

**MEMOIRS OF THE PEABODY MUSEUM OF
AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND
ETHNOLOGY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, VOL. II -
NO. 2. RESEARCHES IN THE CENTRAL PORTION
OF THE USUMATSINTLA VALLEY; REPORTS OF
EXPLORATIONS FOR THE MUSEUM. - PART
SECOND; PP. 81-216**

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TEOBERT MALER

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Vol. II—No. 2

RESEARCHES IN THE CENTRAL PORTION
OF THE
USUMATSINTLA VALLEY

REPORTS OF EXPLORATIONS FOR THE MUSEUM.—PART SECOND

BY
TEOBERT MALER

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RESEARCHES IN THE USUMATSINTLA VALLEY.

VII.

EL CAYO.*

To complete my exploration of the country along the Usumatsintla River, I left my residence in Ticul (Yucatan) in the middle of March, 1897, and went by way of Mérida to Progreso. Here, comfortably lodged in the villa of my distinguished friend, Sr. Felix Falla, I awaited the starting of a steamer for Cármen. On the eve of my departure the sad intelligence was received of the decease of the Bishop of Mérida, Dr. Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona, a man of high culture, who had ever honored me with his friendship and whose death I mourn sincerely.

On the 20th of March, 1897, I embarked with my luggage on the steamer "Tabasco," belonging to the firm of Romano. Touching at Campeche on our way, we came without mishap to Cármen, and, taking up my temporary abode here, I awaited an opportunity to cross the Gulf and to sail up the Usumatsintla to Tenosique. On April 3d I succeeded in setting forth in a small steamer, "La Golondrina." The name of the obliging captain of this craft was Berzunza. After a pleasant trip of five days, we arrived at Tenosique, where I hired a small horse to enable me to make the necessary preparations for exploring expeditions fraught with so many difficulties.

My plan was to explore the Usumatsintla from Tenosique upward as far as the ruins of Yáxchilan, and then to return to my starting point to wait until the end of the rainy season. Having engaged five fairly respectable men at twenty-five pesos a month each and maintenance; and having bought the necessary provisions; packed my photographic apparatus; and hired the necessary pack-animals at a high rate from one of the wood-cutting firms, I was able to start on May 16th. In my report on Piedras Negras,† the route from Tenosique to El Cayo,‡ abounding in beautiful scenery, has been described.

* Mexico. Left bank of the Usumatsintla. May, 1897. El Cayo means "the place where the banks are strewn with stones." Cayo is one of the words brought by the Spaniards from Hayti and Cuba.

† In the preceding reports in this volume.

‡ A map of this region is given as Plate I of this volume.

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We reached El Cayo on May 20th. Here, too, the river afforded a magnificent panorama. Emerging from the wild, cleft mountain, the river flows around an island covered with trees and forms an extensive beach, gleaming white in the sun, composed of sand and of broken stones ground smooth. Here the mineralogist can gather an interesting collection containing specimens of all that is buried in the heart of the most distant mountains of Chiapa and Guatemala. Many of these stones are so beautiful that even the natives never fail to take specimens, which they use as paperweights. Many species of stone are found here. I thought I recognized carnelian, syenite, jadeite, opite, hematite, pure white marble of the finest grain, very pretty pieces of petrified wood, etc. These stones, the most of which are extremely hard, are of all colors: white, ash-gray, black, brown, ochre-yellow, green, blood-red, and pink. Many are striped with several colors.

So far we had been on the right shore. But here we had to cross the river, and to enable us to do this a cayuco was sent from the montería which is situated on the opposite shore and belongs to the firm of Valenzuela. The Casa principal — built of posts with palm-leaf roof — lies close to the left embankment. The Encargado of this montería, Don Tránsito Mejenes, received us in a friendly manner and gave me shelter.

Good fortune ordained that in the tracts now strewn with the huts of the wood-cutters, an ancient city once stood which had been so overgrown with trees that it had not been noticed before. The principal building of this city, a temple palace of five temples, lies directly in the rear of the Casa principal. Its eastern, narrow side faces the edge of the high embankment which is very near. It must, however, be noted that the ever turbulent river is at present rapidly eating away the left high embankment, so that in a short time the Casa principal will have to be abandoned; and hence it is natural to suppose that in antiquity this temple must have stood much farther away from the river than at present.

I undertook a detailed exploration of the mound of débris, which was covered with vegetation. In spite of the badly ruined condition of this structure, its unmistakable architectural form could be traced from the remnants of walls, flights of steps, terraces, and chambers. The plan proved to be one seldom met with in the peninsula of Yucatan; but the double temple found in the neighboring El Chile is an evidence that the crowning of the top platform of a pyramidal substructure with two, three, or more temples was not unusual in the Usumatsintla district.

The façade of the whole structure faced the north, and on this side above a terrace is a series of chambers running the whole length, above which is another platform crowned with the temples. On the rear side facing the south there are only broad steps formed of massive stones, and no chambers.