

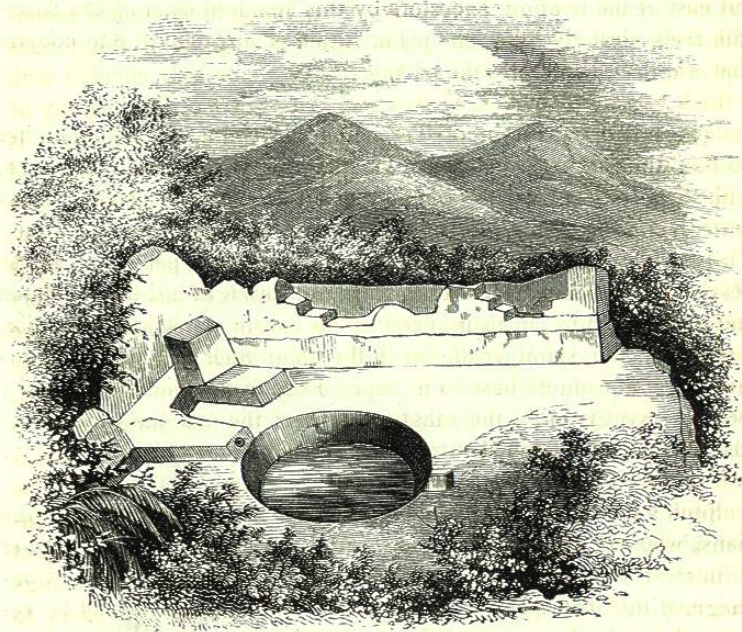
moulded to carry off the water from the upper terrace. Bernal Diaz del Castillo informs us, that the chief *teocalli* of Tezcoco was ascended by one hundred and seventeen steps; and, from the quantity of obsidian fragments, images, vessels and heads of idols we found upon the sides of these structures, it is not unlikely, that they, like the *teocallis* of the capital were devoted to the same bloody and impious rites. In some of the private houses of this town, many larger idols or images cut from basalt are still preserved, and in 1825, Mr. Poinsett saw at the residence of the commandant several of these figures, which were better formed and designed than most of the Indian statues he had previously encountered in his Mexican travels.

#### TESCOCINGO.

About three miles across the gently sloping levels which spread out east of the town of Tezcoco, a sharp, precipitous conical mountain rises abruptly from the plain, which is stripped of the forests that once probably clothed its sides, and is now only covered with a thick growth of nopals, bushes and aloes. From the quantity of Indian remains found on this elevation and in its vicinity, there is no doubt that it was the site of an Aztec palace, or was connected with the adjacent plain by some architectural works that have been destroyed in the centuries that have elapsed since the conquest. The traveller climbs this steep mountain with great labor, and finds nearly every part of it covered with the *débris* of ancient pottery and obsidian; and, in many parts of his ascent, he is aided by the remains of the spiral road, cut in the solid rock, which evidently once wound from its base to its top. Fifty feet below the summit, looking exactly north, the massive stone of the mountain has been cut into seats surrounding a recess leading to a steep wall which is said to have been covered with a Toltec or Aztec calendar. The sculptures upon the rock have, however, been destroyed by the Indians, who cut through it as soon as they found the spot an object of interest to strangers. These simple and superstitious beings imagined that the quest of gold, alone, could induce travellers to leave the capital, cross the lake, and toil up to the summit of this elevation, and, accordingly they bored through the carved rock to obtain the buried treasure, until they have formed a hole in the mountain, which is now the hiding place and probably the home of a large number of squalid wretches. On the absolute top of the mountain no traces of an edifice are now observable; but as the Spaniards supposed it had been desecrated by Indian rites in the olden

time, it has been sanctified by the erection of a cross, from whose feet the whole valley of Mexico, with its lakes, plains, towns and majestic panorama of encircling mountains, bursts on the sight of the wearied traveller.

Returning to the recess from the summit, and winding thence by a spiral path down the eastern slopes of the hill, we find the road suddenly ended by a wall which plunges precipitously down the mountain for about two hundred feet. At this termination of the pathway, cut in the solid rock, we found another recess, surrounded with seats, while, in the centre of the area, was a circular basin, a yard and a half in diameter, and three feet deep, into which water was formerly introduced, through the small aperture in the square pipe which is delineated in the engraving.



