

Italy. It became the Capitolium of the colony, dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva like the one at Rome.

I could go on to tell you how Marius the Dictator was caught there by Sulla's horsemen, but was freed again by the magistrates; about the voluminous records of four minor religious cults of the city, which came to light in the base-course of a later temple; how the forum was struck by lightning again and burned about 50 B.C. scaring the townsmen into building a great sacrificial well to bury the lightning; how the stoa and the Capitolium were reerected on their old foundations and decorated with two marble fountains; of Cicero and Pompey and Caesar and Anthony who raced through many a time along the Appian Way; of Tiberius who passed by on his visits to Capri and the soldiers and couriers and messengers who traveled between there and Rome, stopping to revel in the inns of Minturnae; and how the city dragged on its decay through to the end of Roman history; but tales like those are true, and could be told, of any provincial town in Italy and there are many other writers to describe them for you.

J. J.

MEXICAN AND MAYAN SWEAT-BATHS

IN the last issue of the *Bulletin* Mr. Satterthwaite referred to the problem of sweat-baths in the Maya area and to the reasons for thinking that structure P-7, the best preserved building at Piedras Negras, as well as seven other more ruined structures at this ancient city, were used for this purpose. Since the publication of his report bibliographical researches by Dr. Mason and Mr. Cresson have strengthened the probability of this theory.

IT is an indication of the importance of the Museum's work at Piedras Negras and of our relative lack of knowledge of the archaeology of the Old Maya area that, despite the large number of structures similar to P-7 found at this site, it is a unique type in the region, never before reported. It is also a justification of our opinion that it is better to investigate one site completely than to excavate merely the most impressive buildings at different sites, as, with certain recent and notable exceptions, has been done in the past. For, with the exception of P-7, all of these eight structures seemed of slight importance and would never have been investigated if the expedition had been limited

where plate
Neg. 19456

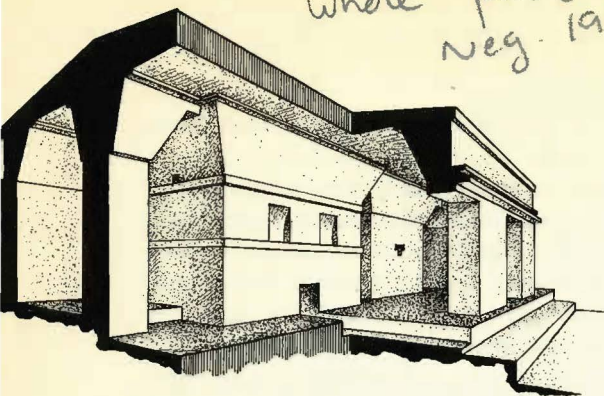


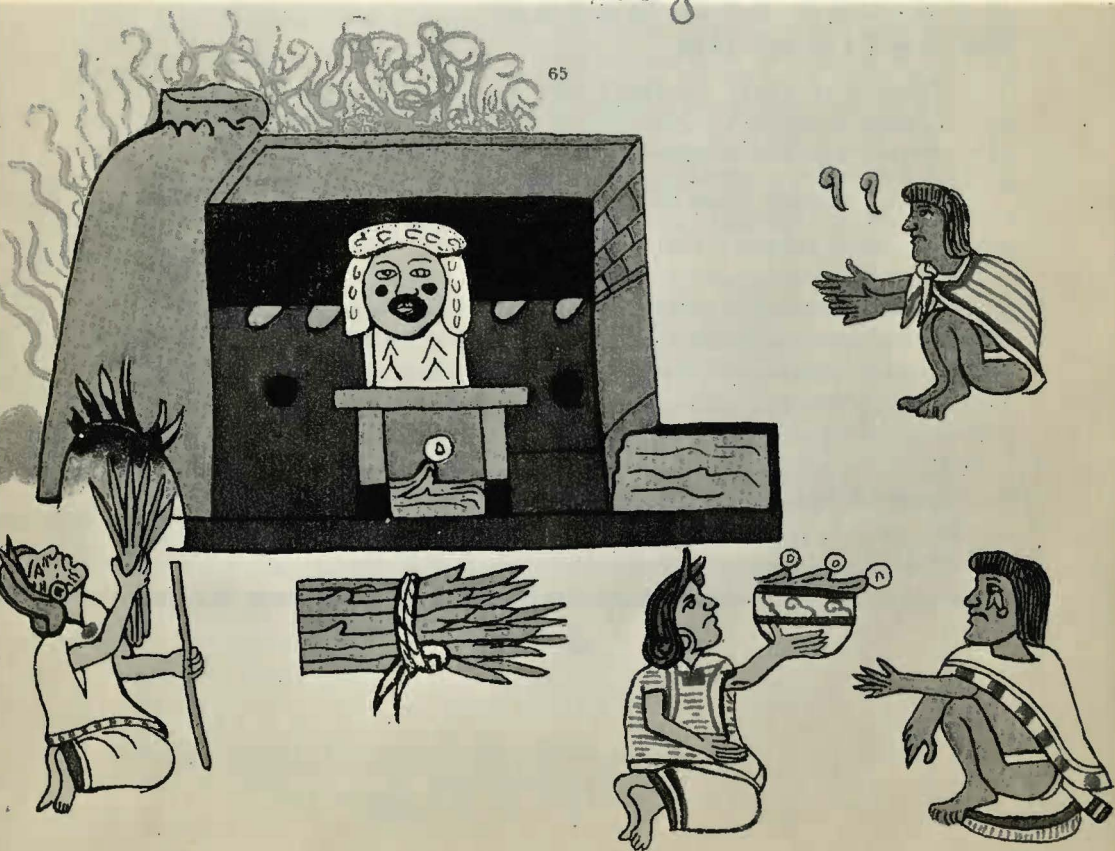
PLATE IX

Left: Sectional drawing of the Restoration of Structure P-7 at Piedras Negras believed to be a Maya Sweat-Bath Building. The drawing is by Miss Tatiana Proskouriakoff

Right: A modern Mexican Sweat-Bath



Below: An illustration of the "baths for Indians" reproduced from one of the Codices



to one or two season's work. Structure P-7 itself was first investigated not because of any outstanding esthetic features but merely because of its better condition of preservation. A restoration of Structure P-7 was shown in the last issue of the *Bulletin* (Plate IV), and a sectional drawing, showing the central chamber with its low doorway and depressed passage, is reproduced herewith (Plate IX, left).

