

XII.

EL CHICOZAPOTE.*

THE chicozapote is the tree which exudes a thick white mass in the rainy season when large connecting V's are cut one above the other in its bark. This liquid is collected in a vessel placed at the lowest V, and when evaporated it forms the well-known chewing-gum, *tsictin*, *tsiktin*, Hispanicized *chicle*. The collectors are called *el chicletero*, *los chicleteros*, and their temporary camp, *una chicletería*. The roundish fruit of this tree looks like a potato, the meat is yellowish brown and has a pleasant winey taste. The dark red-brown wood belongs to the best of the Mexican forests.

One of my men had told me that when roving formerly through these woods with collectors of tsapotl resin they had found the ruins of a large city situated not far from the now-abandoned montería of "El Chicozapote," which might perhaps yield something of interest on closer examination. As a result of this information, we started, carrying the absolutely necessary luggage, in the direction of the settlement of El Chicozapote. This place is midway between El Chile and Anaité, being about three leagues (about twelve and a half kilometres) from these two points. There had been heavy rains during the last nights. For almost the entire journey we had to wade laboriously through water and mire. Worn out and drenched, we finally reached El Chicozapote, and took up our quarters in one of the huts, where we were at least sheltered from the rain.

To my great sorrow I had in the last days contracted a bad fever, which now broke out with great violence. Abstaining from food for three days and taking heavy doses of quinine in coffee, I succeeded in breaking it up completely. In such desperate conditions—surrounded by people who are constantly dissatisfied and grumbling—it is necessary to lose no time in curing one's self, otherwise the case lasts for months and the system is much reduced. In spite of the fact that I was very weak I undertook the exploration of the ruined city. Pushing our way in a southeasterly direction through the forest for about one and a half kilometres from the huts of the montería we in fact came to a large ruined city, where many remnants of buildings covered the extremely hilly tract of land. All, of course, was hidden in the dark forest of high trees.

Searching the ruins in all directions we were unable to find a building standing erect, nor was there an esplanade with sacrificial altars and deity-stelae, since the hilly nature of the ground would not have been favorable

* Mexico. Left bank of the Usumatsintla, about three or more kilometres inland. Middle of June, 1897. Chicozapote in the pure Mexican (Nahuatl) form is *chichtsapotl* or *zicontsapotl* (*tsikttsapotl*, *tsikontsapotl*), and its botanical name is *Zapota achrus*.

for such. Finally, however, we came to a half-ruined building of two chambers in a row, and to my very great satisfaction all four entrances to these rooms had their respective lintels sculptured on the under side and two of them still displayed their original beautiful coloration. This was a fortunate and unexpected find which repaid us in some measure for the hardships we had endured.

On a terrace about two metres high, with a flight of steps leading to the lower esplanade, a building rises facing the northwest, probably a temple, consisting of two chambers in a line (Fig. 36). Detailed examination proved that originally there was only a single chamber erected in the oldest period, the interior length of which was 316 cm. and the exterior 466 cm., to which at a much later period a second building had been added, forming a wing on the right hand. This had an interior length of 929 cm., and its exterior was 10 m. 79 cm. long. Therefore, the total length of the structure was 15 m. 45 cm.

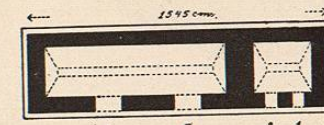


FIG. 36.—PLAN OF RUIN AT EL CHICOZAPOTE.

The frieze, which had probably been simple and severe, had fallen off as far as the projecting lower cornice. The stone lintels, however, were still in place with the exception of the first (counting from the left wing to the right), which lay shattered among the ruins.

In order to photograph the undersculptures, the stones had to be turned so that the sun's rays would shine upon them from the side, which we did not hesitate to do, since, as I stated, the frieze had fallen down. Each of the two entrances to the oldest chamber is only 65 cm. wide. The thickness of the walls is 75 cm. For that reason the undersculptures are of small dimensions. The two entrances to the more recently built chamber were 140 and 143 cm. wide; and hence their lintels had large and beautiful undersculptures. Counting from the left wing to the right:

Lintel 1, sculptured on the under side (Plate XXXVII, 1). Width of the carved surface, 29 cm.; height, 66 cm. I joined the broken pieces carefully together, and my photograph gives as distinct a reproduction of the archaic sculpture as is possible. This consists of three parts: A hieroglyphic base, on which a personage of rank sits in Turkish fashion, and the upper finish formed by two horizontal rows of four glyphs each.

The principal personage sits cross-legged, resting his left hand on his knee and holding the right to his breast. The face is unfortunately much weather-worn, yet I think I recognize an old h'men or magician.

Lintel 2, sculptured on the under side (Plate XXXVII, 2). The width at the bottom of the little field containing the sculpture is 35 cm.; at the top, 31½ cm.; height, 66 cm. Total breadth of the stone, 75 cm.; total length, 145 cm.

