

“There was no fixed place for burials; many ordered their ashes to be buried near to some temple or altar, some in the fields, and others in those sacred places of the mountains where sacrifices used to be made. The ashes of the kings and lords were, for the most part, deposited in the towers of the temples, especially in those of the greater temple. Close to Teotihuacan, where there were many temples, there were also innumerable sepulchres. The tombs of those whose bodies had been buried entire, agreeably to the testimony of the anonymous conqueror who saw them, were deep ditches, formed with stone and lime, within which they placed the bodies in a sitting posture upon *icpalli*, or low seats, together with the instruments of their art or profession. If it was the sepulchre of any military person, they laid a shield and sword by him; if of a woman,

a spindle, a weaver's shuttle, and a *xicalli*, which was a certain naturally formed vessel, of which we shall say more hereafter. In the tombs of the rich they put gold and jewels, but all were provided with eatables for the long journey which they had to make. The Spanish conquerors, knowing of the gold which was buried with the Mexican lords in their tombs, dug up several, and found considerable quantities of that precious metal. Cortez says, in his letters, that at one entry which he made into the capital, when it was besieged by his army, his soldiers found fifteen hundred *castellanos*, that is, two hundred and forty ounces of gold, in one sepulchre, which was in the tower of a temple. The anonymous conqueror says also, that he was present at the digging up of another sepulchre, from which they took about three thousand *castellanos*.”

“The Mexican empire abounded with all those kinds of paintings; for their painters were innumerable, and there was hardly any thing left unpainted. If those had been preserved, there would have been nothing wanting to the history of Mexico; but the first preachers of the gospel, suspicious that superstition was mixed with all their paintings, made a furious destruction of them. Of all those which were to be found in Tezcucó, where the chief school of painting was, they collected such a mass, in the square of the market, it appeared like a little mountain; to this they set fire, and buried in the ashes the memory of many most interesting and curious events. The loss of those monuments of antiquity was inexpressibly afflicting to the Indians, and regretted sufficiently afterwards by the authors of it, when they became sensible of their error; for they were compelled to endeavour to remedy the

evil, in the first place, by obtaining information from the mouths of the Indians; secondly, by collecting all the paintings which had escaped their fury, to illustrate the history of the nation; but although they recovered many, these were not sufficient; for, from that time forward, the possessors of paintings became so jealous of their preservation and concealment from the Spaniards, it has proved difficult, if not impossible, to make them part with one of them.

“The cloth on which they painted was made of the thread of the maguey, or aloe, or the palm *icxotl*, dressed skins, or paper. They made paper of the leaves of a certain species of aloe, steeped together like hemp, and afterwards washed, stretched, and smoothed. They made also of the palm *icxotl*, and the thin barks of other trees, when united and prepared with a

certain gum, both silk and cotton: but we are unable to explain any particulars of this manufacture. We have had in our hands several sheets of Mexican paper: it is similar in the thickness to the pasteboard of Europe, but softer, smoother, and easy for writing."

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"In this respect we have also to lament the furious zeal of the first bishop of Mexico, and the first preachers of the gospel; who, in order to remove from the sight of their converts all incentives to idolatry, have deprived us of many valuable monuments of the sculpture of the Mexicans. The foundation of the first church which was built in Mexico was laid with idols, and so many thousand statues were then broken in pieces and destroyed, that, although the kingdom was most abounding in works of that kind, at

present the most diligent search can hardly find any of them remaining. The conduct of those missionaries was no doubt laudable both in cause and effect, but they should have distinguished between the innocent statues of those people and their superstitious images; that some of the former might have been kept entire in some place where no evil consequence would have attended their preservation."