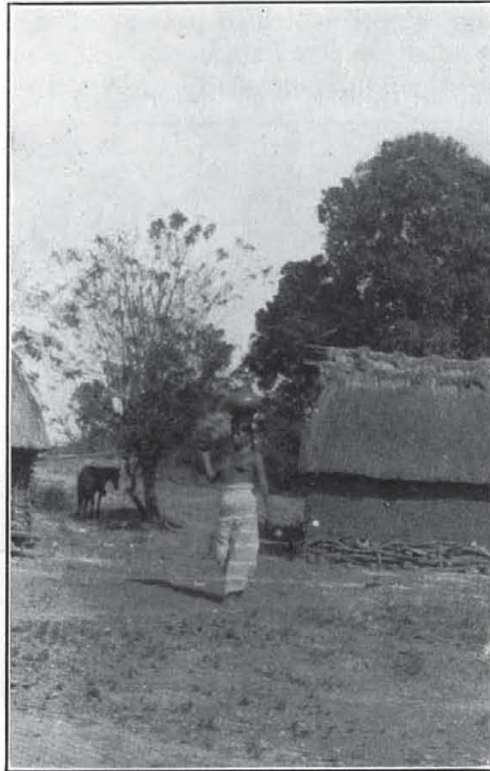


FIG. 35—Tatahuicapa, Ver. Indian woman going to the river for water.

It was still early when we continued towards the coast. First we passed through a high forest and then rode out among low bush and grass clad hills. We had to cross several small streams, and, as was to be expected, one of the horses could not miss the chance of getting bogged. We pulled and pushed and at last had to unload him. But he did not seem to want to stir until our men, and we too, for that matter, opened up on him with a shower of profanity. That helped.

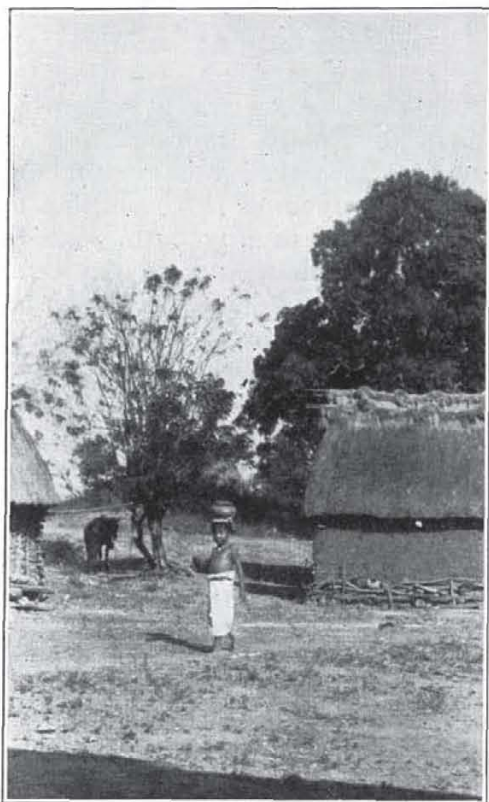


FIG. 36—Tatahuicapa, Ver. Indian child carrying clay pot on her head.

Soon we could hear the waves breaking against the shore; a distant murmur that grew to thunder when we rode over a sand dune, and saw the Gulf lying before us.

Following the sandy beach towards the west we came to a wall of lava projecting far out into the sea, and at its end lay an isolated rock looking like a sentry of lava thrown there by his majesty, the volcano. A crack leading up to the back of the lava stream was found, and we then rode along on an open grass plain for some time, winding in and out in order to avoid large cracks in the cliff. Then we scrambled down again to the sandy beach, and followed it. The sun was now high, and the glittering white of the sea and sand pained our eyes. Another lava stream had to be crossed but thereafter, the beach lay before us unbroken as far as we could see. To our right lay the blue Gulf showing white teeth of foam-tipped rollers, and to our left, a belt of forest out of which rose the volcanoes, San Martín and Santa Marta. It was a place of rare beauty.

