

fastened our cayuco to the roots of an overhanging tree. The ascent was very steep and rocky. After reaching the summit of the mountain, we examined the slope on the other side and soon found the rather spacious open cave, which in ancient times probably afforded an acceptable shelter to Indians hunting in the adjacent forests or fishing in the lake. I at once examined the walls to see if there were not pictures of some kind cut in the rock.

In the centre of the cave where the ground had been somewhat levelled, there was an almost vertical boulder about two and a half metres high. On the wall back of this rock an oval stalactite had formed in the course of years. Into this two round holes for eyes, two quite small ones for nose, and a short line for the mouth had been cut, perhaps by people of a long-vanished race. It is easy to imagine that this rock in front of the human face served in the most primitive fashion to hold incense vessels or small sacrificial gifts.

On searching the corners of the cave for potsherds, I found a few, which seemed to belong to the general Maya-Lacantun period.

I named the cave "La Cueva de la Cabeza," and made a little sketch of the cave with the stone altar and the face on the stalactite.

A heap of stones near the cave seemed to me to be the remains of a building once standing in the vicinity. As we paused on the mountain top and gazed in the direction of Peten-Itza over the boundless wilderness intersected by mountain ranges of not inconsiderable dimensions, we beheld nothing but a vast uninhabited and unexplored tract of country.

Then we descended to our cayuco to explore further the laguna and to fish in the most favorable places.

My men threw in their hooks and with such success that at each throw a fish rose almost instantly to the bait. These fish were *mojarras*, — or *tencuayacas*, as the natives call them, — and were from 25 cm. to 35 cm. long, having eight black spots on each side. In a short time we caught fully a hundred of these delicious fish, so that the entire bottom of the cayuco was covered with them. We also saw great numbers of small fish, *sardinas*, which probably served as food for the *tencuayacas*. In the distance huge alligators swam lazily about.

A gorgeous vegetation is developed on these shores. Many trees, like the *macuilshual* and *chutté*, showed a profusion of beautiful pink and white blossoms. We also saw a great deal of *palo de tinte*, which no one here thinks of turning to profit.

Late in the afternoon we returned to the huts in a contented frame of mind, without, it is true, having made any important discoveries.

While we were engaged in cooking, Andres Bolon appeared upon the scene. When Reyes had explained the purpose of our visit, Bolon came into our hut to pay us his respects and to offer his services. At first, of course,

I refrained from asking him troublesome questions. Not until late in the evening, after Bolon with his wives and I with my men had eaten an abundant repast, and Bolon had come again to our camp-fire, did I attempt to settle the most important question as to whether he had ever seen ruins in the wide tracts through which he roamed.

I regret to report that the result of our conference — at which Reyes faithfully assisted — was negative. Bolon positively asserted that he had never seen a standing structure like those in Yāxchilan; that only here and there foundations, remains of walls, heaps of stones (*cuyos*), etc., were to be found, nothing worth photographing: . . . *hay cimientos . . . pedazos de pared . . . cuyos . . . en fin vestigios donde se conoce que há habido población . . . pero ruinas en pié, como las de Yāxchilan, no las hay en ninguna parte!* . . . Furthermore, Bolon offered to guide me to the *vestigios* of which he knew.

While convinced that a journey through this wilderness to all the picturesque lakes and little mountain ranges would be of very great interest to the naturalist or to the artist, I decided to leave such an expedition for some future occasion and at present to return to "El Paso de Bolon" in order from there to continue the voyage up the river. On the next morning, therefore, we prepared for the return journey and took leave of Bolon and his wives in the friendliest manner.

Casting a final glance upon this paradisiacal little spot of earth, I could not refrain from thinking that it might be regarded as a remarkable fact that I, Teobert Maler, in the last year of the nineteenth century, had encountered in that vast wilderness on the right bank of the Usumatsintla — opposite the ancient Yāxchilan — a single inhabitant — a *mozo huído* — with the wives of deceased Indians and a very few children, the last remnant of their race.

Conqueror and conquered have both vanished from this region, leaving no trace behind. The forest primeval has again asserted its rights.

## XV.

## SAN LORENZO.\*

UPON our return to the montería "Orizaba," we immediately set out on the voyage upstream. The river again forces a passage through a small mountain range, which is the last on the way from Tenosique and the first as one travels down from the mouth of the Lacantun. Here in its passage between the precipitous rocks the river is often scarcely twenty-five

\* On the left bank of the Lacantun River. (Middle of April, 1900.) Mexican territory, in the State of Chiapas. (See map, Plate I, of this volume.)

to thirty metres wide, which strikes one as remarkable, since it has already received the vast volume of water from the Chixoy and Lacantun, and much farther up — before the entrance of these tributaries — it is from three to five times as broad.

After a toilsome passage of about two leagues, we came to the recently established *monteria*, "La Esperanza," which belongs to the Schindler concession and is situated on the left (Mexican) shore. Having received a very courteous invitation from the manager, Sr. Manuel Otero, we spent the night here, and, as usual, made inquiries relating to our research.

The huts of this settlement were three leagues from the mouth of the Lacantun. Travelling through this no longer mountainous region, we passed two stratified formations of rock with water pouring over them. One was called *el Chorro chico*, and the other, which with its waterfall was very picturesque, *el Chorro grande* (on the right Guatemala shore).

In this tract we were again amazed at the luxuriant growth of the trees, among which were *humpetskin* and *guayacan* trees in the full glory of their wealth of yellow blossoms.

