

EXCAVATIONS AT UAXACTUN¹

By OLIVER G. RICKETSON, Jr.

ARCHAEOLOGIST, CARNEGIE INSTITUTION OF WASHINGTON

IN the New World three distinct aboriginal civilizations developed three apogees of indigenous culture. These are the Aztec in the Valley of Mexico, noted for their military organization; the Inca in the Highlands of Peru, whose despotic, if beneficent, paternalism permeated every fiber of their politico-social fabric, and the Maya of Middle America.

We may justly rank the cultural achievement of the last as intellectually the highest, in that their genius developed not only an accurate calendric system, whose numeration called for the independent invention of zero and place-numeration, but also the orderly development of a pleasing architectural style and its concomitant decoration. Their architecture never violated the principles governing proportion and mass; its decoration, even when it appears florid to Western eyes, observes the fundamentals of design, and in their handling of perspective, the Maya surpassed all the ancient civilizations of the Old World previous to the Minoan.

It is with a sample of this highest aboriginal American civilization, as exemplified in the ruins of Uaxactun, Guatemala, that we are here concerned. So great are the lacunae in our knowledge, however, that the original name of this site is forever lost to us. It was given its present name on May 5, 1916, by its discoverer, Dr. S. G. Morley, an associate of this Institution.

On entering A-Group the first object that met his eye was Stela 9, bearing the Maya calendric inscription 8. 14. 10. 13. 15. *8 Men 8 Kayab*—or June 10th, 68

¹ A lecture delivered at Carnegie Institution of Washington, November 3, 1931.

A. D. Since this was the first monument bearing a cycle 8 glyph, Dr. Morley named the ruin "Uaxactun"—from the Maya *uaxac*, meaning eight, and *tun*, stone. It is the oldest dated stela so far discovered in the Maya area. The latest date found at Uaxactun corresponds to 639 A. D. So that we have here a dated span of 571 years; that is to say, a period three and one half times longer than the United States have existed as a free and independent country. Yet archeology has afforded us every proof that Uaxactun was occupied long before the erection of the earliest stela—just how long it is difficult to say, but the sixth century before Christ would be a conservative estimate. Since we have positive proof that the Maya reused stone stelae, effacing one date to set up another, this custom offers a partial explanation for the lack of earlier dated monuments; but perhaps a better explanation lies in the supposition that dates may well have been carved first on wood rather than on stone. With the climate of Yucatan such as it is we can never hope to find traces of these.

Before I describe the actual excavations themselves, permit me a moment to describe two basic factors—environment and race—an understanding of which is necessary for a clear comprehension of the situation.

Environment is a basic factor which can not be ignored. As you are all aware, the peninsula lies within the tropics; the year is characterized by two seasons, the "rainy" and the "dry." Since the whole region is composed entirely of porous coralline limestone, permanent surface water is rare, despite a heavy rainfall; in fact, the present sur-

face-water supply is so scant that it could not have met the needs of the ancient Maya during the dry season when their population was at its peak.

Various theories have been advanced to explain this condition, of which the most convincing is that of C. Wythe Cooke after a visit to Uaxactun this year. This theory is that the present-day *bajos* or logwood swamps, covering about 40 per cent. of the terrain, were formerly shallow lakes. The rapid erosion of the surface soil, following deforestation by the Maya, has silted up these lakes. Beyond the geologic evidence supporting this theory, namely, that the mud of these swamps is composed of black carbonaceous clay and disintegrating limestone—we should remember that the district itself is called the "Peten," a word meaning "lake" in Maya—and that the silting up of these former lakes would

react very unfavorably upon the environment of the ancient inhabitants in at least two ways: first, because the origin of the silt is the surface soil of the higher land, composing the terrain suitable for agriculture. Its complete denudation would mean crop-failure and the consequent collapse of a civilization based on corn; and second, because the transformation of a lake into a morass not only eliminates rapid communication and easy transport by canoe, but changes the whole aspect of the region and renders land-transport well-nigh impossible by the development of such extensive swamps that they can not be avoided and must be crossed.

The normal increase of population is sufficient to account for a slow but steady expansion in search of new land; if, in addition to this population increase, we have also the progressive onset of these

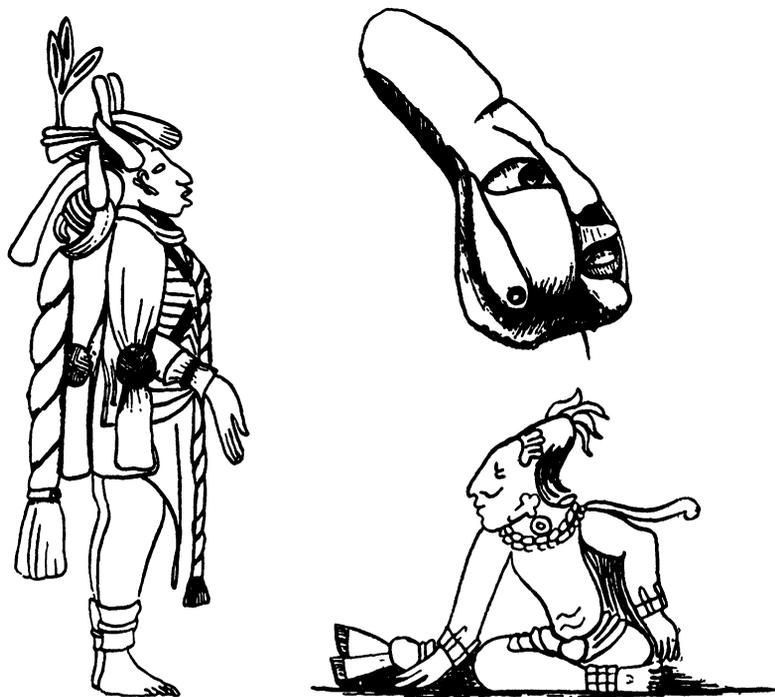


FIG. 1. PRIMITIVE TYPE FIGURINES

SHOWING FLATTENED FOREHEADS CHARACTERISTIC OF ANCIENT MAYA SKULLS. UPPER RIGHT—FROM BLACK DIRT STRATUM, UAXACTUN. AT LEFT AND LOWER RIGHT—FROM PALENQUE.

