

slope of the acropolis. The stairway is ten metres wide and has only five steps, each one about 40 cm. in height. On either side of the stairway is an abutting vertical wall about five metres in length, faced with large stone slabs. At each wing these walls are continued by somewhat receding walls of common hewn blocks of smaller size, which form the retaining wall of the first terrace (Fig. 17).

From the platform of the stone stairway the second terrace is reached, whose right and left wings extend in the same manner as those of the first. But while the right wing of the terrace is quite empty, the *left wing* was formerly adorned with eight large stelæ, which now lie in confusion and for the most part broken in pieces upon the ground.

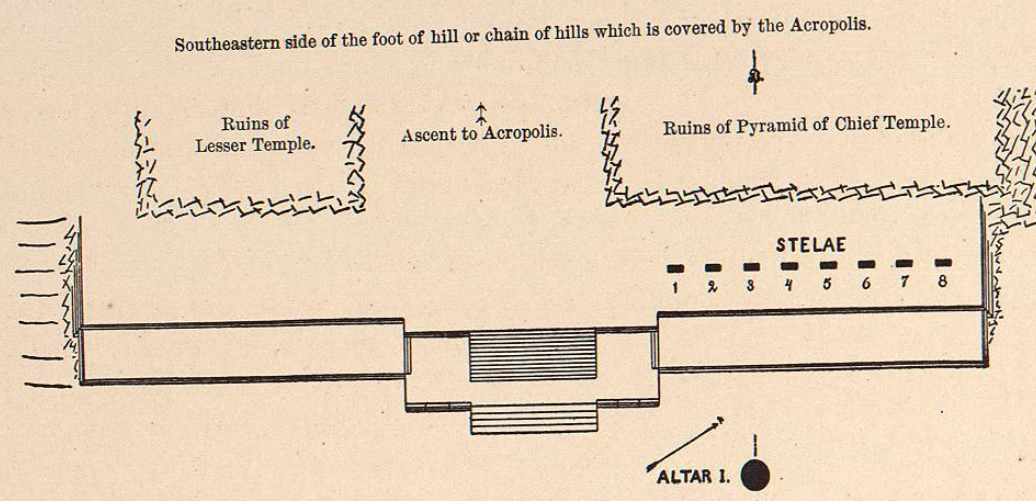


FIG. 17.—PIEDRAS NEGRAS: PLAN OF THE TERRACE OF THE EIGHT STELÆ.

In order to give a correct idea of the whole, I ought to state that on the right wing there must once have stood a lesser temple of inferior height, which is now wholly demolished, while on the left wing stood a large temple whose enormous pyramidal substructure with its numerous steps seems to form a part of the mountain against which it rests. Let me also add that the remaining terraces lead up to the acropolis by means of a saddle-shaped elevation between the two temple sites, in a line with the centre of the stone stairway, and that the upper terraces of the principal temple can be reached from the saddle by lateral ascents, not by centrally placed stairways, as is usually the case.

I searched the steps and the masses of ruins of the upper terraces to find out whether the lintels of the now ruined temple façade which had faced southeast, were ornamented with sculptures or not, for I had determined to dig them up if I could find the places where the entrances had been.

Unfortunately the confusion on the top platform was so great that it was impossible to determine which of the remnants of partially well-preserved masonry had belonged to the walls of the temple or had merely been part of the retaining walls of the steps of the pyramid. I was therefore unable to find the places where the entrances had been, but I concluded that the temple must have had a principal chamber in front and some smaller ones in the rear. I could not determine whether or not there had been chambers abutting against the main body of the whole structure ranged along the last terrace but one. Convinced that nothing short of an excavation on a very large scale would enable me to find the lintels, I was forced to confine myself to the clearing out of the eight stelæ on the second terrace from the bottom, and of the great round altar on the level ground in front of the temple.

Unfortunately this circular sacrificial table (No. 1) has been broken in two, probably by a falling tree, and the elaborate bas-relief on the

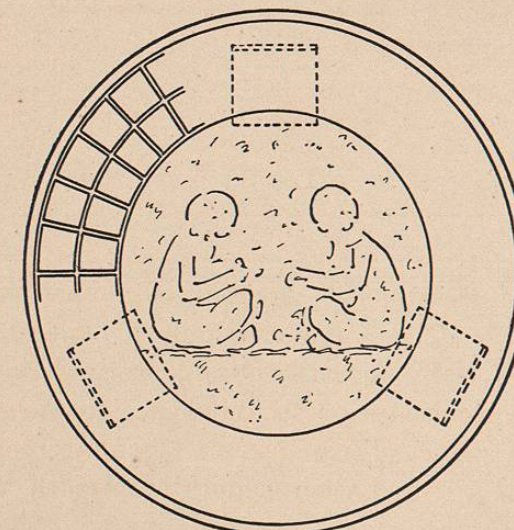


FIG. 19.—DESIGN UPON UPPER SURFACE OF ALTAR 1.

upper surface is almost wholly destroyed by centuries of rain. It is now possible only to recognize two personages sitting opposite one another within the inner circle, surrounded by a concentric double band of glyphs (Fig. 19). The diameter of the circular stone slab is 213 cm. Its thickness is 35 cm., and the cylindrical outer edge is ornamented with a double row of glyphs. These glyphs, being less exposed to the action of the rain, are still in a tolerable state of preservation.

