

The stelæ having all been successfully photographed, we applied ourselves to the task of thoroughly exploring the acropolis, the principal structure of which is undoubtedly the temple of the eight stelæ. Following the ascents belonging to the continuation of the stone stairway (Fig. 17), we reached the plateaus of the mountain chain, which had everywhere been levelled and prepared for the building of numerous edifices of stone.

We examined the numerous half-ruined structures, — remains of chambers, passages, rear-chambers with triangularly arched vaults, half-buried entrances, etc., — but in all that débris we found no sculptured stones. Our attention was especially attracted by a very long edifice which we called *La Casa Grande*. It consists of a long, now ruined vestibule, with an entrance in its medial wall to a rear apartment of equal length, whose vaulted ceiling has fallen, while the long back wall still stands intact. Though the mountain range descends to the river in very steep and often perpendicular cliffs, I nevertheless succeeded in climbing down between the rocks with one of my men, in order to make a tour of inspection through that part of the city which lies nearest to the river. But here also, among countless heaps of ruins, we found nothing worth noting.

Between the acropolis and the hills of the transverse valley, where the cabins of the wood-cutters lie, the otherwise rolling country forms an extensive level area which occupies about the middle of the city. Here we found two large, square sacrificial altars, to which I afterward gave the numbers 3 and 4. It is clear that these altars, which I cleaned and photographed, must have had reference to some temples near by, in particular to a large temple which I afterward called *El Templo de la Estela de las Víctimas*.

At the foot of the dilapidated pyramid of this important edifice, along its south-southwestern side, we found four gigantic stelæ, lying flat on the ground, which I afterward numbered 16, 17, 18, 19. The stelæ had all fallen with the important sculptured faces upward, which were consequently wholly destroyed. We comforted ourselves with the hope that the faces sunk in the earth would have well-preserved sculptures. But this hope was not fulfilled. Some had no sculpture at all on the buried faces, and others displayed only certain wavy lines. The stones had evidently not been able to withstand the moisture of the earth; nevertheless double rows of glyphs could still be recognized on the narrow side faces of all the four stelæ, one even showing a figure in profile.

Somewhat discouraged by the negative results of our investigations of the four giant stelæ, we explored the forest in an easterly direction from the Temple of the Sacrificial Stela, and came to a small half-ruined structure, the ground-plan of which may be thus described: The projecting right wing, and also the now ruined left wing, had each four connected narrow chambers surrounding a middle room located somewhat below their

plane in such a manner that the fourth narrow chamber ran the whole length of the building and was therefore common to both the wings (Fig. 21). A now ruined entrance in the south front led into the middle chamber, which had a large stone bench built into it. The monteros, whose imagination is always stirred up by the thought of *casas cerradas*, not perceiving the entrance obstructed by débris, had made a breach in the wall of the narrow right side, but do not seem to have found the hoped-for treasure.

As I was not prepared to undertake further excavations likely to consume much additional time, after a stay of fifteen days among the ruins,

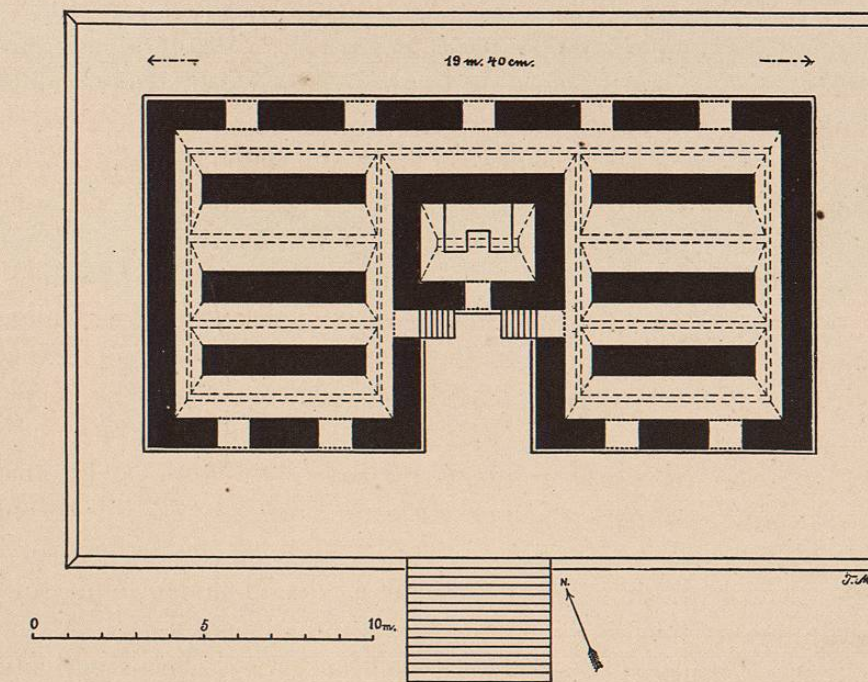


FIG. 21. — PIEDRAS NEGRAS: PLAN OF THE TEMPLE OF THE EIGHT CHAMBERS.

I concluded to set out with my men on my way back to Tenosique, whence I returned to Yucatan.

In 1897, while on my expedition to Yāxchilan, I again passed through Piedras Negras, but without attempting excavations of any kind.

Not until the year 1899, when I had organized an expedition under the auspices of the Peabody Museum of Cambridge, Mass., for the further exploration of the ruined cities on the Usumatsintla and of the Indian territories lying in that region, did I find it expedient to subject Piedras Negras to another investigation, in order to obtain definite results for the Museum, before risking time and money in uncertain wanderings, especially since the perpetually discontented men from Tenosique are never to be counted on for any length of time.