mutually interactive conditions, soil-denudation and lake-silting, we have a condition wherein expansion will be under forced draught, so to speak. This expansion, however, is no more of an exodus than was our own westward expansion across the Great Plains in the nineteenth century.

The sharp division of Maya history into two epochs—a so-called “Old Empire” in the south, abandoned in the seventh century A. D., to be followed later by a “New Empire” in the north, will have to be revised in the light of our present knowledge. The earlier centers were not abandoned; they merely yielded their prestige to new rivals. Incidentally, we should also explain that Maya ruins are not the remains of extensive cities; the Maya were not an urban people, but agriculturists. Even in the large, multi-chambered buildings of northern Yucatan there would not be housing facilities for a large population.

The ruins that we see to-day are the civil and religious centers to which the surrounding farmers flocked on market and feast-days. Proof of this statement is evidenced by the fact that the low platforms forming ancient house-mounds extend throughout the jungle in every direction and without demarcation between one center and another.

By taking a sample count of these mounds and allowing the jurisdiction of such a center as Uaxactun to extend ten miles in every direction, we arrive at the conclusion that the population could not have been less than 48,000, providing that only 25 per cent. of the house-mounds were simultaneously occupied. If all the arable land were equally divided among all the house-mounds, each householder would own a lot 125 yards square. With intensive agriculture, such a lot would produce sufficient, and more than sufficient, corn, beans and squash for one family.

Our second basic factor is race. We definitely know that at Uaxactun we are dealing with a Maya race pure and simple. No evidence is at hand that any other type ever occupied this site. Such skeletons as have been encountered indicate that the individuals were markedly brachycephalic, of relatively light skeletal set-up and of equal stature with living Maya stocks as found in northern Yucatan and the Highlands of Guatemala to-day.

Two wide-spread characteristics of ancient Maya skulls are also seen at Uaxactun—fronto-occipital deformation, in which the forehead is purposely flattened (see Fig. 1), and the filing of the incisor teeth. We therefore assume, in the light of our present knowledge, that the first and original settlers of Uaxactun were of Maya stock, no evidence of a preceding race of inhabitants ever having been discovered. Not only is there no archeological evidence, but in the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, which recounts legendary lore of the Maya, there is this statement in regard to the arrival of the Mayas. “They named the district, they named the wells, they named the region, they named the land, because no one had arrived here, here in Ucalpeten, when we arrived here.” If this is the case, then, the living Maya can claim 2,500 years of continuous residence in the Peninsula of Yucatan, during which time the majority of their race has maintained its physical characteristics even up to the present day, and this in spite of the shock of the Spanish Conquest.

With these two factors in mind, let us now turn specifically to the ruins of Uaxactun themselves. These lie in the north central portion of the Department of the Peten, Guatemala (see map, Fig. 2) at the geographic center of the Yucatan Peninsula, in a dense high jungle which is to-day completely devoid of all permanent human habitation between

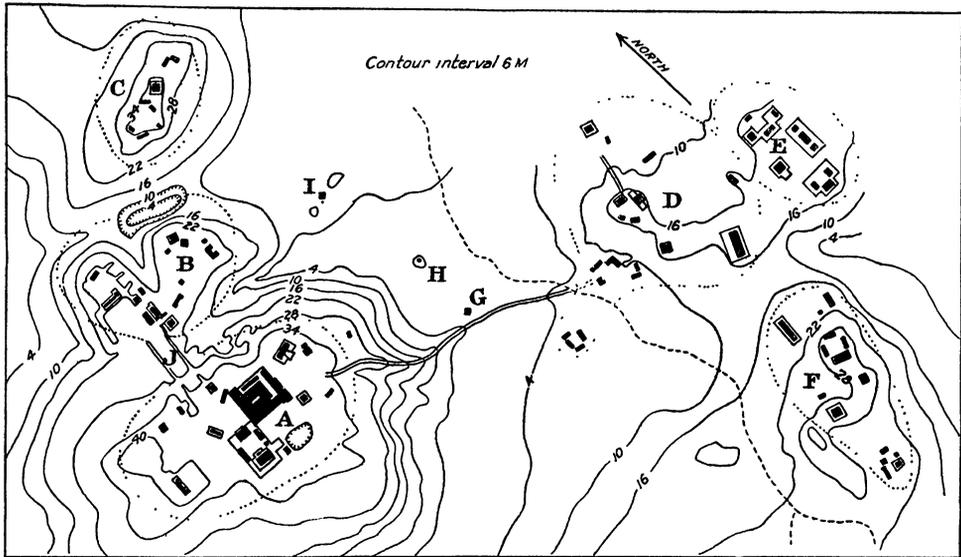


FIG. 3. MAP OF UAXACTUN (AFTER BLOM)
 SHOWING: A, B, C, D, E, F, IMPORTANT GROUPS OF STRUCTURES; G, LABORERS' CAMP; H,
 AGUADA; I, STAFF HEADQUARTERS.

be made at water, of course. Perhaps the strongest impression the jungle makes on the outsider entering it for the first time is a sensation akin to suffocation—not from the heat, because the sun never penetrates the bottom, but from the subdued, green light and the still, silent air, unruffled by the slightest breeze.