Three square pillars, each having ten glyphs on its front face, support the sacrificial stone. I photographed this circular altar after having had it cleaned (Plate VIII).

It took a whole week of hard work to prepare for photographing these stelæ, which probably marked the graves of persons of rank and also represented the principal divinities. Each stone was carefully excavated and set up on one of its narrow side faces by means of a windlass we had

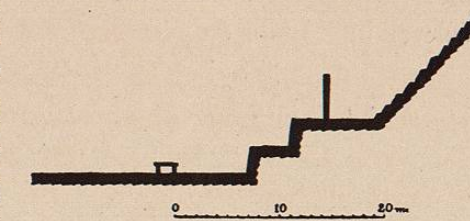


FIG. 18.—PIEDRAS NEGRAS: TERRACE OF THE EIGHT STELÆ. Cross-section a-b.

borrowed from a neighboring montería, and then washed and brushed off in order to secure as good a picture as possible, after felling some trees which excluded the sunlight. Most of the stelæ had sculpture on the two broad faces and inscriptions on the narrow side faces. The face which had lain next to the ground was generally well preserved, while the upturned face was mostly destroyed.

Stela 1 (Plate XII). The whole height of this stone (now broken in two) is 425 cm., one metre of which was under ground. Its breadth is 136 cm.; thickness, 45 cm.

The sculpture on the front is wholly destroyed; that on the back, representing Ketsalkoatl, is very well preserved. Each narrow side face has a double row of glyphs, which have become quite indistinct.

The preserved relief represents the front view of a male figure, with an oval beardless face carved in very high relief. Upon the brow is placed the serpent's head, the upper row of teeth forming a diadem. Above the serpent's head is the turban, from the centre of which rises the ornamented feather-holder, and the plumes of feathers proceeding from it fall to the right and left. The god is clothed in a tunic reaching to his feet, ornamented with delicately incised Maltese crosses, and finished at the neck by a cape of scales. In his right hand the god holds feathers, and his left lies on the medallion of the cape.

The upper part of the relief consists of three horizontal rows of glyphs: $3 \times 7 = 21$. Along the edges a row of glyphs reached down to each shoulder: $8 + 10$, one glyph in each row being wholly destroyed, owing to the fracture of the stone, while all the rest are in an excellent state of preservation,—thirty-nine glyphs in all, two of which are destroyed. A small glyph also occurs at the base of the feather-holder.

Remnants of color were still visible, as follows: face, arms and garment, bright red; background, dark red; edge of garment, blue; breast-cape, blue; feathers, always green.

Stela 2 (Plate XV, 1). Broken in three pieces. Whole height of the fragments when joined together was 273 cm., of which 63 cm. were sunk in the ground, and 195 cm. were covered with sculpture. Width, 68 cm.; thickness, 43-45 cm.

The figure, probably of a god, on one of the broad faces, is wholly destroyed; that, presumably of a man, on the other is pretty well preserved. One of the narrow side faces has an upright figure in bas-relief, and the other has an inscription in two perpendicular rows. The side faces have both become quite indistinct. Though the well-preserved figure presents very nearly a front view, the face, now crumbled away, is quite in profile. In his right hand the personage represented holds a kind of chain, in his left an ornamental pouch. On the right shoulder there is a grotesque face,

and at the girdle, from which depend broad sash-ends, there is a mask of unusual size with eyes turned inward of a Mongolian type. The helmet is formed of an animal with the face turned upward. From its breast proceeds the feather-holder, terminating in a plume of feathers above; while feathers also fall toward the back, and a fantastic little creature, something like a bird, preceded by a much smaller, indefinable one, is represented as creeping upward on the feather-holder. The only traces of color still visible are bits of red on the background.

Stela 3 (Plate XIII). Broken in three pieces. Whole height 410 cm., of which one metre had been sunk into the ground. Width, 135-140 cm.; thickness, about 42 cm.

The two narrow side faces have double rows of inscriptions imperfectly preserved. This stela lay sunk in the ground in a horizontal position, with the sculptured side, which had formerly faced the esplanade, turned skyward, and though it was covered with foliage and earth, it was so badly crumbled that all the finer detail had disappeared. Only the main outlines of the figure were still discernible, and these I copied before I had the stone turned over.

The personage on the weather-beaten side of the stela presents an entire front view (Fig. 20). He seems to hold his right arm against his breast and the left arm against his side. The head is surmounted by a tall turban-like head-dress, to the outside of which is attached a plume of feathers, while another plume still higher up proceeds from an ornament on the top of the turban.

It can no longer be determined whether this figure, following the rule of the stelæ of Yāxchilan, represents a human being of rank, or even, by way of exception, a god. On the other hand it may safely be asserted that the principal figure on the side which had formerly faced the temple and had afterward fallen face downward, represented Ketsalkoatl in the character of a beneficent god.

The sculpture on this side, which had lain upon the earth, was admirably preserved (Plate XIII). The principal figure is represented dressed and adorned like the representation of a god on Stela 1, but enthroned, sitting Turkish fashion, on a bench. The fronts of the two pillars supporting the



FIG. 20.—SKETCH OF THE WEATHER-BEATEN SIDE OF STELA 3.