Sweat-baths are nearly universal among all North American and Mexican Indian groups, which raises the presumption that the ancient as well as the modern Maya used them. Nevertheless we have been unable to find any direct reference to the practice either among the living Maya or in the reports of the time of the Conquest. The largest Maya dictionary, compiled shortly after the Spanish Conquest, gives a word for the sweat-bath: Zumpul-ché, "bath for women after childbirth and other sick persons to cast out the cold that they have in their bodies." This indicates that the sweat-bath was in use at this time and for the same purpose as in highland Mexico.

Most American aborigines built their sweat-baths, like their dwelling-houses, of perishable materials, and sometimes the sweat-bath was not even a permanent structure. Some of the highland Mexicans, however, make their sweat-baths, like their dwellings, of permanent masonry, and it is from this region that most of our information on sweat-baths analogous to our structures at Piedras Negras comes. This is found both in early records and in modern usage, although I know of no ancient sweat-bath that has been excavated even in the Mexican Highlands. Most of our data refer to the Aztecs who have given their name, "temazcal," from Aztec *temazcalli*, to Mexican and south-western United States sweat-baths. It is from these data that we have become convinced that our Piedras Negras structures were actually built for this purpose, as thought by Dr. Morley.

Apparently the temazcal of the present natives of the Mexican plateau differs very slightly from that of their forebears of the time of the Spanish Conquest. In one of the "Codices" or ancient native books of this time there is a painting illustrating the custom, which is here reproduced, Plate IX (below). This book was apparently made a few years after the Conquest, for each illustration is accompanied by a short description in archaic Spanish, but the style of the drawing is very similar to that of pre-Columbian codices which, of course, have no explanatory text. The comments were obviously written by a

Spanish priest who missed no opportunity to express his contempt for native customs and religion.

Freely translated, the explanatory text reads: "This is a picture of the baths of the Indians which they call '*temazcalli*.' At the door is an Indian who was the mediator for illnesses. When an ill person took a bath he offered incense, which they term copal, to this idol, and stained his skin black in veneration to the idol who was called Tezcatlipoca and was one of their major gods. Many Indians, men and women, stark naked, took these baths and committed nasty and vile sins within."

In the illustration the bath is shown as quadrangular and made of masonry. The door is low and covered by a lintel above which is a figure of the god. There are small round holes for ventilation. Through the door is seen the symbol for water on the floor, and the water seems to be flowing out at the side. The fire is shown in a separate furnace at the rear and a woman is feeding it with faggots. Another bundle of faggots or branches is seen in front of the door. At the right is the sick man, seated, his condition indicated by tears in his eye, and a woman is handing him a bowl of water, or medicine, the froth shown by the same sign as the water inside the bath-house. Above is another figure, probably a priest or shaman, uttering a prayer or invocation, the scrolls before the face being the characteristic sign for speech.

Let us now compare this with a modern sweat-bath as described from the Valley of Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico, Plate IX (above, right). The bath is built of masonry, quadrangular in ground-plan but with a domed roof. The door is low but shows its post-Columbian character in being built as an arch, with keystone; the true arch was unknown in America in aboriginal days. Like our structures at Piedras Negras it is entered by a depressed passageway; we were delighted to see this and consider it as affording strong proof that our Maya structures were actually sweat-baths. This depressed passage is not shown in the painting from the codex, but we have little doubt that it existed. Its portrayal from the front would have necessitated considerable knowledge of perspective drawing. Possibly it is indicated by the lines across the jambs of the doorway, and the change in color below these lines. In the modern *temazcal*, however, as in the drawing in the codex, the furnace is a separate beehive-like structure built against the wall of the bath proper; in our structures the fire was certainly inside the chamber.

Both the ancient and the modern references state that the baths were taken primarily by women just after childbirth, also preceding the confinement, and to a less extent by any invalid, especially the convalescents.

Both in certain details of interior construction of the temazoa and in the customs of use the sweat-bath today agrees with accounts written shortly after the time of Cortes. Now as then a wall of a light porous stone known as *tezontli* is erected between the sweat-house proper and the furnace. When this is very hot and the noxious fumes have been dissipated, the patient enters with a bowl of boiling water and a bundle of leafy branches. She, or in case of great weakness an assistant, sprinkles some of the water on the hot *tezontli* wall thereby producing steam and a rain of hot water.

Thus both the ancient and the modern sweat-baths of the Mexican highlands seem to possess the main elements of the eight structures found at Piedras Negras: a small low masonry chamber with one small low door through which a person can enter only by stooping or on hands and knees, and to which a depressed passage leads. Fire chambers occur with both. We therefore consider the identification of these Maya structures as sweat-baths practically proved. J. A. M.

The FIRST
NATIONAL
BANK



of Philadelphia

Main Office 315 Chestnut Street
Central Office 1500 Walnut Street
Centennial Office 32nd and Market Streets
Eighth National Office Girard Ave. and 2nd Street