Contrary to popular opinion, the monotony of the jungle trail is seldom broken by animal life, if we except the wail of the howler monkey. Although there are two of the large cats, the jaguar and the puma, and several of the small, such as the ocelot, these are nocturnal, as is also the largest denizen, the tapir. Two kinds of deer occur, and various small mammals, such as the armadillo, the agouti, the coatimundi and the more rare kinkajou.

On the other hand, bird-life is teeming, and contains one unique species not seen elsewhere—the beautiful ocelated turkey of Yucatan. Snakes, though well represented, find much of the country

too wet; the best-known species of poisonous snake include the fer-de-lance, the tropical rattler and the coral-snake, but, again, contrary to popular opinion, these do not offer any particular hazard, and snake-bite would result only from treading directly on one. In fact, life in the jungle is a great deal safer than in one of our modern cities—the only enemies being malarial fever and intestinal infections, neither of which are even remotely liable to prove fatal with our present-day medical equipment. I may add, however, that if the safety-factor compares well with that of our modern metropoli, the comforts certainly do not. There is no more comparison between a Pullman and a pack-train than there is between a modern hotel and a bush *champa* (lean-to).

But we are digressing from our main subject; the map of Uaxactun (see map, Fig. 3) will show us that these ruins occupy the artificially flattened tops of natural hills, as is so characteristic of Maya sites in the Peten. More or less

centrally located may be seen the Main Aguada, north of it the Institution's field headquarters and south of it the laborers' camp. On the west, crowning the highest eminence, is Group A—here we have a standing building A-XVIII not of a temple but of a domiciliary type facing the East Plaza; the South Plaza bounded on the north by an entirely fallen but extremely massive and complex structure, A-V, containing 3 sunken courts; on the east by the South Terrace; on the west by the South Court, and on the south by the natural slope of the hill.

The South Court, already mentioned, is in itself a complete temple-plaza unit. Its chief temple, A-I, surrounded by 9 stelae, is the site of an important pottery cache which I will describe later on. North of it lies the Main Plaza, in which stands Stela 9—bearing the earliest date, 68 A. D.—from which extends an artificial causeway along a natural ridge to Group B.

This group, as can be seen, occupies the double top of a forked hill—the western plaza is called the Main Plaza, the other the eastern. B-Group stands 10 meters lower than A-Group. It is

composed of large low mounds, of secondary importance to A-Group.

The third group, C, is an irregularly oriented collection of 9 mounds, crowning the top of a hill northeast of B-Group, and separated from the East Plaza of the latter by a steep-sided ravine. It contains no stela.

These three groups comprise the portions of Uaxactun west of the aguada. East of it are the two widely scattered groups D and F and the compactly built temple-plaza unit called Group E, or the Group of the Solar Observatory. This latter is the site of the excavations carried out by the institution during the past six years, and was chosen for two reasons. (1) The three stelae in its plaza, though not the earliest, still bear very early dates—98 A. D. and 235 A. D. (2) Frans Blom, who visited Uaxactun for the Carnegie Institution in 1924, noted that certain lines of sight from Pyramid VII to Pyramids I, II and III, respectively, corresponded very closely to the amplitudes of the sun at the solstices and the equinoxes. Excavations have proved that the positions of these temples are closely related with these four cardinal markers of the year,

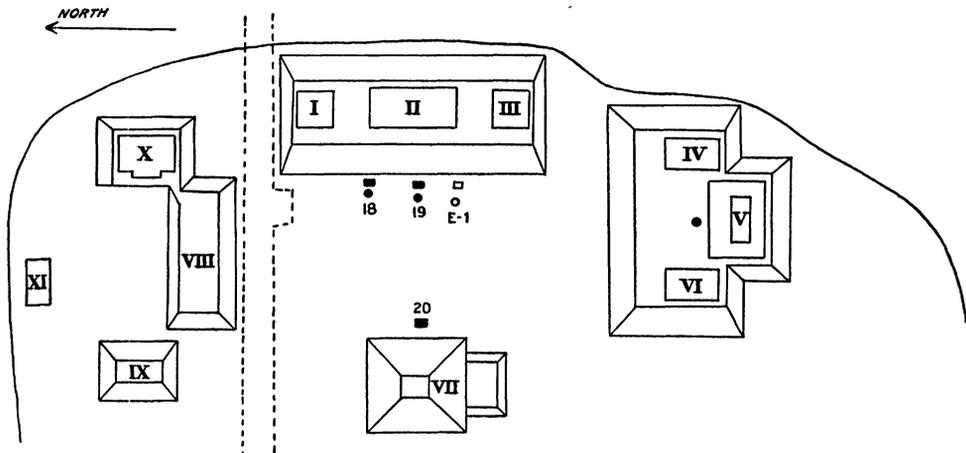


FIG. 4. GROUND PLAN OF GROUP E
SHOWING LOCATION OF THE MAIN TRENCH. THIS GROUP COMPRISES ELEVEN MOUNDS, GROUPED AROUND ONE MAIN PLAZA.