This is divided into three parts like the sculpture on the first lintel, and the hieroglyphic base is similar on both lintels. But the figure sitting on the base is very different. It is drawn partly in profile. We should not be wholly unwarranted, perhaps, in pronouncing this figure a Mictlantecutli, "lord of the kingdom of the dead," or at all events a sacrificer. The figure seems to hold a naked dead child under his left arm, the body and legs of which are clearly distinguishable, I think, and its lifeless arms fall loosely behind. The man holds up both hands, the wrists of which are ornamented with cuffs; the left hand seems to be empty, but the right holds the heart torn out of the breast of the sacrificed child. A necklace of large round stone beads hangs around his neck. The face is drawn in a very peculiar fashion, so that the upper part of the head from the nose upward and backward seems to have the shape of a fish, and this appears to suggest the hieroglyphic-phonetic meaning *mi* (from the Mexican *michin*, *mitsin* = fish). Projecting from the nose is an ornament, which apparently is composed of feathers, but these are drawn somewhat wavy, so that they might also be considered as little leaves (*kilil* = weed), thus giving the phonetic value of *k, ki*, while their position or number would correspond to the phonetic value *tlān* (*tlān*, *tlāni*, there exists, above it, next to it). The entire face gives pictorially and phonetically the value of *teculli* = lord. The resultant expression is *miktlanteculli*.

His head is surmounted by a curious design of streamers and feathers, and on the left a broad object, curved at the top and bottom and forming the border of the sculpture, has on its upper curve a large bird's head, so drawn that the beak touches the knot of the head-dress and at the same time may be regarded as the plume of feathers extending backward from the knot as a counterpart, also showing a bird's head.

There is no doubt at all that the entire sculpture had a symbolical character. In the few cases where a fish is to be recognized, it suggests the idea of *mictlantecutli*, if the other adjuncts are not contradictory. Should my conception of this highly archaic sculpture be correct, we would have in this representation a counterpart of the death god or the sacrificial priest of *Sayil* (Yucatan). The thought, however, is expressed in a different way, but is to be read in any event according to the Mexican language and not the Maya. But this does not exclude the fact that the people of the lower classes may have called this personage simply *Cay*, *kai* (in the Maya language, *cay* = fish).

The upper part of the sculpture is occupied by eight glyphs distributed in two rows which are distinctly recognizable.

Of the former coating of the two undersculptures (1, 2) with stucco and color, only traces of red on the edges and glyphs could be recognized. It is possible that both little reliefs were covered entirely with red without accentuation by means of other colors.

Lintel 3, sculptured on the under side (Plate XXXVIII, 1). The total length of the stone is 230 cm.; total breadth, 80 cm.; height of the sculpture, inclusive of the blue edges, 140 cm.; breadth of the same, 80 cm., the bas-relief with its blue borders thus filling the clear space of the lintel. This sculpture—the fourth, belonging to a later and more advanced period—has retained its beautiful coloration *in toto*. The sculpture consists of two parts, a hieroglyphic base on which two personages of rank engaged in animated conversation are sitting cross-legged. The whole representation is bordered by a blue band at the top and bottom, but not at the sides, since it occupies the full breadth of the stone.

The design on the base seems to be a much conventionalized serpent's face = *can*, and is colored green, *yācan* (*yākan*); but the eyes, the nose, and the upper jaw are bright red. At the left,—presumably also on the right, but there it has become indistinct—the hieroglyphic head design shows a cylindrical object which is wound around in the centre and is red and green. This cylinder is of the form which Dr. Valentine believes should be considered a roll of paper, *amali*; even the supposed thorn, *istli*, is sticking in the wrapper. At a pinch this could have the phonetic value *yācanātsan* (*yā-kan-its-an*), which as a matter of fact corresponds to a city name. Unfortunately, we have no reliable means of solving such rebuses.

The two men engaged in conversation are almost nude, and wear only dark green and blue girdles (*maxlli*, *mašlli*) and green necklaces. The color of the skin of both is idealized to bright red, while the ground is dark red, so that the two colors can contrast with one another. One man has round ear ornaments and the other square; they are green in each case. One wears the high bright-red cylindrical head-covering—like the calpac of the modern Persian—which rests on the green forehead band of rattles. A green plume projects from this cap. The other man likewise wears a red head-covering but of a different shape, and a large plume of green feathers also issues from its knot. The clear space between the two heads is filled by a green rectangular field, probably intended to contain glyphs, but these were not drawn.

Lintel 4, sculptured on the under side (Plate XXXVIII, 2). Total length of the stone, 255 cm.; height of the sculpture, inclusive of the blue band forming a border at the top and bottom, 135 cm.; breadth of the stone and of the sculpture, 83 cm. Unfortunately this lintel is broken in the centre, otherwise the relief with the colors is well preserved.

A bright-red bench, forming a throne, with two somewhat tapering feet, stands on the blue border. On this throne a man of rank sits cross-legged in Turkish fashion, inclining slightly forward. The whole figure is drawn in a very graceful and natural manner. The man wears only a green girdle and for the rest is nude. Around his neck is a necklace of green stone beads, with a breast disk also green. The round ear-ornament