While we rode along, it entered our minds that four centuries ago a small band of Spaniards, some of the "Conquistadores," had followed this same strip of coast going towards the east in search of a port where the great Captain, Cortes, could land his ships; and

with them were some of the men of the Emperor Montezuma with a map of native paper "on which were painted and marked very true to nature, all the rivers and bays on the northern coast from Panuco to Tabasco, that is, for a matter of one hundred and forty leagues, and the river Coatzacoálcos was marked on it."*

Few are those who since then have followed this coast. We were told that here and there pirates had taken shelter, and we heard stories of political refugees who had taken this route. But otherwise, it had apparently been deserted by everybody for centuries.

Some small rivers had to be forded, but only one of these was so deep that we found it necessary to place our feet on our saddle in order to keep dry. We were on the lookout for a trail which should turn inland to the settlement of Piedra Labrada, and did not find it until late in the afternoon. This trail was very narrow and its entrance well concealed. Into an opening in the bushes we drove our horses, and then struck a low and muddy path. All the time we had to be on the lookout for branches, and as our horses stuck to the edges of the trail in order to avoid the mud, we had to be on the alert not to get our knees smashed against the trees.

Our guide insisted that we were now nearing the settlement, but we rode on for an hour and a half without seeing a sign of human beings. Then he gave up, and another guide, whom we had christened "the Pope," his name being Bonifacio, set us on another trail which by five o'clock brought us to all that was left of the settlement of Piedra Labrada—a few charred house posts over-grown with plants. Nine hours in the saddle, and then to reach an abandoned and burnt settlement!

But that was not all our trouble. Huge black clouds were gathering around the mountain tops; a storm was near. Hastily we rigged up our tent fly on three charred posts, hung up our hammocks, and set to prepare a well-earned lunch. When we climbed into our hammocks for rest and sleep, it had begun to rain slightly.

The rain gathered force during the night, the tent fly sagged, and pools of water formed on it and started to drip on us. We managed to keep fairly dry, though La Farge had a fight to stop a small river from running down his hammock ropes. The "boys" huddled together under our hammocks and really had the driest place in camp.

Shortly after dawn, two of the "boys" set out in search of some rumored inhabitants and the third tried hard to make a fire with some wet wood. He finally gave this up and turned to a job which pleased him infinitely more—he sat quite still for an hour looking

*Diaz, Bernal, Maudslay Edition.

at the rain water dripping from the edge of the tent into a bucket. This he enjoyed because if the bucket would fill he need not go down to the river for water. The bucket finally *did* fill. The rain started in real tropical fashion, coming down in streams. Everything was now wet, and our breakfast was perforce limited to some cold rice left over from the previous evening and a few slices of sausage.

About half past nine our scouts returned bringing not only a local Indian guide, but also dry weather, so at once we packed up our belongings and started off for some Indian huts reported to be nearby.

Before leaving our camp a photograph was made of a small stone idol which some of the former inhabitants had found in the bush and brought to this place. This idol has a human face, but is so crudely done and has so little character to it, that it is hard to place it in any particular culture.

We had not gone very far before we reached some very well-kept corn fields with a trail leading through them, flanked by rows of pineapples. Here and there were clusters of bananas and in another place was a patch of sweet potatoes and calabash. It was apparent that the owner was a hard-working man.

José Albino, an old Indian who spoke Popoluca, was the proud possessor of these corn fields, a score of pigs, eight sons, two daughters, one son-in-law, and a kind, hard-working old Indian wife. He lodged us in a small corn barn with a good, solid palm-leaf roof to shelter us against the rain, and after a while we went over to his house to enjoy a good meal he had prepared for us.

Some small low huts were clustered together in the centre of the cornfield. In front of them was a palm roof under which the women were preparing the food (see fig. 49), and behind them was a pig sty where the prides of the family were kept.

The old lady of the house served us with eggs, coffee, and hot tortillas. The corn for the latter we had seen her grind on an old metate, or Indian grinding stone, which had been found in the forest near the ruins we were in search of. This grinding stone was quite elaborate with the high leg at its upper end carved as shown in the accompanying drawing (fig. 37).

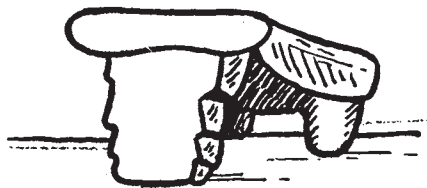


FIG. 37—Piedra Labrada, Ver. Ancient Metate.