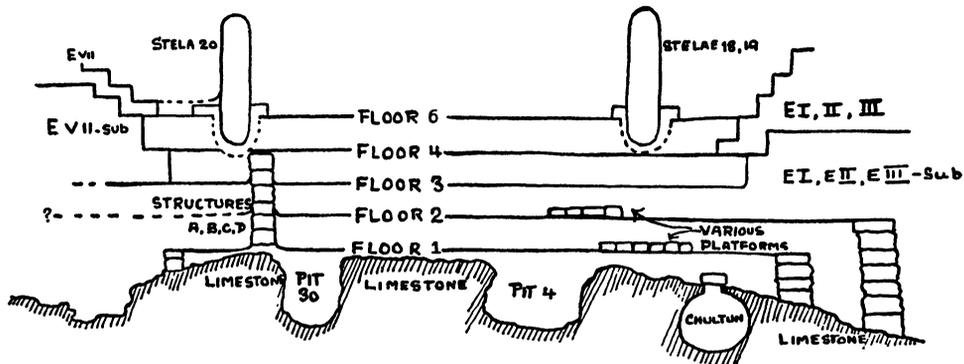


FIG. 5. DIAGRAMMATIC CROSS-SECTION OF E-PLAZA

SHOWING SUPERPOSITION OF PLAZA FLOORS. FLOOR 5 HAS BEEN OMITTED. STELA 20, DATED 235 A. D.; STELAE 18, 19, DATED 98 A. D.

probably for purposes of geomancy rather than for actual observation in a modern astronomic sense.

The group was also chosen for excavation because of its compactness, which would permit its thorough examination in a period of five years.

An examination of the map (Fig. 4) shows that this group comprises eleven mounds, grouped around one Main Plaza and a smaller North Court. All but one are in complete ruin.

Temples I, II and III surmount a 15-foot mound, closing the main plaza on the East; Temples IV, V and VI surmount a similar mound, closing the main plaza on the south; Pyramid VII stands solitary on the west. It was from a position on the stairway leading up to this structure that the lines-of-site to I, II and III marked the cardinal points of the year. On the north the plaza is closed by a long, enigmatic mound, VIII, whose adjacent structures, IX on the west and X on the east, enclose, with the aid of Pyramid XI on the north, the North Court. Temple X is partially standing, a condition found elsewhere in Uaxactun only at A-XVIII.

Temples I, II and III were those first excavated. These were found to consist of an outer and inner room, the latter invariably containing a low masonry

altar. In the floors of all these temples were small circular cists with caches of two types; one type consisting of two flat-bottomed redware dishes with flaring rims, laid the one inverted over the other, containing in the space between them a human skull. Inasmuch as the first few cervical vertebrae were found beneath each skull, it is evident that the head must have been severed from the body—and that we therefore are not dealing with a secondary skull burial, but with human sacrifice.

The second type of cache consisted of a small cylindrical jar, generally lidded and barrel-shaped, which often contained a red powder—hematite—or a stone object. The most striking object found in this type of cache was a small archaic green mudstone human figurine, represented as squatting. This figurine has been called crude because early and therefore primitive, and it has been called crude because late and therefore degenerate. There is no doubt in my mind that it is primitive, but its manufacture long anteceded the erection of the temple in which it was found.

Opposite the three temples just described stood Temple VII. This steep-sided pyramid originally stood 50 feet high, but the dilapidated character of its masonry precluded the determination of

any architectural features other than that a stone-balustraded stairway once ascended its east face; just how far we do not know, for unlike the usual Maya pyramid, this was not a substructure mound with a flat top whereon a temple was erected. It continued up to a more or less sharp peak (Fig. 7).

As excavations proceeded around the base of this pyramid in a vain effort to find definite remains of wall stones *in situ*, a hard, perfectly preserved stucco surface was found directly beneath it,

which upon further investigation revealed itself as an earlier pyramid completely covered over and preserved by the later one. This pyramid was called E-VII-sub and was eventually found to consist of a low terraced platform ascended on all four sides by stairways (Fig. 8). On its top sat another platform, access to whose top was had by only one stairway on the front or east.

All these stairways—five in number—were flanked by grotesque stucco masks built up over stone cores—the four

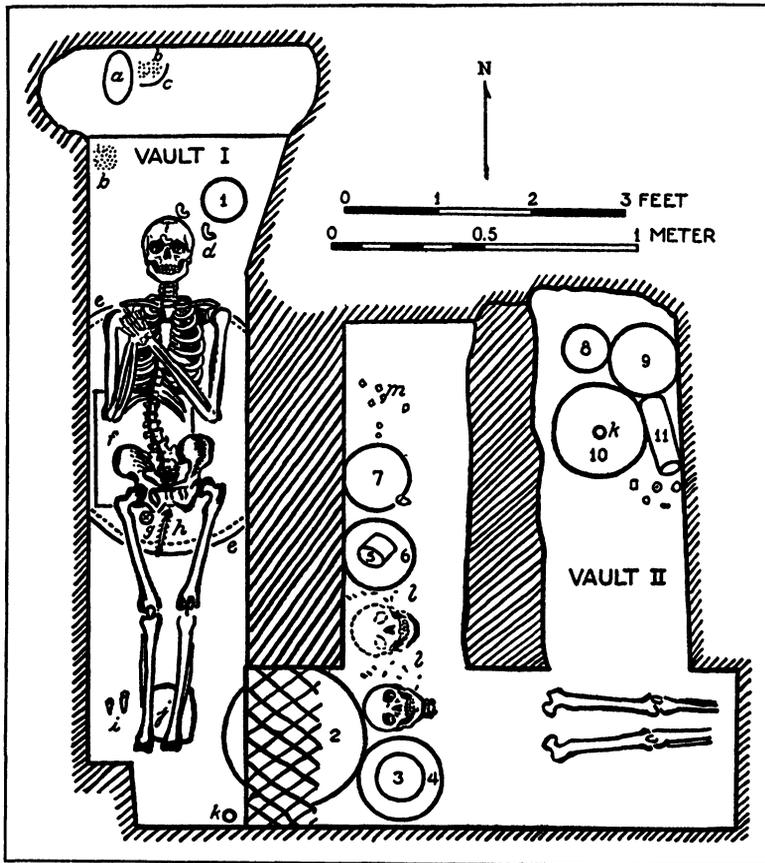


FIG. 6. DIAGRAM SHOWING THE BURIAL VAULTS AND THE LOCATION OF THEIR CONTENTS.