ANCIENT RESERVOIR.

This basin has, of course, been also connected with the fame of the emperor, and is known as "Montezuma's bath." Its true use, however, is perfectly evident to those who are less fanciful or antiquarian than the generality of visitors. The picturesque view from this spot, over a small plain set in a frame of the surrounding

mountains and glens which border the eastern side of Tescocingo, undoubtedly made this recess a favorite resort for the royal personages at whose expense these costly works were made. From the surrounding seats, they enjoyed a delicious prospect over the lovely but secluded scenery, while, in the basin, at their feet, were gathered the waters of a neighboring spring, which, whilst refreshing them after their promenade on the mountain, gurgled out of its stony channel and fell in a mimic cascade over the precipitous cliff that terminated their path. It was to this shady spot that they no doubt retired in the afternoon, when the sun was hot on the west of the mountain, and here the sovereign and his court, in all probability, enjoyed the repose and privacy which were denied them amid the bustle of the city. Antiquarianism would be greatly assisted in its researches and conjectures, if it recollected that the *nature* of civilized men is the same in all ages, and that it is easier to judge the architectural remains of our ancestors by this standard than by the fanciful or classical rules, which they are dramatically disposed to conjure up in order to interpret the past.

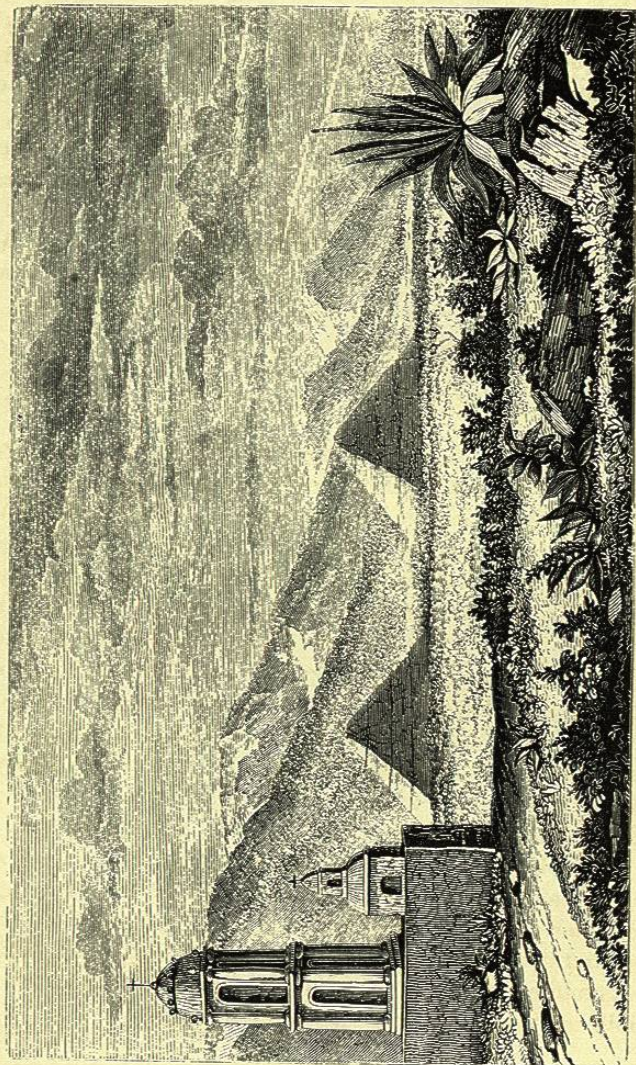
The hill or mountain of Tescocingo is connected with another hill on the east by a tall embankment about two hundred feet high, upon whose level top, — which may be crossed by three persons abreast, on horseback, — are the remains of an ancient aqueduct, built of baked clay, the pipes of which are now as perfect as on the day they were first laid. The water was brought hither by a canal around the hill to which it is connected by the embankment; while, east of this, and uniting the last hill with another elevation, there is a second aqueduct raised on an embankment, which was fed by other aqueducts and canals that formerly conducted the water from the eastern mountains about three leagues distant.