The Indians insist that these grinding stones found in the ground are far superior to those manufactured today, as they are of a better grain, and the corn, therefore, can be ground much finer on them.

The preparation of the corn for grinding and subsequent baking into tortillas is done in the following way. First the corn is boiled in water containing lime, whereby it swells up. Then this swollen corn is taken to the river where the lime is washed out by sieving the corn in a basket. Well cleaned in this way it is laid on the grinding stone. The person grinding stands at the higher end of the stone, and grinds by pressing and rolling a cylindrical stone pestle over the corn. This operation is repeated many times until the dough has the desired fineness. Then the dough is flattened out in the hand to make thin cakes varying in size according to the custom of the district, and laid over a clay disk resting on the three stones of the fireplace. The tortilla is baked on both sides, and is then ready for eating. These tortillas are the principal food of the Indians. To make them is a slow process and hard work. The Indian women spend, it appears, two thirds of their time in front of the metate preparing tortillas for the household.

After our meal we at once set out for the reported monuments. One of the sons of the house took it upon himself to guide us to them. They were there, to our great relief.

Through the forest and across a small stream, the Xuichapa, we came out in a clearing, and soon discovered that this clearing recently had been used as a pasture for cattle. It was infested with ticks, and before long we were covered with these pests. Walking along we would brush them off the smaller bushes onto our clothes, and these insects, as large as the head of a pin, at once started for every opening in our clothes in order to get at us.

On a slope facing towards the sea were several artificial mounds, and between two of these we at last came across the monument we were in search of. The information we had received from Mr. La Cerda, the Mexican engineer friend, who first drew our attention to this stone, proved correct. It was well carved, and around it lay several other carved stones. The principal monument, *Stela 1*, was a monolith, 2.02 meters long, the lower 18 c.m. of which was shaped into a plug. This plug fitted a nearly circular hole in a square stone tablet lying close to the Stela. Undoubtedly the monument once stood upright, the square stone forming the base. The Stela was an average of 35 c.m. broad, and on its front were a series of carvings. At first sight they looked Maya, but a closer investigation proved them not to be so. The best description of this monu-

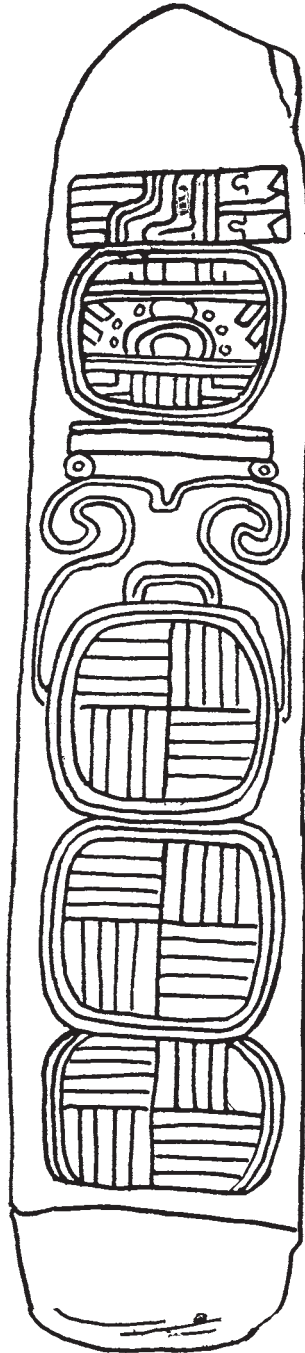


FIG. 38—Piedra Labrada, Ver.
Stela No. 1.

ment is the attached drawing. To this only shall be added that above what resembles the Maya glyph Pax is a bar with two dots underneath, and over this bar is a conventionalized head of some monster seen fully "en face" and over this a scroll. The monument has plain sides and back and is carved out of hard volcanic rock, as are the other monuments in this place (fig. 38).

To state definitely to what culture this monument belongs is difficult. The carving in the hard rock is so skilfully done that it might be made by the Totonacs but, search as we may, we have not been able to find any similar design with which to compare and classify our discovery.*

Close to this Stela lies the base, a square block 1.04 x 1.23 x 0.55 meters, with an approximately circular cavity in the centre, 45 c.m. across and 35 c.m. deep.