A, FRAGMENTARY SKULL OF LARGE MAMMAL. B, B, CARVED PIECES OF BONE PIERCED FOR USE IN A NECKLACE. C, FRAGMENT OF POTTERY VESSEL. D, SEA SHELLS. E, E, AREA OF CHARRED WOOD UNDERLYING SKELETON. F, HOLE BELOW CHARRED WOOD AREA. G, LARGE JADE BEAD. H, TAIL OF STING-RAY. I, DEER ANTLER. J, LARGE RECTANGULAR BONE (TURTLE?). K, K, JADE BEADS. L, L, HUMAN TEETH. M, IRON OXIDE. 1-11, POTTERY VESSELS.

main stairways of the supporting platform having two such masks on either side, the single stairway of the upmost platform having but one. There are therefore 18 masks in all, the general design of which does not conform to what we may call Classical Maya, but is yet so Maya in feeling that we have referred to it as Primitive Maya. These masks, roughly eight feet square, all represent grotesque human faces with open slit-like mouths in which exaggerated teeth are shown. Their general expression is one of ferocity. They have all a rolled ornament over the nose, and a broad band across the face at the level of the nostrils, reminiscent of a nose plug. Perhaps they carry a suggestion of the rain-god Tlaloc. Masks of similar motif, but broken down into greater conventionality, have been reported by Merwin from Holmul, a near-by ruin with which certain periods of Uaxactun pottery are to be associated, as we shall see.

Important as this discovery of an extremely early type of Maya architecture may be, the scientific importance of less spectacular excavations is even greater. This resulted from the sinking of an elaborated network of trenches into the very plaza itself. The photographs of these trenches will give some idea of their size—the first one, that of the main north-south trench—shows us how this trench appeared at the conclusion of the 1929 season (Fig. 9). It has been dug down through six superimposed plaza floors, the one overlying the other.

The six plaza floors extending across the plaza were found to overlay a deposit, varying in depth, of a black earth (Fig. 5). Beneath this was the basic limestone, so that we are more than reasonably certain that in this case we have reached bedrock.

The inferences from these trenching

operations may be summarized as follows:

(1) Pits and bottle-shaped chambers called *chultuns* were found artificially excavated by the Mayas in the solid limestone at depths of 15 feet below the present plaza surface.

(2) All soil from limestone up to the present surface bore traces of man's presence in one form or another—such as burials, worked shell or flint or obsidian, and broken fragments of pottery.

(3) The lowest layer, the so-called Black Dirt, underlying the main plaza floors, is a refuse bed—a typical midden type of deposit formed by the gradual accumulation of vegetable debris, such as thatching for roofs and the debris from long occupancy by man.

(4) The lowest plaza floor is to be associated with a plaza much smaller, as compared with the latest plaza; on it are rectangular platforms presumably the foundations for the earliest structures. Whether these were of wood or of stone, they had been razed to make way for the later plaza expansions.

(5) The six plaza pavings occur directly superimposed the one upon another. From the lack of debris accumulation between these superimposed floors we assume that the period involved in their construction need not have been long. As compared with the Black Dirt accumulation, the period may well have been relatively short.

(6) The period of construction of E-VII-sub corresponds with the laying of the second and third floors of the plaza.

(7) The period of construction of E-VII outer corresponds with the laying of the fourth, fifth and sixth floors.

(8) The erection of Stelae 18 and 19, both dated 98 A. D., and that of Stela 20, dated 235 A. D., loses much positive significance, in that their floor-relations indicate these monuments to have been

erected simultaneously. In other words, the earlier ones must have been removed from their original locations. In the case of Stela 20, dated 235 A. D., we can say with some assurance that it probably marks the latest possible date for the construction of E-VII outer.

The true significance of these excavations, however, lies in the definite development of the first pottery stratification for this area, as worked out by Mrs. Ricketson. And here we are back again on firmer ground. There are three main types:

I. Uaxactun I—an early or “archaic” type. This type is found only in the Black Dirt stratum and is characterized by the following types:

- (a) large ollas of unslipped orange-red ware, design in brown wash, thinly applied.
- (b) small ollas of polished black ware with incised cross-hatchings gen-

erally in diamond and half-diamond designs.

- (c) Round bottomed bowls, some spouted, with horizontal fluting around the neck.
- (d) Flat-bottomed dishes, having everted rims with horizontal, parallel incisal lines.
- (e) figurines—of definitely “archaic” characteristics, which are always modeled, never moulded or cast.

II. Uaxactun II. Middle Period. This corresponds to Holmul III. It is characterized by wide-mouthed dishes, with a basal bevel or flange, in polished black ware or with complicated polychrome designs on the exterior.