In the forests lying along the banks of the river, new lumber camps had been established since my last visit, which, by their offer of large sums of money, had attracted all the available men for miles around, so that I found great difficulty in securing a few men for my expedition. By the end of August, however, I was able to leave Tenosique with three men and the necessary pack-animals, having already sent a store of provisions and other things to El Cayo.

The palmleaf huts of the montería of Piedras Negras had entirely disappeared, and everything was already quite overgrown by the luxuriant tropical vegetation.

For this reason I had to find quarters for myself and my men in one of the caves near the place of the ceiba. These caves afforded us excellent shelter in the rainy season, which was now in progress. We supplied our animals with fodder by daily cutting branches from the ramon-tree, which fortunately abounds in these forests.

We devoted the months of September, October, and November (1899) to the further exploration of the ruined city, with such good results this time that Piedras Negras now ranks with Palenque and Yāxchilan in respect of the number and importance of its sculptures.

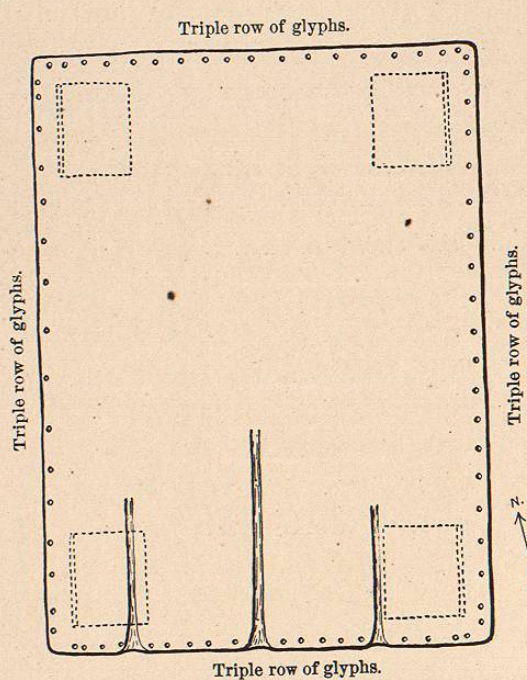


FIG. 22. — ALTAR 2.

I will now proceed to describe the new discoveries consecutively, in connection with those previously made by me, in order to be perfectly clear.

The Temple of the Three Stelæ 9, 10, 11, forming a part of the acropolis. Leaving the stone stairway of five steps and passing along the foot of the acropolis mountain range in the direction of the river, we came upon a well-preserved, rectangular sacrificial table or altar resting upon four pillars, which I called No. 2 (Fig. 22).

The length of the table is 220 cm.; breadth, 172 cm.; thickness, 35 cm.

Certain wavy lines on the surface of the table seem to indicate that it must once have had a sculptured bas-relief upon it, which is now totally worn away. The grooves for carrying off the blood, sloping toward one of the edges, are still plainly visible.

Around the four narrow faces of the table run three parallel rows of glyphs, which are quite small and have nearly all become indistinct. The

four edges of the table have been pierced by a series of little holes at an angle of 45°. Could they have served for suspending the skulls of the victims?

On the faces corresponding to the long sides of the table, the four supporting pillars have three perpendicular rows of glyphs of three characters each, that is, $4 \times 9 = 36$ glyphs, which are very well preserved, protected, as they have been, by the sacrificial stone.

The monteros, who perpetrate a great deal of mischief among the ruins of this wilderness, in spite of all prohibitions on the part of the Mexican government, have torn out one of the supporting pillars of the table, suspecting hidden treasures beneath it. It was, therefore, an easy matter to put the detached pillar in a good light and photograph its inscription (Plate X). The other three inscriptions, owing to the projecting edges of the sacrificial stone, are in an unfavorable light, and it would be necessary to make a mould of them if they are to be reproduced. The height of the little pillars is 91 cm., about one-third of which was sunk into the ground.

A little way back of the sacrificial table rise the steps and terraces belonging to a small temple standing on a considerable eminence, the front apartment of which is in ruins, while remains of the rear apartment are still standing, — a fact which I had already observed during my first expedition. Among the débris of the ruined façade I found the various pieces of the lintel slab, which I called No. 5. Unfortunately its bas-relief was almost wholly effaced. It was, however, still possible to discern that it resembled a scene similar to that on lintel No. 4 (Plate XXXII), that is, warriors kneeling before a *Halachwinic* (warrior chieftain), with descriptive glyphs overhead. It was possible to recognize distinctly that the chieftain, who holds a lance in his right hand, has on the same peculiar round head-dress as the one worn by the principal person in the bas-relief of lintel 4. Unfortunately the whole thing was broken into such small pieces and was so weather-worn that it was impossible to fit the fragments together so that they could be photographed.

Upon the second terrace, rising about eight metres above the natural level of the ground, formerly stood the three stelæ which, in my enumeration of the whole, I have numbered 9, 10, 11. They are all three broken in pieces, but most of them having fallen with the sculptured face downward, they are in that respect well preserved. The backs of the stelæ were smooth, the sculptured fronts had faced the esplanade, and the sides had also been ornamented with sculpture.

Stela 9 (Plate XVIII, 1). Of this stela three fragments, which held the most important part of the sculpture, lay on the ground, while the bottom piece and a piece of one of the upper corners could not be found. The stone may have been about four metres in height; the breadth is 112 cm.;