A few paces from these stones is a small stone basin, broken, and a small crouching stone jaguar with its head gone, and at the foot of a mound is a large metate, likewise with an animal head and its legs doubled up under it. (1 meter long and 23 c.m. high). (fig. 39).

On the top of the small mound are charred house posts of a recent dwelling.

It was agony to draw and photograph these monuments, as hordes of ticks were crawling over us. We were glad when the ordeal was over and we could prepare to return to camp. But the guide had another surprise in store for us. He led us into the high forest again, and at the foot of a huge Zapote Mamey tree, he showed us a fragment of a female stone figure. This fragment was 70 c.m. high, and showed head and breasts of a woman. The long hair was indicated by fine parallel

*Recently Dr. W. Lehman, of Berlin, said that the monster head was the hieroglyph for Ieotihuacan, and that the monument was Toltec.

lines down the back. The head was well carved, somewhat broader at bottom than top, and well rounded, giving the impression of a



FIG. 39—Piedra Labrada, Ver. Small grinding stone in form of animal.

bald-headed person when seen from in front (fig. 40). This piece of sculpture is very interesting. There is something about it that reminds one of the much smaller Tuxtla Statuette, and it also shows similarity to some small green stone idols in various collections, as well as one seen by us in Comitán at a later stage in our journey. Though the hieroglyphs on the

Tuxtla Statuette are Maya, the statuette itself was executed by a people of another culture.

A rough plan was made of the structures, and for a short moment we enjoyed the view from one of the mounds over the forest to the blue waters of the Gulf. Then the itching of millions of tick bites drove us back to camp where we at once stripped and started the slow process of removing the insects with a concoction of tobacco leaves soaked in alcohol. The little wretches disliked this treatment and fell off, but left wounds which could be felt for some time after.

As we woke up the next morning it was raining again, so we got hold of the son-in-law of the house and, as he was a little more intelligent than the rest of the family, we succeeded in getting a short list of words of his language. The settlement here is a Popoluca outpost. The inhabitants migrated to this place in the old man's time from Ocotal Grande.

Our informant was very ill. He could not be more than 23, but looked 35 to 40 years old, and walked with difficulty; his limbs were thin and withered, and he could not eat without becoming nauseated and vomiting.



FIG. 40—Piedra Labrada, Ver. Fragment of female idol.

Our house stood on a small mound, and great quantities of sherds lay scattered about, but not one with incised drawings or paintings on it to give us a clue as to origins. The cornfield itself was very well kept, and so clean that it could be planted three times without re-cleaning. The stalks of the first growth lay bent down to the ground, and the second planting stood high.

By ten o'clock the rain had entirely stopped, so after having presented our hosts with some small trinkets and a beautiful chromo print of a saint, we bade farewell. We were to return not by the beach, but by what was said to be a much shorter way through the forests, passing between the volcanoes of San Martín and Santa Marta.

One of our men went ahead to find a local guide, and after some time he returned advising that the guide would meet us along the trail. We stopped at the given point, and while we were waiting the rain started again with full force. For one-half of an hour we sat patiently in our saddles, and meanwhile our guide was waiting just as peacefully a few hundred meters further up the trail. We found our new guide sitting on a log. He was dressed in a much torn cotton shirt, and the pants of the same material rolled up well above his knees. An old torn straw hat and a home-made cigar completed his costume.

During the morning we forded several rivers, now quite full after the recent rains, and then we started up hill. Possibly this trail was shorter as the crow flies, but the trail along the beach had the advantage of being horizontal for its greatest part. The trail was vertical, up and down the walls of cañons with cool mountain streams at their bottoms.

There have long been rumors of gold in the San Martín mountains, though we were not able to trace them down. In several places there are, on the other hand, large indications of oil in form of asphalt seepages, also there are springs of sulphur water, and deposits of sulphur. Cinnabar is also said to be abundant.*

The occurrence of cinnabar is of interest to the archaeologist, as it was highly treasured by the ancient Maya, and was often used as offerings in burials.

Well into the afternoon we reached the highest point (600 meters) and there found two trails, one leading off to the southeast to Ocotál Grande, and the other more to the north and northeast through Encinal Amarillo to Tatahuicápa. Just before reach-

*Williams, 1852.

ing the first mentioned place, we came across a man and four boys well armed with bows and arrows. They were cleaning a curassow they had just shot.