Along both sides of the triangular point of land, which is formed by the conjunction of the Lacantun and Usumatsintla rivers, there are huts built by settlers. This colony is called "Tres Naciones." We now turned into the Lacantun, the large tributary river on the left side. After rowing about a league, we came to the enormous bed of stratified limestone which the natives call *El Planchon de las Figuras*.

It is certain that an ancient city once stood here along the left high shore of the river. This is proved by the fact that in the course of the slight excavations which have been made by the few people settled here — for example, in building a hut — numerous flint lances and arrow-heads, axes of a hard green stone, stone beads, potsherds, etc., have come to light.

The surface of this bed of limestone, which is almost horizontal, having only a very slight incline, forms in the dry season a level beach about one hundred and fifty metres long, and from thirty to forty metres wide.

The inhabitants of the neighboring country have evidently used this large, smooth, and conveniently situated surface to immortalize themselves or their kindred, buried perhaps near by on the high shore behind the rock, by carving low reliefs, or by merely making deep incisions. This vast surface may once have contained nearly a hundred of these designs of the most varied kind. Many have become entirely obliterated, partly owing to natural causes, and partly to the ignorance of the people now living in the neighborhood, and to the thoughtlessness of travellers who at night kindle their campfires on the surface of the rock often directly on one of the pictures. Nevertheless a considerable number are still plainly discernible.

The "Planchon" or "Playon" with its pictures is visible, however, only in the dry season. In the rainy season it is entirely hidden beneath the

water. Hence every one who came down the river gave me the following advice: . . . *ya quedó completamente fuera el planchon . . . ahora conviene que suba Usted el río arriba para verlo . . .*

We secured our craft to a rock and decided to stay here two days. I had the surface of the stone wherever figures were still discernible swept

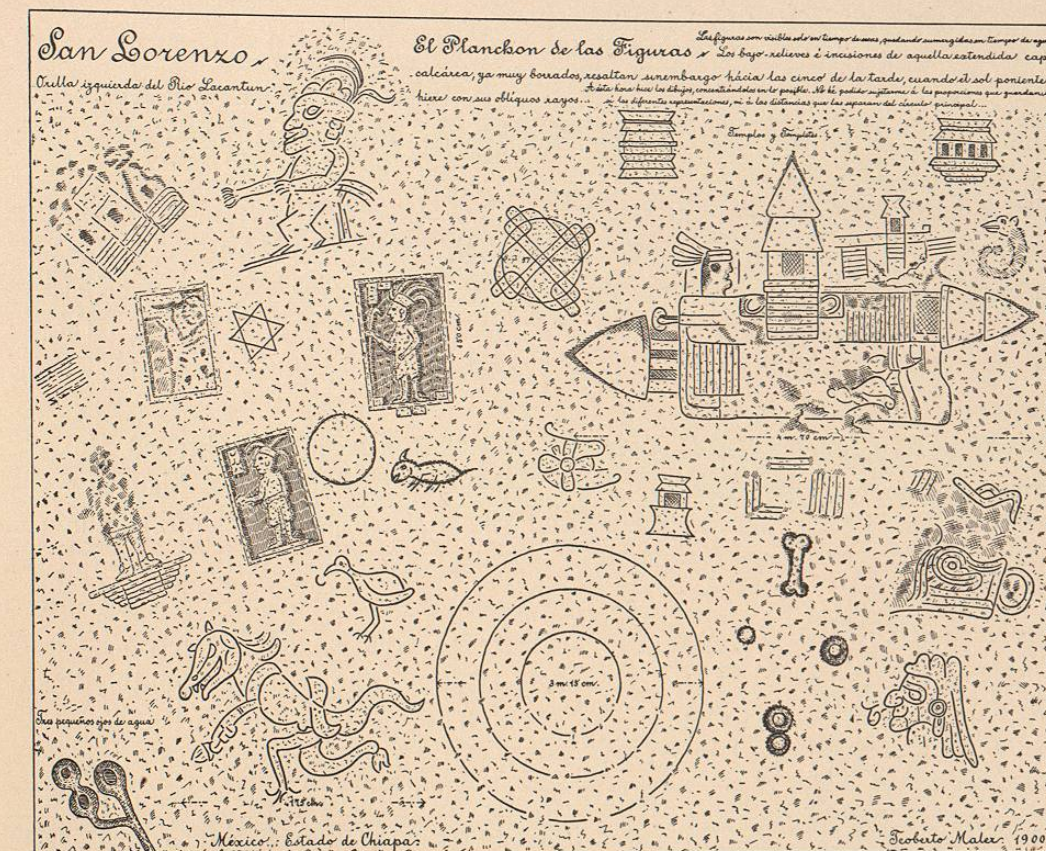


FIG. 67.—ROCK CARVINGS: SAN LORENZO.

clean and sprinkled with water, for the purpose of making at least temporary sketches of the principal outlines of the best-preserved pictures. It turned out that no satisfactory drawing could be made during the day owing to the unfavorable light. Not until about five o'clock in the afternoon — when the rays of the western sun struck the stones at an acute angle — were the still preserved designs plainly distinguishable. At this hour I hastily filled in my temporary sketches on which the outlines and measurements were merely indicated.

Referring to my finished drawings (Fig. 67), I shall confine myself here to a few remarks. Near the centre of this rock are several large concentric circles — probably indicating a circular altar for sacrificial gifts — around which some of the more important figures, especially the low reliefs, are grouped.