

## Article XI.—THE TEMPLE OF TEPOZTLAN, MEXICO.

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PLATES V-IX.

### INTRODUCTION.

This old temple, called by the Indians "La casa del Tepozteco," has remained unknown to others until a few months ago.<sup>1</sup> The existence of tombs in this region is indicated in the archæological map of the Republic of Mexico, published by Leopold Batres in 1886, but no data is to be found bearing upon this temple.

It is due to the enthusiasm of Mr. Francisco Rodriguez, a young civil engineer, and a native of Tepoztlan, that we are now able to give a description of this most interesting structure. During the months of August and September of the past year, Mr. Rodriguez was engaged in the excavation of the temple with a large force of Indians who voluntarily gave their services, and to-day take great pride in the result of their labor.

Mr. Rodriguez read an account of his explorations before the Congreso de Americanistas, held in Mexico during the month of October, last autumn.<sup>2</sup> A résumé was published in a small paper recently started in the town of Tepoztlan, under the title 'El Grano de Arena,' in the first number, which appeared Feb. 15, 1896. This paper publishes with each number several columns of matter in the Nahuatl language.

The town of Tepoztlan is situated in the State of Morelos, about twelve miles northeast of Cuernavaca, the capital of the State. It is at the extreme northeastern limit of the extensive Valley of Cuernavaca, at the southwestern border of which are situated the famous ruins of Xochicalco. It may be easily reached from the City of Mexico by two routes; the first being by the Mexican, Cuernavaca and Pacific Railroad, which now terminates at Tres Marias, but will in the near future be extended to Cuernavaca. At the present time a lumbering stage-coach is used

<sup>1</sup> This paper was read before Section H of the A. A. S. at the Buffalo meeting, August, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> This account will appear in the Report of the Congress, now being printed by the Department of Justice and Public Instruction, of Mexico.

to traverse the distance. At Cuernavaca it is necessary to take mules for a rough ride of about twelve miles to Tepoztlan.

The other route is by the Interoceanic Railroad to Yautepec, a most picturesque ride, passing in close proximity to the base of Popocatepetl, and winding through the fertile valley of Cuautla. From Yautepec mules are taken for an ascending ride of ten or twelve miles to Tepoztlan.

By the first route the journey is through the Cuernavaca Valley; by the second, through the Cuautla Valley. Tepoztlan being located on elevated ground between rugged cliffs which divide the two valleys, commands a view of both, a most strategic site for a town, and easily defended from invaders.

This locality is in the nature of a plain inclining from west to east, protected at the north and south by bold and rugged mountains. The cliffs rising to the south of the town are less imposing and much easier to climb.

It was among the sheltered spots here that the ancients built their tombs, several of which have been found, being in the form of stone-lined cysts. The most prominent peak of this southern range is at the western end, towering high above the rest, guarding, as it were, the Cuernavaca Valley. This mountain is named Chalchihuitepetl, or hill of the Chalchihuite, the sacred green stone of ancient Mexico and Central America. There are said to be old quarries on the southern side of the mountain which have not yet been investigated.

The imposing cliffs which rise to the north of the town present the aspect of buttes, from the recesses of which break forth springs of water which unite in one stream and flow through the town, affording a never-failing source of water to the inhabitants.

It is a most picturesque spot, and formerly must have supported a large population, many aboriginal relics abounding, some of which have been gathered together and placed in a building set apart by the municipality for a museum.

The people living here are lineal descendants of the Aztecs; at no place in Mexico is the sonorous Nahuatl language spoken with greater purity, or old customs adhered to with greater tenacity, the people taking great pride in their ancestry.

The population is between five and six thousand, and although there are eight churches, only one priest presides over them all. During feast days the sounds of the old wooden drum, the Tepoztli, and the clay flute, the Chirimia, are still heard.

We have here the interesting spectacle of a town of almost pure aboriginal blood, almost unknown in the City of Mexico, and within a day's journey of the same, possessing a museum for the preservation of the antiquities of their ancestors, and publishing a paper in both Spanish and Nahuatl.