Such are some of the remains of Tezcocan sumptuousness, in the neighborhood of the ancient capital of this region; and, together with the ancient grove of cypresses, known as El Bosque del Contador, lying across the levels north-west of Tezcoco, may be regarded as the most remarkable relics of the princes and people of the Tezcocan monarchy. The grove of the Contador is formed by double rows of gigantic cypresses, about five hundred in number, arranged in a square corresponding with the points of the compass and enclosing an area of nearly ten acres. At the north-western point of this quadrangle another double row of lordly cypresses runs westwardly towards a dyke, north of which there is a deep oblong



ANCIENT AQUEDUCT AT TEZCOOSINGO.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS



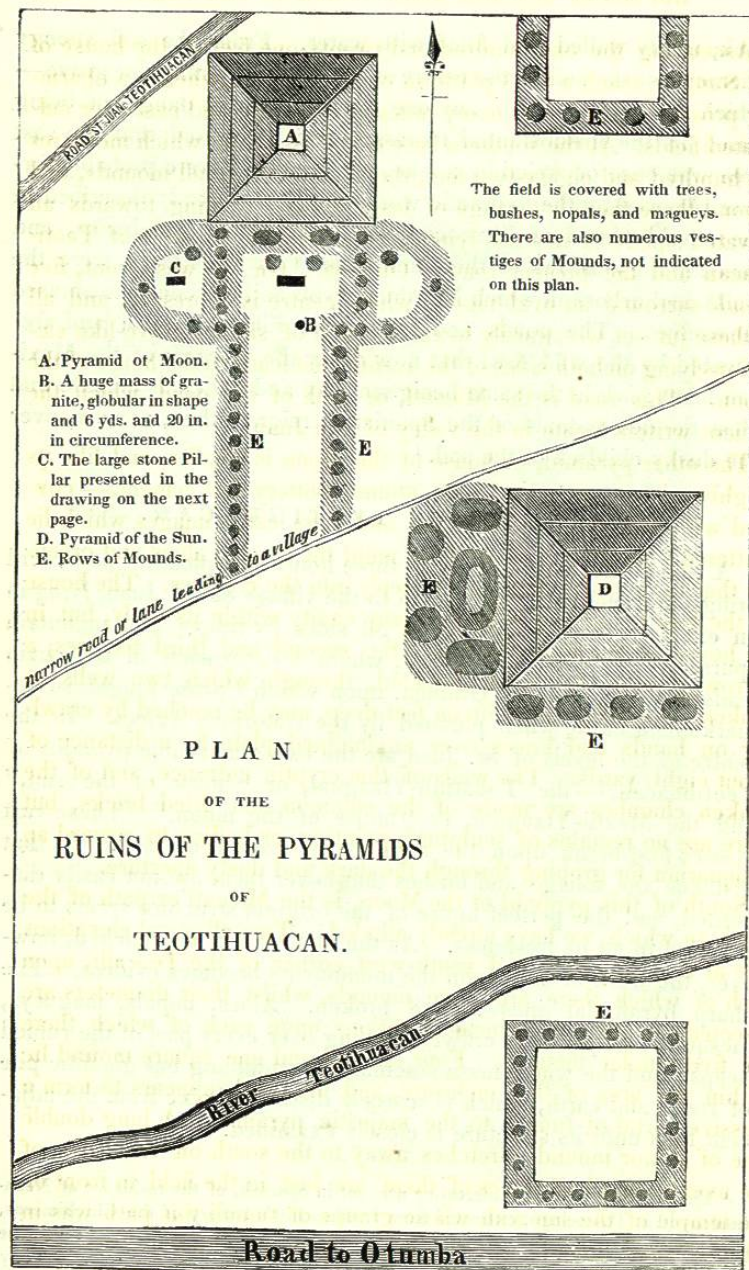
PYRAMIDS OF TEOTIHUACAN.

tank, neatly walled and filled with water. From the soft spongy character of the soil in the centre of the great quadrangular grove—which it is impossible for any one to cross without danger of being mired in the unsubstantial morass,—it is supposed that the vast area was once occupied by a lake, whose waters were probably forever renewed by the hydraulic works we have already described in the neighborhood of Tescocingo. Along the raised banks, and beneath the shadows of the double line of majestic trees, were the walks and arbors in which Nezahualcoyotl and his courtiers amused themselves. The ponds and lakes were filled with fish and frequented by the wild fowl that now cover the margins of the Mexican lakes; while the same benignant sky and delicious climate that bless the descendants of the Spaniards, reigned then, as now, over the dusky children of the soil.<sup>1</sup>