III. Uaxactun III. A late period. Corresponds to Holmul V. It is characterized by:

- (1) tripod dishes, with rattle legs;
- (2) shallow plates (some with tripod

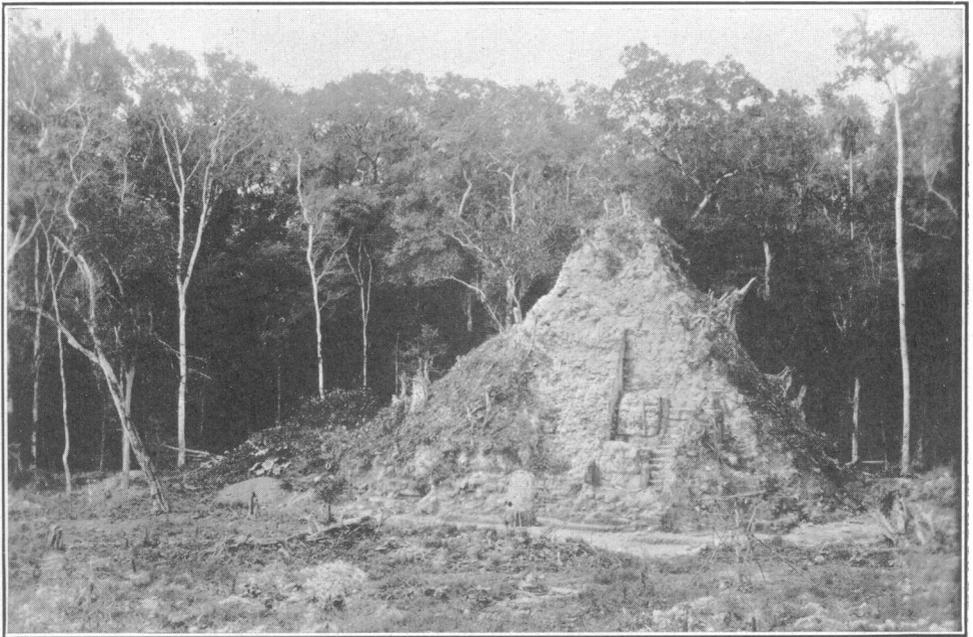


FIG. 7. TEMPLE E-VII, UAXACTUN

AT CLOSE OF THE 1927 SEASON. THE TWO MASKS VISIBLE BELONG TO AN UNDERLYING PYRAMID, E-VII-SUB. STELA No. 20, DATED 235 A. D., IS SEEN AT FRONT.

support) with polychrome design on interior;

- (3) cylindrical vases with polychrome design on exterior, consisting of glyph-band and life figures.

This pottery sequence at Uaxactun seems to indicate an early influence from the south, Salvador and Nicaragua, a local development, and a later influence coming from the north or highlands of Guatemala. The nearest relationships for the Uaxactun I figurines are seen in those from the Ulua Valley, though there is also a resemblance, not so close, with the figurines from the Finca Arevalo, Guatemala.

When I mentioned Temple A-I, I said that it was the site of an important pot-

tery cache found by Mr. Robert Smith in 1931. The cache consisted of eleven magnificent polychrome pots from a grave vault (Fig. 6). These are all of Uaxactun III period, that is, polychrome designs often with glyph-bands and life figures. I shall here describe seven of the more important of these vessels.

The first of these vessels is a simple bowl, six inches in diameter, and 3.6 inches deep, of polished orange-red ware with a conventionalized design in red and brown in four bands horizontally around the rim and sides; the second, a similar polychrome bowl, 6 inches in diameter and 6 inches deep, with the addition of black to the colors already mentioned. The third is a polychrome

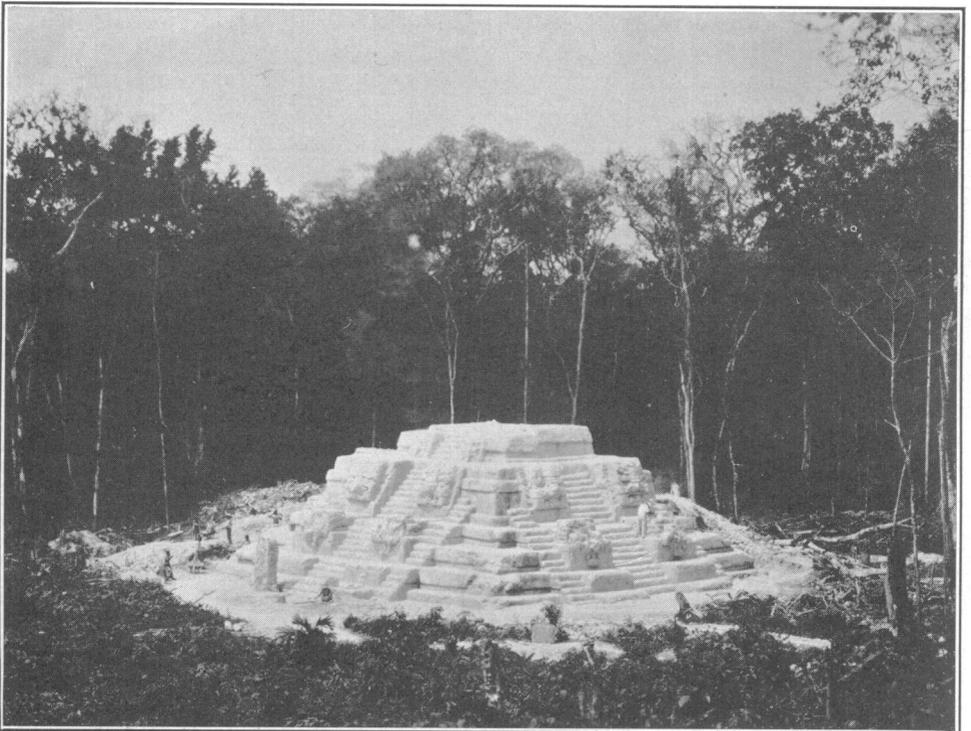


FIG. 8. E-VII-SUB.