I visited the place last April in company with Mr. Rodriguez, whose services were of the greatest value, and through his assistance in securing Indians to carry my photographic instrument and refreshments, I was able to spend an entire day at the ruin. I secured photographs of the temple, but the air was so filled with smoke from burning brush, that it was impossible to take good general views of the landscape.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE.

On one of the most inaccessible peaks of the northern range of mountains, at a point which commands a view of the whole region, was erected the old temple. It can be barely discerned from the town, and the ascent to the summit of the peak is arduous, and in some places, dangerous.

After leaving the town, the ascent is constantly upward until the base of the cliffs is reached, upon which, nearly two thousand feet above, is the temple. We enter a long cañon, and begin the difficult part of the ascent. Climbing upward we often encounter long flights of steps, some merely cut out of the solid rock, while others are stones placed to form steps. The appearances indicate that there was once a continuous flight, but many of the steps have been washed away by the torrents of water which flow through here during the rainy season. On the vertical walls which rise on either side are several inscriptions carved in the rock.

About half the distance up the mountain we wind around the cliff and begin the most difficult part of the ascent. In some places for nearly one hundred feet the ascent is nearly vertical, steps

being cut in the rock and in other places masonry being built to support the steps.

When Mr. Rodriguez began his explorations he found it necessary to place ladders in two places, as the cañon is blocked by fallen boulders.

The last three or four hundred feet are really dangerous; a false step would precipitate one to certain death. A few men at these points could successfully resist the invasion of hundreds.

Reaching the summit we find an irregular surface divided in two parts, connected by a narrow neck; upon the western one is the temple. The eastern part contains the vestiges of low walls and terraces, occupying nearly the entire area. These may be the remains of the houses of the priests, the guardians of the sacred spot. To the back rises a cliff clothed with pine trees; this cliff can only be reached from this place. Mr. Rodriguez found water here. Until last fall the temple was simply a mound in which terraces might be discerned. It rises above the base upon which the foundations were placed to the height of twenty meters, and nearly covers the entire surface of the point, which slopes sharply from the centre to the eastern end. This point is about thirty meters in length, from east to west, and nineteen meters in width.

The eastern end of the temple shows a structure composed of four parts; the lowest is simply a rude foundation built against the sloping surface of the peak. It is built of rough stones cemented together, and may have been covered with cement, but it has now entirely disappeared. This serves as a foundation for the second part, which is the foundation proper; it is in the form of a truncated pyramid, the sides rising at a vertical slant of fifteen degrees. The western surface of the peak was leveled in its construction, and the remains of its western and northern edges form a fort-like structure, which rises about two meters above the base of the pyramid.

Against the eastern side of the pyramid are the remains of a steep flight of steps which led to the top. Near the southern side, a little removed from the base, are the low walls of several chambers rising to the height of 1 meter 25 centimeters. Resting upon the lower pyramid is a smaller one of the same form, the base of which is reached by a steep flight of steps built against the western end of the lower structure.

Ascending these steps we reach the level platform and are in front of the old temple, which faced the west. In the centre of this platform are the remains of a small, square platform with serrated corners, which was once used as the sacrificial altar. The smaller pyramid served as the foundation for the building, which is reached by a steep flight of steps, twelve in number; the upper half was destroyed by the fall of the front wall of the building.

The temple is slightly smaller than the pyramid, leaving a narrow ledge on the four sides, just wide enough to walk upon. The outer walls are 1 meter 90 centimeters in thickness, composed of rubble stone strongly cemented together, and rising to the height of 2 meters 50 centimeters. Nothing remains of the front wall, with the exception of two low, square columns, showing a wide central doorway with a narrow one on either side. The temple is divided into two rooms, the outer one being 6 meters long, from north to south, and 3 meters 73 centimeters wide, from east to west. The roof had fallen in, filling the rooms with *débris*, but the excavations of Mr. Rodriguez revealed an almost level arch.

At either end of the front room was a narrow bench or seat, built against the wall. In the centre of the chamber Mr. Rodriguez found the remains of a raised rectangular platform, probably the place where the sacred fire was lighted, as fragments of copal and charcoal were found in the *débris*.