## PYRAMIDS OF TEOTIHUACAN.

A ride on horseback of about three hours at a pleasant pace, will bring the traveller from Tezcoco to the village of St. Juan, lying in an extensive level bordered on all sides by ridges and mountain spurs, except towards the east, where a depression in the chain leads into the plains of Otumba, upon which Cortéz fought so remarkable a battle when pursued by the victorious Aztecs. In the centre of the levels of St. Juan are the two remarkable pyramids of Teotihuacan,—the Tonatiuh-Ytzagual, or “house of the sun,” and the Meztli-Ytzagual, or “house of the moon.” These vast masses first break upon the sight as the ridge is crossed. At that distance the foliage and bushes that cover them are not easily discerned, and the perfect figure of the original structure seems to be revealed in all its freshness. As the objects are approached, however, the work of time upon the monuments becomes evident. The sharp pyramidal lines are all broken. Aloes, nopals, magueys, mesquite and parasites crawl and cling over every part of the ruined heaps; and the whole mass resembles a crumbling but gigantic pile of rocks and earth, which is scarcely distinguishable from the adjacent hills until its structure is closely examined.

<sup>1</sup> The reader will find an interesting account in Spanish, of the residence of Nezahualcoyotl at Tescocingo, extracted from Ixtlilxochitl's history of the Chichimecas, in the third volume of Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, page 430. The hill or mountain described in this section, is doubtless the same one referred to by the Indian historian; and it is to the Vandalism of Fray Zumarraga, the archbishop, that we are indebted for the destruction of one of the most graceful and elegant monuments of Indian civilization.

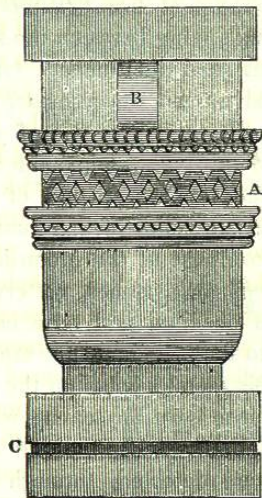


Ascending the one hundred and twenty-one feet of the house of the Sun, we reach a level platform on the summit, whence a charming prospect extends for many miles to the south and east over cultivated fields. At the southern base of this pyramid, which measures six hundred and eighty-two feet, there are four small mounds, and beyond these there is a range of lesser *tumuli* running towards an elevated square of mounds lying between the stream west of Teotihuacan and the present road to Otumba. On the west front, five *tumuli* surround an oval mound whose centre is depressed, and all of these jut out westwardly towards a line of similar grave-like elevations lying on both sides of the avenue that leads to the house of the Moon. This road is the Micoatl, or path of the dead, which the ancient writers locate in the valley of San Juan.

The other pyramid, or house of the Moon is smaller, and like its neighbor is composed of rock, stones, pottery and cement,—covered with the debris of obsidian and terra cotta images which lie scattered from the top to the base amid the tangled aloes and creepers that have struck their roots deeply into the crevices. The house of the Sun is not known to have any cavity within its body, but in the house of the Moon, between the second and third terraces, a narrow passage has been detected, through which two wells or sunken chambers, about fifteen feet deep, may be reached by crawling on hands and knees over an inclined plain for a distance of about eight yards. The walls of this cryptic entrance, and of the sunken chamber are made of the common sun dried bricks, but there are no remains of sculpture, painting, or bodies to reward an antiquarian for groping through the dark and dusty aperture.

South of this pyramid of the Moon, is the Micoatl or path of the dead, to which we have already alluded. Two elliptical elevations rise at the south-east and south-west corner of the Teocalli, upon each of which there are three mounds, whilst their diameters are bisected by other rectilinear elevations upon each of which there are five similar mounds. Four circular and one square mound lie within the area of this inclosure, and the whole appears to form a massive portal of *tumuli* to the majestic pyramid. A long double line of minor mounds stretches away to the south on the sides of the avenue, until all traces of them are lost in the field in front of the temple of the sun with whose groups of *tumuli* this path was in all likelihood formerly united. The student will obtain a better idea of the localities of these remains by examining the plan which was carefully prepared by the author, on the spot, in 1842. At B, on the plan, there is a large globular mass of granite measuring nine-

