

Southward from the cluster of buildings of La Reforma, a small mountain range is visible, the crest of which forms an extensive plateau, on which the ruins of a little ancient city lie hidden among the high forest trees. Although the monteros had found nothing of importance there, as the ruins lay within easy reach I deemed it advisable to explore them. Following the road to Tzendales for two kilometres, and then turning to the right where the road is crossed by a small stream and a giant ceiba lifts its top to the sky, we entered the forest. Ascending the slopes, we soon reached the ruins, which were quite numerous and often quite imposing, — foundation walls, levelled areas, heaps of ruins, etc. Finally, we also discovered the principal temple, which crowned the platform of a massive, well-preserved substructure about six metres in height. It was still possible to determine the position of the various apartments of this edifice. I thoroughly explored these ruins and their neighborhood for sculptured stones, but in vain. All I found was a large, thick stone slab (sacrificial table?) on which, however, there was no drawing of any kind.

I called these ruins "Las Ruinas de La Reforma."

II.

CHINIKIHÁ.

THE name Chinikihá (Tsinikihá), or Chinikilhá, admits of a twofold interpretation: *chi-nikil-há* (*tši-nikil-há*) = "mouth or opening of the disappearing water," in allusion to the river passing through a rocky tunnel not far from the ruins. Or it may also be that there is in this region a tree named *chinikil* (*nic, nicté*, in names of plants always signify "flower"). Hence the name — without putting too much emphasis on the second *i* — can also signify "water where the chinikil tree grows."

I had long known that there was a large ruined city on the Chinikihá River, but it was not until the middle of January, 1898, after making my headquarters in La Reforma, that I was able to undertake the thorough exploration of these ruins. To reach them we first took the *camino de Tzendales*, and after travelling for about two leagues (or for two hours), we turned off to the left, following the path of an abandoned *montería*, El Clavo, and by turning still farther to the left, we soon crossed the Chinikihá and reached the *camino viejo de Tenosique*, a road which passes straight through the ruined city. Here on this path, which is now seldom used, we built a small palm-leaf hut, *champa*, at a spot convenient for bathing in the river and for providing ourselves with water.

We first explored all the remains on the right of the road, but found nothing but remnants of walls and terraces, with the exception that in one

building we found small rear rooms in a half-preserved condition; everything else was completely in ruins. Then we followed the road to Tenosique for nearly two kilometres, to the end of the mountain pass, where the path running between high cliffs begins to descend into the valley of the Usumatsintla. Though it was a difficult task, we climbed these cliffs and enjoyed a magnificent view of the endless, wooded lowlands through which the Usumatsintla rolls. From these lofty heights our view extended as far as Balancan and beyond. But finding no structures on these cliffs, we returned wearied to our camp.

On the following day we undertook the exploration of that portion of the town which lies on the left of the road. Here we found the main mass of the buildings, which, it is true, are mostly in ruins. Two groups of buildings of noble proportions especially attracted our attention. In one the outlines of a large court were recognizable, intersected by a high and massive structure. The rooms which formerly bordered this court were in ruins, but from out the *débris* projected great lintels. These I examined in the hope of finding sculptures on the under side, but, alas, in vain!

The other larger group of buildings, which in past years had more particularly fallen a prey to the depredations of the woodcutters exploiting these woods, was especially difficult to rediscover, since, when the woodcutters abandoned this region, the forest had been set on fire and everything was now concealed by the dense vegetation.

Mr. Molina himself came to our assistance from La Reforma, bringing with him some of the most experienced of the elder monteros. And it was only with this help that we were successful in finding the ruins.

A great pyramid, rising in several terraces, once formed the substructure of the principal temple, which now like the adjacent apartments has fallen to ruin. From among the *débris* the woodcutters — who, I regret to say, seem to busy themselves, incidentally and in a manner quite uncalled for, with archaeology, but naturally only after the style of woodcutters — had taken out a slab bearing inscriptions, intending to carry it away with them, but finding it too heavy, they left it lying on the side of the pyramid and contented themselves with knocking off a corner to take with them as a "specimen"!

I succeeded in finding this slab, and at once perceived that it was part of a stone table, which had rested against a wall, and whose three exposed (naturally narrow) faces were ornamented with very delicately executed hieroglyphs in bas-relief, while the top (at least of the portion which I found) also had an inscription, which, however, was incised.

Here was another instance of the mischief arising from the meddling of ignorant people. If the men had simply left the slab on the spot where they found it, it would have been an easy matter for me to have dug a little further and the missing portion would undoubtedly have come to

light. Now, of course, no one can surmise in what part of the huge pyramid of ruins, overgrown with trees, this table stood. We must perforce be content, therefore, with the mutilated fragment here discovered.