Encinal Amarillo is a cluster of falling huts, all very poor looking and dirty, and, as far as we could see, only inhabited by old shriveled-up, half naked women and totally naked children.

Just as it was getting dark we came in sight of Tatahuicápa. Crossing the river we scattered a crowd of lightly clad women who were chatting around the public washing and gossiping place—the local newspaper. We rode up to the “Oficina” and were heartily welcomed by our friends, the chief and the armed guard.

Hungry? Indeed we were, after a day's ride without a bit of food, but first we attended to our tired animals. Then our diplomatic agent, Mr. Demijon, showed himself, much to the joy of our Indian friends. Everybody had a drink, and we at last sat down to a hearty meal.

In Latin America, like everywhere else, it is important to know the right people. In some places these are senators, bankers, and other big men; but in Southern Mexico the best people are sometimes men with loose guns and knives, or bad Indian chiefs. If one from the beginning gets hold of the right man, everything is easy. So with our trip—from the start we got hold of one man who was friends with all the leading elements around, and, thanks to his direction, we went through without any trouble.

To climb the San Martín Pajapan volcano was our next objective. Guides were procured in Tatahuicápa, and we left the village on horseback. But after an hour's ride we were forced to tie our horses near a small Indian coffee plantation, and then proceed on foot. The Indians grow a little coffee which they carry over the mountains and trade in Catemaco.

We now left the trail and entered the forest, climbing at an easy grade until we reached a small stream at an altitude of 506 meters. Here, our guide told us, was the last place where we could get a drink of water before we started the real ascent. In this part of the forest every rock and stick was covered with some sort of white larvae the size of one's little finger. There were hundreds of thousands of these, and we wondered what kind of plague they represented.

The underbrush was dense with small palms with thorny trunks, but as we reached higher altitudes they disappeared. The trail was very steep. The path followed a narrow ridge, and we saw very little outcropping rock. The ground was covered with fine, rich,

black soil. As we neared the top the trees grew short and wind-beaten, and their branches were covered with moss. Up to the very top the mountain is covered with forest, which indicates that it must be a very long time since the crater was active. The top has two peaks, and on the highest point of the southernmost of these we found a big stone boulder marked with the number 1211. This number was carved in the rock by a Mexican engineer, Ismael Loya, who made a survey of this area in 1897. The number stands for the altitude of the mountain, 1211 meters.

Loya was the first one to see the idol on the mountain top, and he told the writer in 1922 that he had removed this idol a short distance in order to use it as a corner mark for his survey. In

doing so, he broke the arms of the image. Before having broken it, though, he made a drawing of it which is shown in figure 41. Under the figure a small pit was found in which stood some pieces of pottery containing various small objects of jade. Mr. Loya had given all these away but one, which is a small piece of light green jade carved in the form of a rattlesnake.

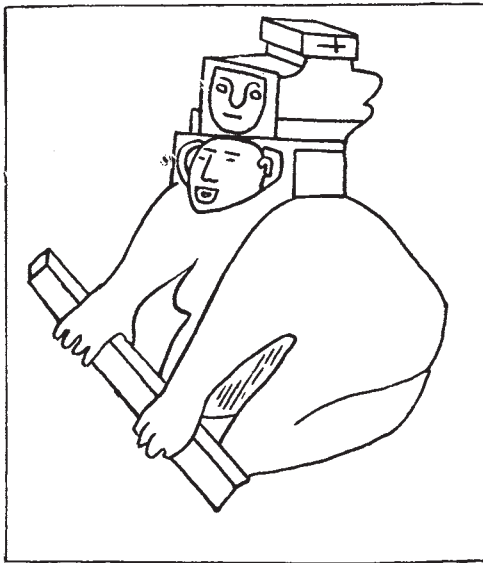


FIG. 41—San Martin Pajapan, Ver. Drawing of Idol from top of the Volcano made by Ismael Loya in 1897.

