

THE TEMPLE OF THE WARRIORS

The most notable find of the year at Chichen Itzá was the discovery of the serpent-columns and sculptured door-jambs of an earlier temple, which had been partially destroyed and partially incorporated in the northwestern corner of the pyramid supporting the Temple of the Warriors, Station 4 (see p. 283).

A single column of this temple had been exposed last year,¹ but it was not until the excavation of the northwestern corner of the pyramid was commenced at the close of the present season, that these additional façade elements were found.

The two heads and two tails of the pair of feathered-serpent columns, which had stood in the entrance of this earlier temple—all four slightly broken—were recovered, just where they had been built into the hearting of the later pyramid; and in this same rubble fill, arranged in the form of a low bin or rectangular enclosure, were found the sculptured blocks which had formed the two jambs of the same doorway (see plate 1a).

Three painted and sculptured columns belonging to the row behind the serpent columns and a section of the southern wall, 8 feet high, were found *in situ*, all brilliantly painted.

Never before has such vivid coloring been exposed at Chichen Itzá. This early temple must have had a fresh coat of paint shortly before it was destroyed in ancient times, and the rubble hearting of which these blocks formed a part has kept them from sunlight and weathering so that their colors, red, green, black, yellow and blue, seem to be preserved almost at their original values.

One interesting feature noted was that the eyes of the human figures had been deliberately gouged out as though they had been made of some more precious material, which it was desired to save for use elsewhere. This is partially confirmed by the fact that one of the 92 human figures on the columns in the Temple of the Warriors still retains its eye made of an incrustation of mother-of-pearl with the pupil of obsidian or hematite, whereas all the other human figures in this temple had had their eyes gouged out. These blocks were removed to the church at the hacienda for safekeeping and placed in a darkened room.

Scarcely less remarkable was the discovery of a magnificently sculptured and painted dais, 16 feet 6 inches long, 13 feet 2 inches deep, and 2 feet 10 inches high, built against the back wall of the Northwest Colonnade (Station 10) just south of the stairway leading to the Temple of the Warriors.

This dais is almost identical with the one found in 1924 against the back wall of the Northeast Colonnade,² except that the one found this year is in a perfect state of preservation, not a single sculptured element being missing. Without doubt it is one of the most remarkable productions of Maya art yet brought to light at Chichen Itzá.

The cornice or molding shows the same treatment as the corresponding element in the dais in the Northeast Colonnade: pairs of plumed rattlesnakes facing each other, from whose mouths issue human figures visible to the waistline, which in turn face tripod bowls filled with small round cakes of copal incense.

¹ See Year Book No. 24, p. 254.

² Year Book No. 23, p. 212.

Jean Charlot, one of the staff artists, made a color copy of the figures in oil, original size, shortly after the dais was first uncovered and while the pigments still retained much of their original brilliancy. In describing the paintings, he says:

"The most striking feature of this platform is the excellent state of preservation of its paintings. The floor of the altar is painted red like the floor of the temple.

"The cornice presents a group of gods in human shape, holding arrows and *atlalls*.¹ They are seen only to the waistline as they emerge from the open jaws of feathered serpents. They seem to receive the smoke of copal incense offered in painted ceremonial bowls. The snakes are alternately green, black and white with yellow bellies. The background is red and the border blue. The sloping sides of the platform are carved with processions of men, probably warriors and priests, marching from the back wall toward the front and from the sides to the center. These figures vary greatly in costume and attributes. Behind some of them stand rattle-snakes curved in an S shape, while others have headdresses made of blue feathered masks of the Long-nosed God, and carry long ceremonial sticks tipped with flowers.

"The figures also have flowers on their heads, and their short dancing skirts, curved like petals, probably suggest the same *motif*. The background is filled with ornamental devices. The dominant colors are blue, red, yellow, green, black and white. This platform is one of the best-preserved examples of painting combined with sculpture yet found at Chichen Itzá."