THIS PYRAMID WAS BUILT OF UNCUT STONE AND FACED WITH DAZZLING, WHITE STUCCO. FOUR MAIN STAIRWAYS LEAD TO THE TOP. FLANKING THESE ARE COLOSSAL MASKS OF FINE, LIME STUCCO, FASHIONED IN THE LIKENESS OF GROTESQUE HUMAN HEADS. STELA E-20, AT LEFT, BEARS THE DATE OF 235 A. D.



FIG. 9. TRENCHES IN E-PLAZA

AT THE CLOSE OF THE 1929 FIELD SEASON. LATER THESE WERE DUG DOWN THROUGH SIX SUPERIMPOSED PLAZA FLOORS.

bowl, 7.5 inches in diameter and 2.7 inches deep, but with only black and red on the orange background, and with two vertical areas of red instead of the horizontal bands seen on the others.

A fourth vessel from this cache is a shallow bowl with an orange slip on the inside, unslipped and unpainted on the outside, measuring 12.25 inches in diameter and about 3 inches deep. The painted design on the interior consists of a narrow black and a broader red band around the rim, and a central figure in red outlined with black which is not identifiable, though it has some resemblance to the head and forelegs of a turtle emerging from an area of red curlicues.

A fifth vessel is a shallow, flanged tripod dish, 18.2 inches in diameter, unslipped and unpainted exteriorly but bearing on the interior an elaborate design in red and black on a buff background (Fig. 10). The flattened, slightly everted rim (2" wide) is painted solid red for half the circumference; the

other half has black spots, simulating the spots of a jaguar, on buff. Within the rim, the concavity of the plate pitches more steeply for a distance of two inches. It is set off from the rim proper by a heavy black line. This surface is painted solid red for half the circumference; the other half shows five series of hieroglyphs outlined in black but painted red.

Within these two rim areas are two concentric heavy black lines which enclose the main artistic effort . . . a boldly, if carelessly, executed picture, also in black and red, depicting full face on the right a man in regalia with a javelin or staff, looking left. The body of a serpent divides the remaining surface into an upper and a lower portion. In the upper portion, facing left, are four human figures in profile. The first on the right carries a stick; the second holds the tail of a jaguar whose body fills the lower left quadrant of the dish, below the serpent's body. Both of these human figures are standing. The third



FIG. 10. A SHALLOW, FLANGED TRIPOD DISH FROM VAULT II

ITS EXTERIOR IS UNPAINTED; ITS INTERIOR BEARS AN ELABORATE DESIGN IN RED AND BLACK ON A BUFF BACKGROUND.

and fourth figures, however, are kneeling and hold before them in their hands a monkey each.



FIG. 11. A SHALLOW BOWL

14 INCHES IN DIAMETER, ALSO FROM VAULT II. THE FIGURE IS THAT OF A MAN POISED AS THOUGH ENGAGED IN A POSTURING DANCE. THE HOLE THROUGH THE MIDDLE INDICATES THAT IT WAS CEREMONIALLY "KILLED," POSSIBLY TO RELEASE THE SPIRIT OF THE VESSEL TO ACCOMPANY THE SPIRIT OF THE DEPARTED OWNER.

The lower portion of the dish depicts the body of the jaguar already mentioned on the left; another jaguar approaches from behind the large human figure in regalia, which we first mentioned as filling the whole right-hand area. Both jaguars give the impression that they are stalking or even springing at a central human figure, apparently unclad, which is shown in profile and head down between them, in what, for lack of a better word, we may describe as an acrobatic position . . . arm on the ground, head bent back so that the face looks to the left, the body rising in a column above, and the legs flexed at the knee so that the feet hang down.

As already said, the whole has been done with boldness; in spite of its obvious complication, it leaves small areas around the periphery blank; the scene depicted is certainly ceremonial, the full face figure on the right being the master of ceremonies, the "acrobatic figure" perhaps being a corpse thrown to the jaguars. If this figure represented a form of the Diving God, one would expect it to wear insignia. Tricklets of tears from its closed eye would seem to indicate that the individual was either dead or not enjoying the prospect.

A sixth dish, 14 inches in diameter, with tripod legs, also unslipped and unpainted on the exterior, shows a central human figure in red and black on an orange-buff background (Fig. 11). The rim area is demarcated by outer and inner concentric red and black borders, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart, containing between them a series of non-calendric hieroglyphs painted free hand in black.

The human figure represents a man standing erect, full face, toes apart, with a large non-feather headdress and a highly deformed skull. His left arm and shoulder are raised, the palm extending outward, the long fingers pointing down. His right arm, rigid, is held

down slightly away from the body, the hand and fingers bent inwards and upwards. Feet, legs, torso and arms are red; the face, except for the region around the eyes and mouth, which are orange-red, is left the buff color of the background, as are the thighs. These latter give the appearance of being clad in puffy doublets supported by black and red sashes whose half dozen ends swirl out around the legs. Nothing can describe the position of this figure better than to say that it probably depicts some posturing dance at a moment when the arm-action is semaphoric in its rigid-

white slip, and painted outside, the design showing against a red background. Around the rim, beneath a band of red .3 inches wide, is a cream-colored band .9 inches wide bearing hieroglyphic figures outlined in black and painted for the most part red, with some pale orange. Below this band there are represented six figures, five human and one jaguar. The chief figure is represented seated cross-legged on a dais, full face, but with the head facing left. Behind it stands a smaller figure, dressed in black, bearing before him as an offering some object in his hands. Behind this figure stands