The pilasters forming the sides of the doorway leading to the inner chamber are covered with stucco, and are highly ornamented; the lower portions are decorated with a fluting, above which is seen the familiar fret found at Mitla. Above this is what appears to have been the representation of the sun symbol, the lower part only being preserved.

The doorway is 1 meter 90 centimeters wide, and the inner wall is 90 centimeters in thickness. The inner chamber is 6 meters long and 5 meters 20 centimeters wide. Running around three sides of the room is a bench faced with carved stones; this bench is 64 centimeters high and 42 centimeters wide. The upper part projects, forming a slight coping; the top was covered with cement. The coping is inscribed with chronological signs, while the lower part has four ideographs at each end. The exact number on the side of the room cannot be determined, as the bench

here is somewhat destroyed. In the centre of the bench, at the back wall, Mr. Rodriguez found the remains of an altar, and two carved fragments, one painted red, the other in the shape of a crown; there, probably, was placed the idol.

The carving in this room was finely executed, and traces of the red paint, which once covered them, can still be seen. The walls were covered with a smooth cement, showing traces of red, blue, black and yellow paint. The whole structure was carefully erected, the lines of the pyramid being accurately proportioned. The work of transporting the material used must have been enormous. In the explorations potsherds, stone implements, and several small stone death's heads were found.

The most important feature of this ruin is the hieroglyphic inscription which was found in the southern side of the lower pyramid; here were discovered two stone tablets about two feet in diameter; these were removed and are now in the town. The first tablet contains the hieroglyphic representation of the mythical animal Ahuizotl or water rat; it was the sign of the Emperor Ahuizotl, the seventh Aztec monarch, who ruled, according to Mexican chronology, from 1486 to 1502, preceding Montezuma. He was a man of energy and a bloodthirsty ruler. He extended the limits of the empire, completed the temple of Mexico, and erected many buildings. On the second slab is carved a rabbit and ten dots; this is the chronological sign, 10 Tochtli, which corresponds to 1502 of our era. This would seem to establish the date of the erection of the temple in 1502 by Ahuizotl, 17 years before the entry of Cortez into Mexico. The importance of the old temple of Tepoztlan cannot be overestimated, it being the only aboriginal structure still standing in Mexico to which we can probably assign a positive date. As it stands to-day it bears every evidence of antiquity, and one would be inclined to assign it a much greater age.

It is to be hoped that excavations may be continued at this place, which may still further bring to light material of great importance for the student of Aztec remains.

NOTE.—I am under great obligations to Mr. Rodriguez, who has kindly furnished me with a copy of his plan of the Tepoztlan Temple, herewith reproduced.

### EXPLANATION OF PLATES.

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PLATE V.—General view of Temple, looking southwest across the narrow cañon through which the ascent is made.