In reporting the results of his study of the sculptured columns in the Temple of the Warriors, Mr. Charlot makes some interesting observations on the technique of Mayan artists:

"The columns are made of a relatively soft white limestone, each column being composed of an arbitrary number of square drums, whose height varies from 20 cm. to 1 meter. These drums are joined by lime mortar, and the space between is filled with stucco, modeled to connect the sculptured designs on contiguous stones, some of it still being in place. The carving was done with a tool little harder than the stone itself, if one may judge by the irregularity of the curved lines and an evident concern to avoid deep carving and spheric modeling. The drums were put in place before carving, and the design was then sketched upon the flat surface of the stone and the silhouette of the figure was brought out by cutting in the background a centimeter or two. Inside lines were cut by diagonal incisions, and the lightest lines were made by scratching only. The apparent primitiveness of this technique, however, must not be charged to any incapacity on the part of the ancient craftsman, who had skill enough, when he chose to exercise it, to carve in full round the Atlantean figures of the altar and the beautiful seated figures of the façade.

"This primitive character of the relief would seem to be due to the fact that the carving on the columns was considered only as a sort of skeleton to be entirely covered with painting. The suggestion of depth, correct drawing and the details were to be worked out with paint, so much so that, in the darker parts of the temple, the sculpture was limited to a few rough lines scratched on a surface covered with stucco.

"The painter, who followed after the sculptor, worked with two kinds of colors; one opaque and sufficiently solid to be applied directly to the surface of the stone and sometimes used only as a background for finer colors; the other, applied *al fresco* on a preparation of white which showed through the

¹Throwing-sticks.

transparent color, the same effect being obtained by this treatment of the columns, as in the case of the wall paintings. The line is elegant, tapering from broad to narrow by imperceptible nuances. This and the boldness of the curves shows that the brushes must have been of carefully chosen long hairs pointed when wet, as a Japanese water-color brush.

"The colors used are the following: an opaque, dull red, near the Indian red, made from an indigenous wood, which is still used in wall-painting. This red forms all of the backgrounds, and, since it is one of the most permanent colors, still retains in practically all places its original brilliancy. There is a blue, which when opaque is like a kind of dark Prussian blue, and when transparent more nearly a cerulean blue. This color was used for all the borders around the pictures; it is the dominant note in the ensemble and is especially associated with sacrificial ceremonies. A green, a yellow and a black complete the palette. These colors were so much varied by mixing, however, that in practice the number of colors is unlimited.

"The colors were not applied in flat tones, but were irregularly distributed, the brush strokes suggesting movement and depth. Black or red lines, drawn freely on colored background, indicate such minute details as the individual feathers or stones in a mosaic, the thongs and polychrome designs of sandals, finger-nails, hair and eyebrows. Different layers of color can be distinguished, one from another; the latest layer being especially characterized by a preponderance of black and white.

"The sculpture, in addition to painting, was enriched by incrustations of mother of pearl, obsidian, and very probably of colored beads, the places of which are now shown only by empty holes in the surface of the stones. In addition to diversity of interest, polychromy also added clarity, for each object was traditionally of a certain color, and this together with the outlining gave definition to and emphasized each object. Feathers were green or blue; jewels, when turquoise, are blue, but green, when malachite or jade. Yellow was used to indicate gold or copper. The greatest variety is to be noted in the colors of the skin, which run from a sort of greyish yellow to black, through all shades of red. Even bodies of pure blue or striped red and white can be found. Such differences would be hard to explain ethnologically, and to understand them one must remember the war-paints and tattoos of which the early Spanish writers give full descriptions."

Continuing the policy established during the 1924 field season of reconstruction only within the bounds of virtual certainty, the work of reassembling the sculptured elements of the Temple of the Warriors was continued during the 1926 season.

In excavation the greatest care was taken to keep the individual sculptured stones as near as possible in the relative positions in which they were found, and this proved of invaluable assistance in placing the stones in their original places in the friezes, masks and panels.

The enormous task of fitting together and assembling the sculptured elements of these different bands, masks and panels was performed by several members of the staff during the last two seasons.

In 1925, Messrs. Morris, Ricketson and Ruppert devoted much of their time to this difficult work, and this year Messrs. Ruppert and Thompson were thus very largely engaged. Mr. Ruppert spent practically all his time during the last half of the season fitting together the masks and serpent-bird panels in the Temple of the Warriors, and supervising their replacement in the walls (see plate 2), and Mr. Thompson devoted fully half of his time to the bands on the northern and southern sides of the pyramid.

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