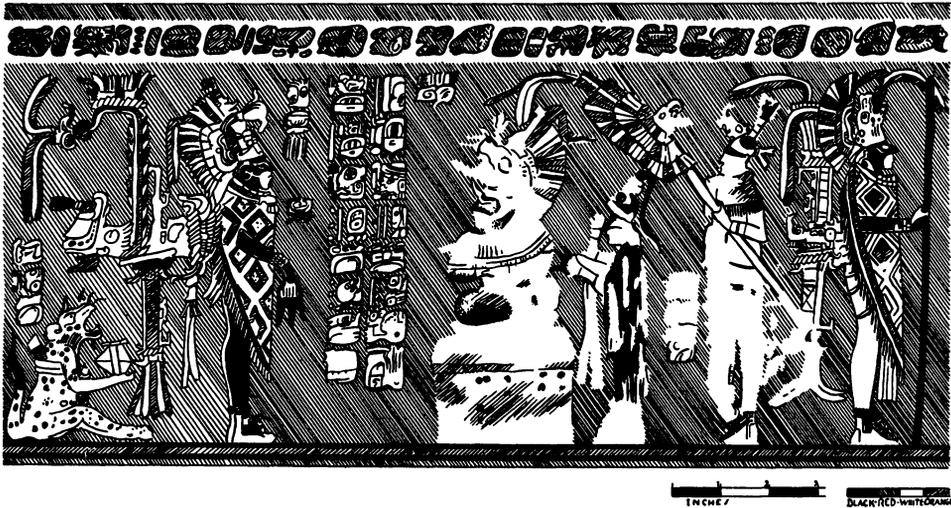


FIG. 12. A CYLINDRICAL JAR

9 INCHES HIGH AND NEARLY 6 INCHES IN DIAMETER, FOUND IN VAULT I. THIS PICTURE REPRESENTS IT AS CUT FROM TOP TO BOTTOM AND FLATTENED OUT. THE JAR IS DECORATED WITH A COMPLICATED DESIGN SHOWING AGAINST A RED BACKGROUND. NOTE THE DOUBLE ROW OF DATE GLYPHS AT LEFT OF THE SEATED FIGURE. THIS IS THE FIRST SERIES OF SUCH GLYPHS EVER FOUND ON ANY MEDIUM OTHER THAN STONE OR STUCCO. ACCORDING TO ONE SYSTEM, 120 B. C. IS THE DATE REPRESENTED; ACCORDING TO ANOTHER, 140 A. D. IS INDICATED.

ity. That this piece was ceremonially "killed" is indicated by the hole in the center.

The most interesting vase from this cache, and the last, is a cylindrical jar measuring 9 inches in height and nearly 6 inches in diameter (Fig. 12). It is slipped inside and out with a cream-

a third, larger one, bearing a ceremonial staff, which he holds over the heads of the other two; the staff carries a panache of feather work at the extremity and was intended perhaps for shade as well as for regalia of office. These three figures all face left; they are unfortunately in a poor state of preservation,

the slip having peeled off, perhaps because this side was nearest the burial itself.

Facing them stand the other two figures, and the jaguar, sitting; but between the foremost of these figures and the chief seated figure we have already described is a double row of calendric hieroglyphs, eight in a column, or sixteen altogether. The first of the figures facing the seated figure is a man standing, with an elaborate feather headdress and a fringed apron-like garment extending from his neck to below his knees. His right forearm extends through this apron and he holds in his hand a small, tridentate object, the points down, resembling an eccentric flint. His skin is represented as painted black on the arm, legs and face, except for an area around the mouth, which is left cream. Behind him, as though attached at a point just below the shoulders, is a cruciform design representing a feathered serpent, whose head and jaws face left. Beneath and behind him the sitting jaguar is represented holding in his outstretched right paw two flaring rimmed dishes, the one inverted over the other, and tied together with a band.

The last figure is similar to the one last described, the essential difference being that he holds upright a plain staff in his right hand. His headdress involves a jaguar head as well as featherwork, and a less elaborate, conventionalized feathered serpent is shown behind him also, as though attached to the small of the back. All these figures stand on a narrow cream-colored band just above the bottom of the vase. Four series of non-calendric hieroglyphs are shown in juxtaposition to the various figures.

The calendric hieroglyphs, reading from left to right and from top to bot-

tom, give us the date 7. 5. 0. 0. 0. 8 Ahau 13 Kankin. Unfortunately, this seventh cycle date can not be contemporaneous, because the vase belongs stylistically to the latest period at Uaxactun. We might infer then that the date referred back to some past event in history wherein two ambassadors appeared before a king or noble. But unfortunately the fifth katun of the seventh cycle does not fall on 8 Ahau 13 Kankin, so that it is quite evident that the potter himself made a mistake when he put on this Initial Series.

Maya hieroglyphs and their systems of bar and dot numeration being what they are, several solutions have been offered in an effort to determine the date that was actually meant. Dr. S. G. Morley adds one dot to the cycle, making it read 8. 5. 0. 0. 0; this falls on 12 Ahau 13 Kankin, so that the only other correction necessary is to change the one bar and three dots of the day-sign Ahau to two bars and two dots. This system has the merit of merely changing the numerations and not the glyphs, but on the whole it is very difficult for us, almost two thousand years later, to decide just exactly what date was meant, and, in this case anyway, the importance is not so great, inasmuch as the contemporaneity of the manufacture of the pot and the date 7. 5. 0. 0. 0 is out of the question.

The description of this cache concludes my remarks on the excavations carried out during the past six years at Uaxactun. I hope that the future excavations, which will be under the direct charge of Mr. Ledyard Smith, will uncover other caches of equal beauty and importance; perhaps it is one of the fascinations of archeology that nobody can predict what the removal of the next spadeful may reveal.