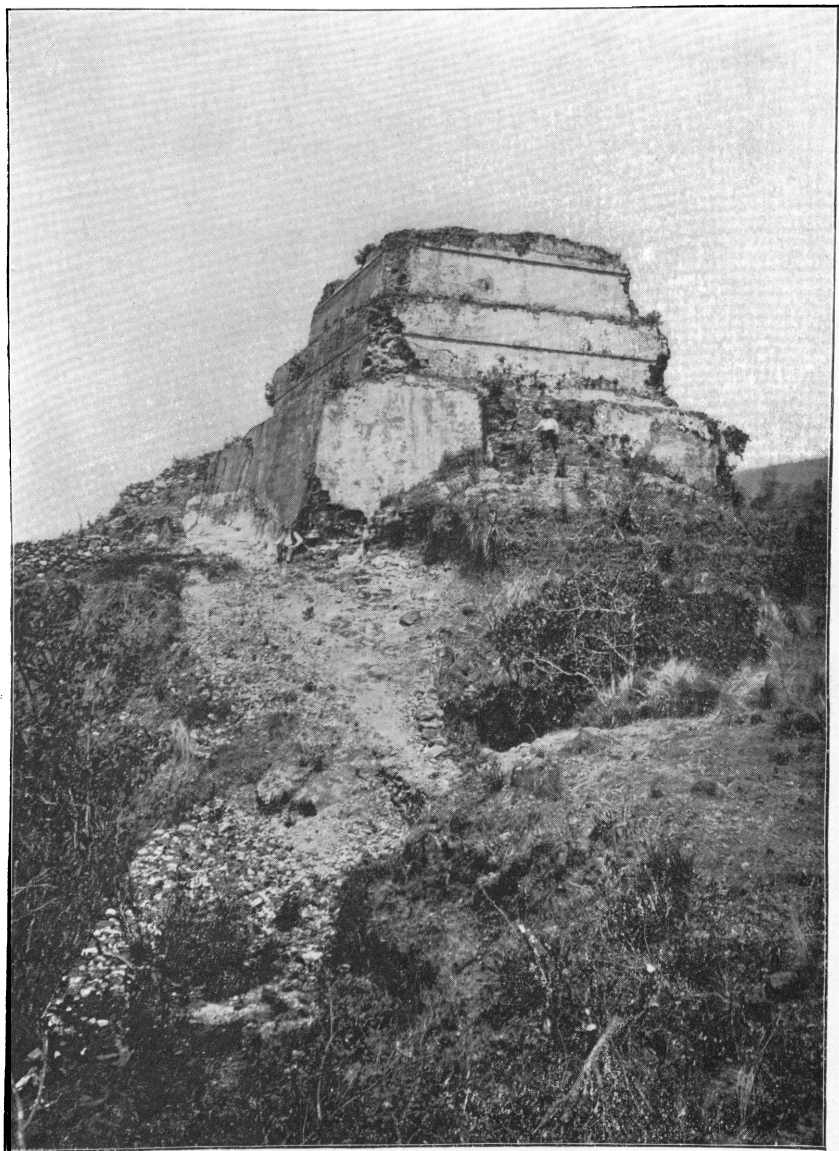
PLATE VI.—View of the Temple, looking northwest.

PLATE VII.—Front of Temple, looking west.

PLATE VIII.—Northern end of inner chamber, showing bench with sculptured front.

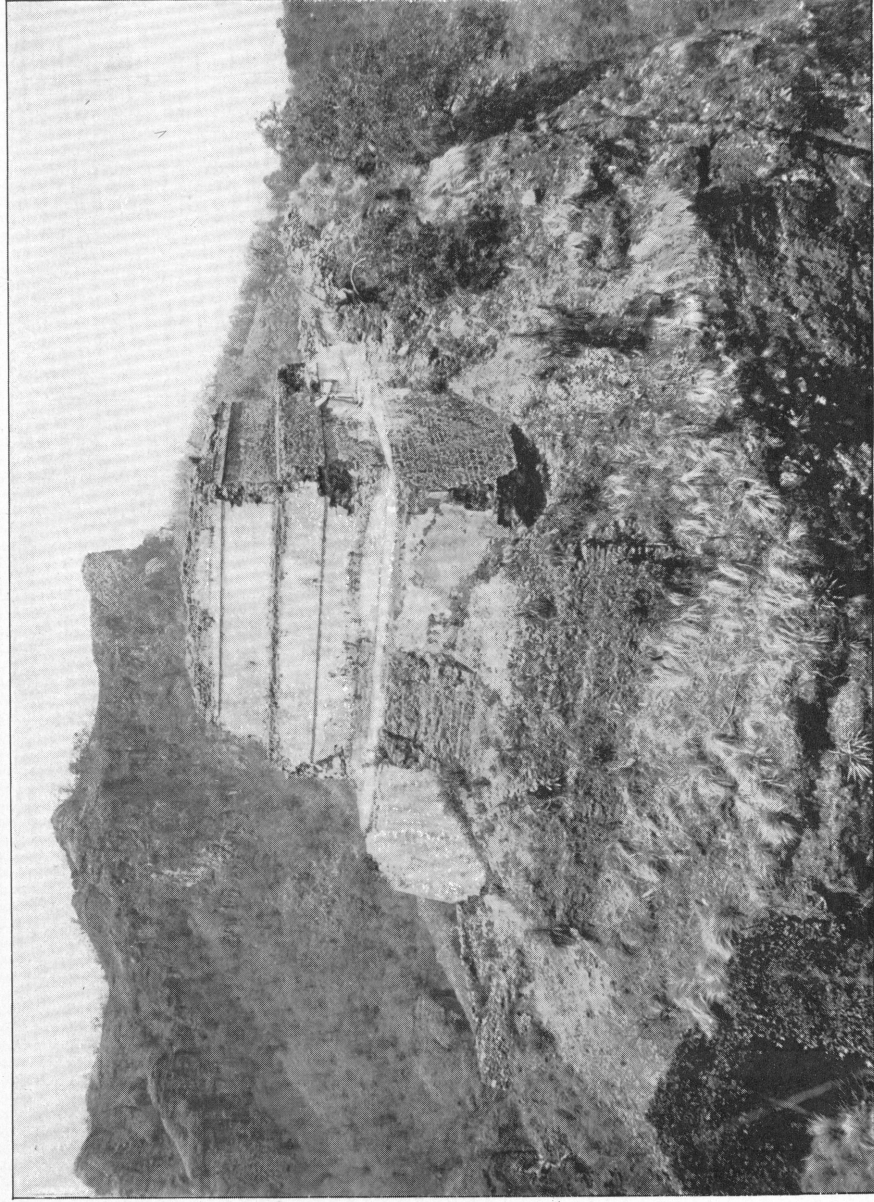
PLATE IX.—Ground Plan of Temple.