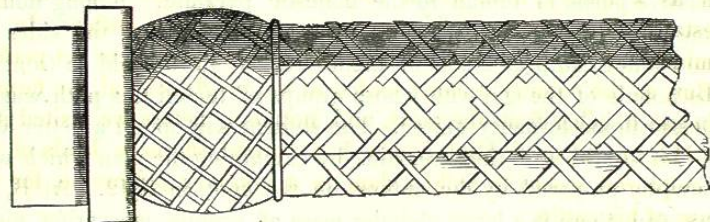
teen feet eight inches in circumference, upon which there is some rude carving which has been found to bear some resemblance to the Aztec figure of the sun; — and in the semicircular enclosure among the *tumuli*, at C, is placed the sculptured granite stone, represented in the annexed cut. It lies due east and west. The dark shadow



at B, represents a sink or hollow three inches deep at the sides, and six at the top and bottom. This is known as the "fainting stone," as it is alleged that all who recline on its surface are sure to experience lassitude, or loose animation for a while!

## O T U M B A .

This place is famous in the ancient history of Mexico, but no remains of importance have been found in its vicinity or within the limits of the village. When Mr. Poinsett visited it during his residence in Mexico as Envoy from the United States, he observed no relic of the past worthy of examination or record except the fragment of a pillar represented in the annexed drawing.