The idol is squatting and according to Loya's drawing, holds a bar horizontally with both hands, its body leaning forward. Arms, feet, and the bar have disappeared, and the

face is badly mutilated. The total height of the figure is 1.35 meters, of which 57 c.m. is taken up by the head-dress. The head is well carved and has large plugs in the ears. The head-dress is very elaborate. On its front is a face with slanting eyes, a small broad nose, and a downward curved mouth with a broad flaring upper lip. This face resembles a jade head now in the National Museum of Mexico City. Over this is a kind of small hat, the top of which appears to have been broken off. Seen from the side, the head-dress shows a band with some figures that may represent a conventionalized rattlesnake, and over this band are feathers (figs. 42 and 43).

This monument stands on a small level in the saddle between the two highest peaks of the crater rim. It may represent a fire or mountain god. For the time being we would not venture to ascribe it definitely to any culture.

Clouds had gathered around the mountain top and it was raining slightly while we were working with this monument, but when

we started our descent the wind tore a momentary rift in the clouds and we got a most magnificent view of the Coatzacoálcos basin, with the town of Pajápan and the Laguna de los Ostiones in the foreground, and a glimpse of the Chiapas mountains far away to the southeast.

Our old guide was searching the landscape for his dear "pueblo." It is remarkable to note how these people are attached to their home towns. It is the first and last to them; the fate of the country as a whole does not concern them.

The descent was not so bad as we had expected, though in some places we were sliding rather than walking downwards. A family of monkeys followed us for a while, jumping from one tree top to another.

Returning to Tatahui-cápa we found everybody busily engaged in preparing for a fiesta. Hunters were out to kill deer in the forests, pigs were being slaughtered, and boys came in with bundles of fire wood. The women were gathered in groups of fifty or sixty in different parts of the village. Sheltered by light structures built of palm leaves, they were grinding corn, baking



FIG. 42—San Martin Pajapan, Ver. Drawing of same Idol as FIG. 41, as it now stands.

tortillas, and cooking other food. Chatting was in lively progress. Some women were carrying water, children were playing around, and in the background some of the elder men were watching the behaviour of the gay youngsters. The colours of the women's skirts and belts, their bronze bodies and their black hair adorned with flowers made an excellent picture.

We walked from group to group watching the work, and were able to persuade the Indians to sell us some of their bows and arrows as well as some samples of the textiles made in the village.

Our chief "boy," Enrique, gave an amusing description of how he had seen a group of about twenty Indians hauling at a rope trying to throw a bull. The bull jumped about, the rope broke, and the twenty Indians fell on top of each other with much noise and laughter.

The Indians were much interested in our photographing and we were requested by the elders to take some pictures of the village saint. This could not be done in the dark interior of the church, so the saint was moved to the door, which called for much ceremony and drumming. Several Indians were beating wooden drums made out of hollow logs covered with deer skin. Those who were carrying the saint never touched it directly with their hands, but used a cloth when handling the image. They set the saint on a table and decorated it with natural and paper flowers; whereafter we took his photograph. (See fig. 52.)



FIG. 43.—San Martin Pajapan, Ver. Idol from the top of the mountain.

Our friends were urging us to stay for the fiesta, but unfortunately we were not able to do so. We packed our animals and left these friendly "bloodthirsty" Indians, who had treated us with so much kindness.

A broad trail leads to Chinameca, a station on the Tehuantepec railroad, but unfortunately there is also a broad trail leading to

some of the Indian corn fields. We took the wrong trail which cost us two hours delay and forced us to ride very hard in order to reach Chinameca in time for the daily train to Puerto Mexico.

All along the road we met parties of Indians on their way to the fiesta in Tatahuicápa, the men generally riding and the women trotting behind carrying baskets and bundles. A little procession of Indians, in all seven or eight men, all of whom had had several drinks for breakfast, stopped on the roadside at one point, and every one of them insisted on shaking hands with us. As we rode along the line, we bent over from our horses and shook hands with each and every one of them, wishing them a pleasant fiesta.

We were now down on the lowlands, in the Coatzacoalcos basin. Within sight of the station, and right in the main street of Chinameca, our rush to catch the train was stopped by one of the pack horses running into a mud hole and getting bogged. The delay was irritating, but had no serious results. We had to unload, and haul and pull the poor animal before we got it out, but reached the station with just time enough to pay off our boys and check our baggage. Late that afternoon we reached the town of Puerto Mexico.