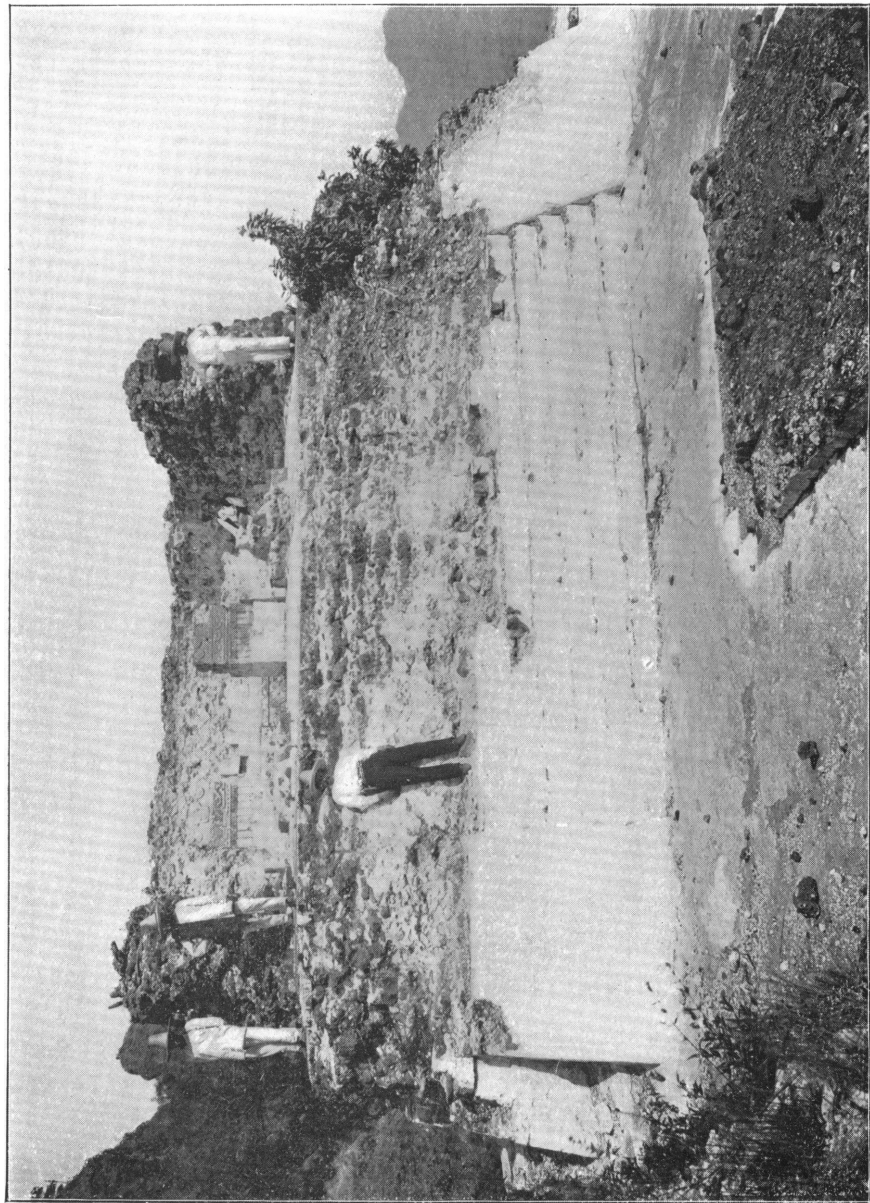
VIEW OF TEMPLE, LOOKING SOUTHWEST.