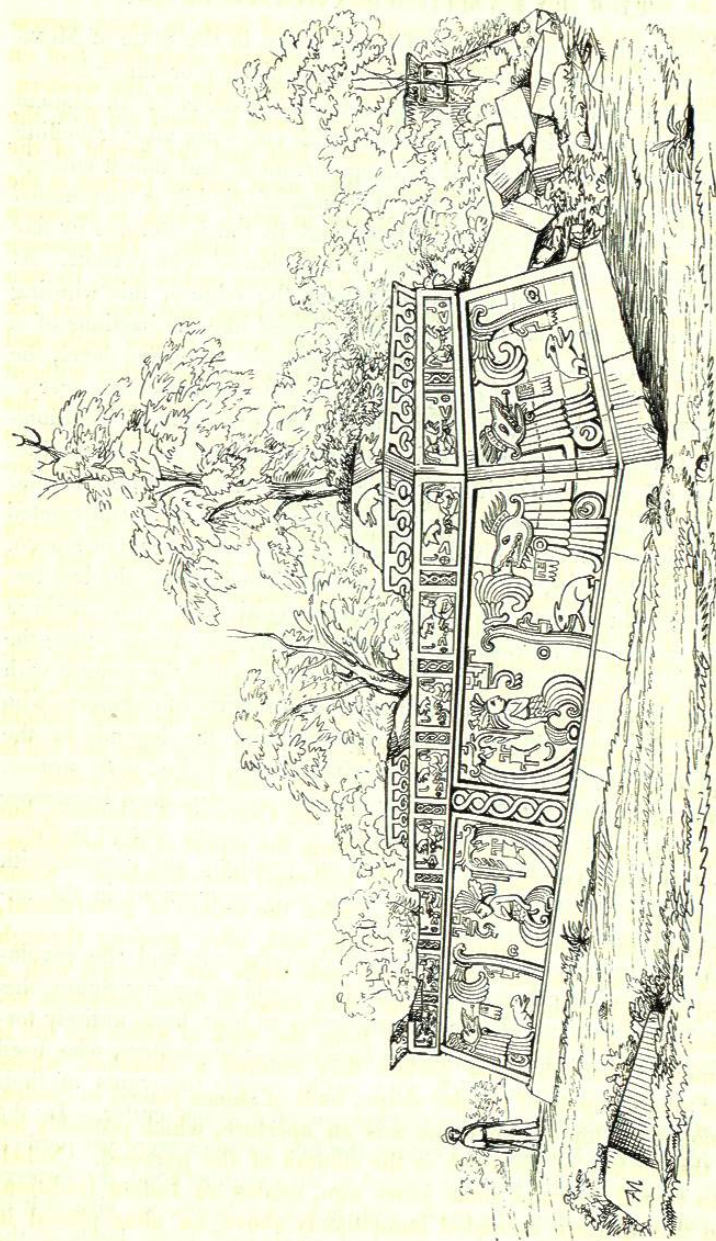


## THE PYRAMID OF XOCHICALCO.

About eighteen miles south of Cuernavaca, in the State of Mexico, there is a *cerro* or hill, known as Xochicalco or the "hill of flowers," whose summit is occupied by the remains of an ancient stone pyramid. The traveller reaches this eminence after travelling over a wide plain intersected by deep barrancas, and almost entirely denuded of trees and shrubbery. The base of this hill is surrounded by the remains of a deep wide ditch, and its top is attained by five spiral terraces, supported by walls of stone joined with cement. At suitable distances from each other, along the edge of this winding path are the remains of bulwarks fashioned like the bastions of a fortification. On the summit there is a wide extensive level, the eastern part of which is occupied by three truncated cones, resembling the smaller mounds found among the pyramids of Teotihuacan. On the other three sides of the esplanade there are other masses of stones, which may have also been portions of similar *tumuli*. The stones of which these lesser mounds were constructed have evidently been nicely shaped and covered with a coat of stucco.

Passing upward, amid tangled trees and vines, along the last terrace, and through the cornfield which is cultivated on the plain at top by an Indian *ranchero*, the traveller at length stands before the remains of the elegant structure that once crowned the summit with its carved and massive architecture. The reports of engineers who visited this pyramid in years long past, and the legends of the neighborhood, declared that it originally consisted of five stories, placed upon each other at regular intervals and separated by narrow platforms. But of all these, nothing now remains except portions of the first body, which is formed of cut porphyry and covered with the singular emblems which are accurately represented in the annexed plate of the north-western angle.

Amid the neglect of the viceregal government, and the revolutionary disturbances subsequent to the rebellion against Spain, this beautiful monument of ancient art, seems to have been entirely forgotten, save by the neighboring *haciendados* or planters, who used it as a quarry, from which they might supply the wants of their estates without the trouble or expense of a stone cutter. In the middle of the eighteenth century the fine terraces were yet perfect. But, as the country became settled in the neighborhood, the farmers began to pilfer from the mass, and, not long before we visited it in 1842, an adjacent land owner had carried off large loads of the sculptured stones to build a dam in a neighboring ravine, for the use of his cattle.



REMAINS OF THE PYRAMID OF XOCHICALCO.

The story of this pyramid that has been thus far spared, is rectangular; and, facing north, south, east and west, in exact correspondence with the cardinal points, it measures sixty-four feet on its northern front above the plinth, and fifty-eight on the western. The distance between the plinth and frieze is about ten feet, the breadth of the frieze is three feet and a half, and the height of the cornice one foot and five inches. The most perfect portion is the northern front; and, here, the carving in relief, which is between three and four inches deep, is most distinctly visible. The massive stones, — some of which are seven feet eleven inches long, by two feet nine inches wide; five feet two inches long, and two feet six inches broad, and five feet long, two feet seven inches high, and four feet seven inches broad, — are all laid upon each other without cement, and kept together simply by the pressure and gravity of the general architecture. These dimensions of the fragments of so splendid an edifice will give the reader an idea of the labor and ingenuity which were employed in its construction. For it must be remembered, that not only was the Indian skill taxed in the design and shaping of the stones in the immediate neighborhood, but that the weighty materials were drawn from a considerable distance, and borne up a hill three hundred feet in height, without the use of horses. The terraces supporting the spiral path, and their bastion-like bulwarks, were subjects of equal labor; while the broad deep ditch, surrounding the whole, was in itself a work exacting the most patient industry. Few nations have probably devoted more time and toil to a work which was perhaps partly religious and partly defensive.

These are the external works upon the Cerro of Xochicalco, but it appears from good authority, and from the report of the neighborhood, that the hill itself was partly hollowed into chambers. Some years since a party of gentlemen, under the orders of government, explored these subterranean retreats, and, after groping through dark and narrow passages, whose side walls are covered with a hard and glistening gray cement, they came to three entrances between two enormous pillars cut from the rock of which the hill is formed. Through these portals they entered a chamber, whose roof was a cupola of regular shape, built of stones placed in circles, while at the top of the dome was an aperture, which probably led to the surface of the earth or the summit of the pyramid. Nebel, who visited the ruins some years ago, relates an Indian tradition, that this aperture ascended immediately above an altar placed in this chamber, and that the sun's rays fell directly on the centre of the shrine when that luminary was vertical!