The table is chiselled out of the finest limestone. Its breadth is sixty-two centimetres, the length of the part found is seventy-five, the width of the band of glyphs is seven, but the general thickness of the stone is somewhat more. The incised inscription of the top formerly consisted (according to my calculation) of twenty-four squares containing glyphs in two rows of twelve each. Of the first row eight are preserved, and of the second six. The missing squares belong to the broken-off corner. The first seven glyph-squares of the outer band were preserved; then, on the same side, there were probably four more, and around the broken-off corner, on the long side, probably six more; then followed seven well-preserved squares to the edge where the missing portion of the table formerly joined.

I have taken photographs of the bands of glyphs preserved on the narrow frontal faces (Plate II), and have made a tracing of the incised inscription on the upper face (Fig. 1).

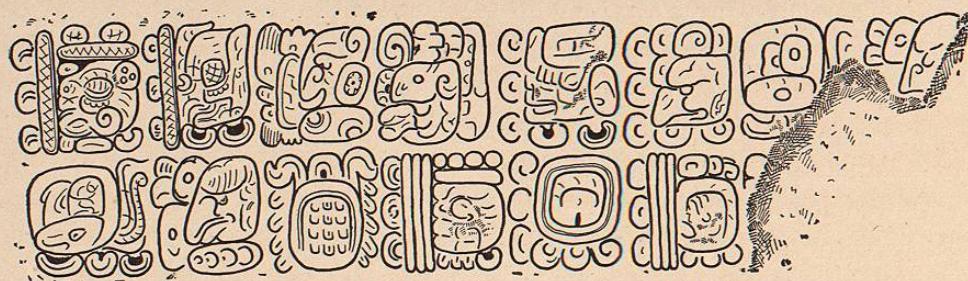


FIG. 1.—CHINIKIHÁ: PORTION OF INCISED INSCRIPTION UPON UPPER SURFACE OF STONE TABLE.

Adjoining the north side of the ruined pyramid is an extensive palace with several courts. On one side of the main court there is a row of narrow entrances, which are arched over with triangular arches flattened at the top. These entrances, I think, did not lead to actual apartments, but only to a passageway by which chambers in the rear and at the sides may have been reached, while the horizontal stone roof formed an elevated passage to adjoining terraces.

Climbing over the ruins of the fallen chambers, which lie opposite the structure with the flattened triangular arches, we came to further remains of buildings and to a covered passageway, which must have led to chambers now filled with débris. Traces of painting (red scroll work) were still visible on the plastered walls of this passageway (or anteroom), but they had become so indistinct that it was impossible for me to copy the design.

Since the principal façades of this group of edifices, especially that of the temple, must have faced the west, I carefully searched the ground in

front of it for sculptured stones, and found a small circular sacrificial table, and near it the fragments of a small stela, which had the figure of a man on one side and an inscription on the other. Unfortunately both sides of the stela were so much worn off by the rain that I could not photograph them. Whether the destruction of this stela is also to be imputed to the monteros and the fire which broke out at that time, it was useless to inquire. I will only remark that in almost all cases where a sculptured stela is dashed down by the accidental fall of a forest giant, the picture facing upward is destroyed, but the one turned downward is marvellously well-preserved. The only explanation I can give for the fact that both faces of this stela were worn off is, that some intruder out of curiosity had turned the fragments over and had then left them lying there.

This second group of edifices lies in the northeastern part of the city, and at a slight distance from it, but to the northeast there is a large truncated pyramid, which might prove of great interest to a future explorer able to undertake excavations on a more extended scale. Without wishing further to blame the honest woodcutters — who apologized to me for having meddled in archaeological matters by saying that they could not have foreseen that some time I should penetrate into these hidden corners — I must mention, however, to complete the matter, that one of the mozos found among these ruins a small sculptured stone in perfect preservation which, it is said, still showed some traces of colors, and that he had carried it off with the intention of selling it to one of the managers of La Reforma. But on the road — who knows where? — on thinking the matter over and being in doubt whether he should receive the hoped-for recompense of fifty pesos, and the stone being somewhat heavy, he hid it in the woods. At the time of my stay in La Reforma, this man was in far-off Tzendales; hence it was utterly impossible to find the stone, which may now be forever lost.

III.

CHÁNCALA.

Cháncala (tsáncalá) is the name of a plant with large leaves, the seed-pods of which contain small black balls, which, when pierced with holes, are used by the Indian women for necklaces. It is the *Heliconia* of the botanists.

At the end of January, 1898, leaving the larger part of my baggage at La Reforma, I went with my men to the waterfall of the Cháncala River to investigate a ruined city in that locality. The road was extremely miry and occasioned us much trouble. We passed first through a small rancho, and were courteously received by the occupant, who had lost his right hand