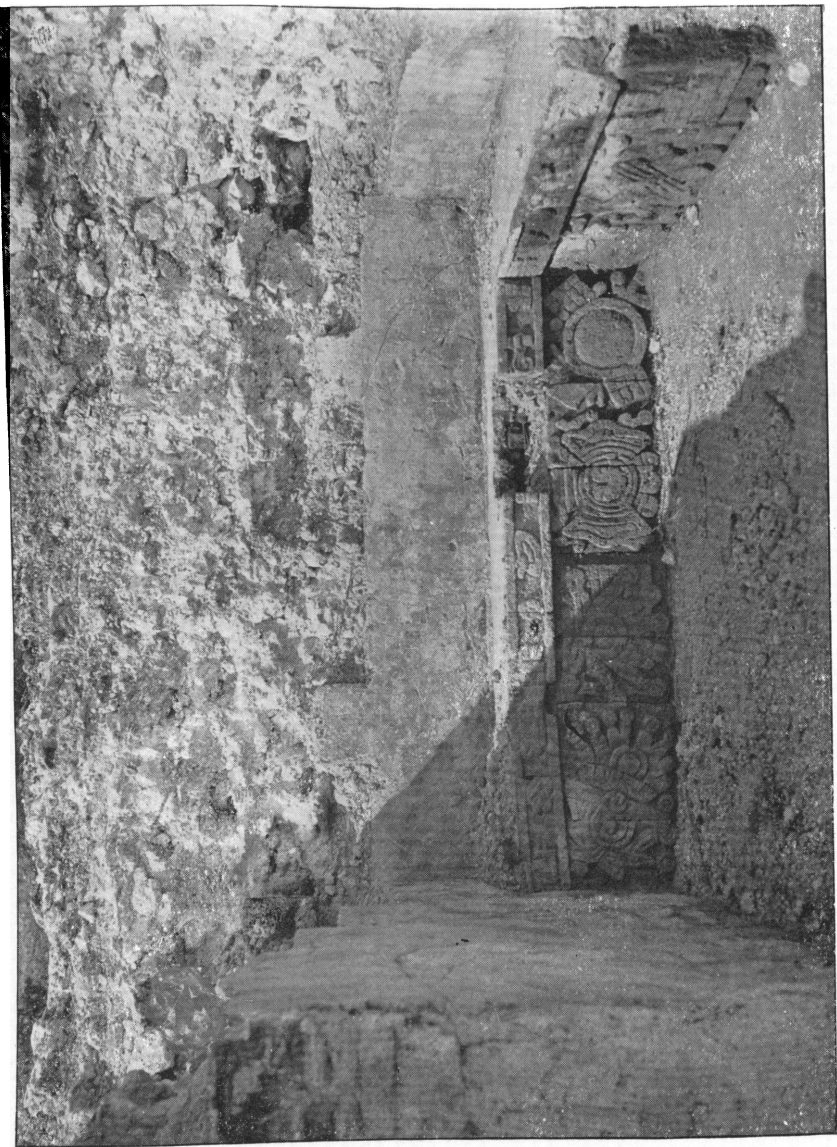
VIEW OF TEMPLE, LOOKING NORTHWEST.





FRONT OF TEMPLE, LOOKING WEST.





NORTHERN END OF INNER CHAMBER OF TEMPLE.



