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THE COUNTRY · THE PEOPLE
AND THE ARCHITECTURE

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Mexico is one of the richest countries in the world. Nowhere else do we find over such an extensive area equally favourable conditions for the formation and enrichment of ores. Nowhere else is there such fertility of soil coupled with such possibilities of crop cultivation as in the wedge-shaped southern end of the North American continent. The United States of Mexico do not represent a physical unity with their two million square kilometres. The Isthmus of Tehuantepec separates the States of Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche and Yucatan from the northern part of the country. In their geological structure, climate, vegetation and fauna they belong to Central America.

The country to the north of the Isthmus is chiefly a high plateau. Along the Rio Grande del Norte it is merely the continuation of the stone and waste-deserts of Arizona and New Mexico with their wide table-mountain. To the south of the 28° latitude the grouping of the mountain ranges becomes clearly evident. The high plateau or Mesa Central is limited in the west by the Sierra Madre Occidental with its wealth of recent volcanic extrusions, and in the east by the folded chains of the Sierra Madre Oriental, chiefly built up of limestone and flattening out northward to the "Llanos estacados" of Texas. Steep slopes deeply-incised by mountain torrents, the beds of which are dry during most of the year, give both of the bordering ranges a young and wild appearance. In its northern part, the Mesa Central is an enormous broad folded basin-area consisting of waste-plains, without exterior drainage, showing in the Bolsón of Mapimé an altitude lower than a thousand metres above sea-level. This steppe-like boundary district was once the battle-field of nomadic Indian tribes against whose attack's European settlers had long to defend themselves.

Between the 25° and 19° latitude the high plateau rises again to 1,800 and 2,000 metres, and is divided up into several broad and fertile valleys, separated by ridges or timbered mountain ranges, running as a rule parallel to the edge of the plateau, but in places with a somewhat oblique trend.

Further to the south the country rises to the zone of high volcanos where lava-streams have blocked the valleys in which, as in the valley of Mexico and further west in the states of Michoacan and Jalisco. great lakes were formed, most of which were salty. These parts of the country have long been densely populated. The strata of the soil show the remains of at least three pre-Spanish cultures superimposed one on the other: here on the surface we set foot on historic ground full of memories of recent Aztec or Spanish times. The highest volcanoes are the Pic of Orizaba (Citlaltepetl, Star Mountain), 5,394 metres; Popocatepetl (the Smoking Mountain), 5,452 metres (which after
a long period of repose suddenly became active again in 1920), and Iztaccihuatl (the White Woman), 5,286 metres. Only these volcanoes are clad in everlasting snow. The present snow-line lies at about 4,500 metres. Other well-known volcanoes are the Nevada de Toluca (Xinantecatl) 4,578 metres, and in the State of Jalisco, the Nevada de Colima (4,378 metres), with its side cone thrown up in 1869. All these volcanoes are formed of andesitic lava and ashes. A volcano built up in historic times is the 1,700 feet high basaltic cone of Mt. Jorullo (in the state of Michoacan) rising to a height of 1,820 metres above sea level.

The Mesa Central ceases abruptly south of the volcanic zone and splits up into a rugged low mountainous district deeply carved by the Rio Balsas and its tributaries. The greatest range in this mountainous district is the Sierra Madre del Sur, a steep coastal range sloping abruptly into the Pacific. Here in the surroundings of Oaxaca and in the Mixteca alta, rocks of archaean age and crystalline shists crop out over an extensive area. Boulders of archaean green stone may have supplied the material for the numerous little stone idols in the Mixteco-Tzapotec style. The highland and the Sierra Madre extend South of the Isthmus from Chiapas to Guatemala. The whole of the Chiapas mountain region was formerly the natural fortress of the Chiapanecs, a warlike and very ancient Indian tribe, who maintained their independence against the victorious advance of the Mexican rule. During the Spanish rule Chiapas belonged to Guatemala as the Provincia de San Vicente de Chiapas. The descendants of kindred people dwell to the south on both sides of the present state border. Here are also the remnants of an old superior Indian culture common to both countries.

Both the shores of the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico are bordered by narrow or broad coastal plains. The broadest of these belts is the still uninhabited grass steppe at the lower part of the Rio Grande del Norte. This steppe is the southern extension of the Texas coastal plain. The peninsula of Lower California on the Pacific, the eastern mountains of which rise to 2,000 metres, and the peninsula of Yucatan on the Gulf of Mexico, are mainly reached by sea from the rest of the country. In their somewhat loose connection with the Mexican State they retain much that is peculiar to their historical and economic development.

Although the greater part of Mexico extends south of the Tropic of Cancer, i.e., in the tropical Zone, it offers the most varied conditions for vegetation owing to its elevated position. It is the elevation above sea-level, and not only latitude that determines climate. There is also a great contrast between the humid Atlantic and and Pacific coast where artificial irrigation is even necessary in the vicinity of the ocean. Only the Atlantic winds bring rain. One of the driest districts on the Pacific is the central part of Lower California where frequently no rain falls for years. Settlements there are cases in the places where underground streams have been dammed and collected behind artificial walls.

The Rio Panuco, an important waterway of the oil district, flows into the Gulf of Mexico, as well as the Rio Blanco and Rio Papaloapam (along the
banks of which are vast sugar-cane fields), the Rio Coatzacoalcos and the mighty streams Tabascos, Grijalva and Usumasinta. All these rivers may be navigated to the foot of the mountains by ships of shallow draught. It is chiefly during the rainy season in summer that their turbid waters carry the mud of the wild mountain torrents to the ocean. At their mouths they deposit broad “barras”, the material of which is redistributed along the coast by the Gulf Stream, and accumulated in the form of dunes and sandy spits. The district around the mouths of the great streams to the east of the Isthmus is an alluvial plain of recent formation covered with savannas and swamps with natural channels which afford the only connection with the interior. But on the Pacific side the rivers break through the mountains at the bottom of deep oak and pine-clad gorges. Such rivers are for instance the Rio Sonora, Rio Yaqui and the powerful Rio Grande de Santiago or Lerma which flows through the Lago Chapala. Only the mouths of these rivers are navigable.

When we approach Mexico from Europe we only perceive the hot and damp coastal strip of Campeche, Tabasco and Vera Cruz covered with a rank tropical forest and sparse-growing mangroves along the lagoons. This is the fever-haunted “tierra caliente”, the home of numerous valuable timber trees, dye-woods and tropical forest animals. The country towards the interior, Edward Seler tells us, consists of vast wooded plains with an impenetrable tangle of the most varied deciduous trees. Their foliage is shed irregularly, and their trunks are very large with horizontally spreading branches. In the shade of these forest giants the tree-fern and small palms thrive, and different sorts of bamboo grow along the rivers and brooks. Cocoa and rubber-trees grow wild here, and the vanilla plant is found climbing the trunks of various trees. The great trunks are cumbered with innumerable epiphytes or parasitical plants such as orchids, araceae, ferns and bromeliaceae which usually cling to the branches and forks of the branches and collect rain-drops, humus and all sorts of detritus in their funnel-shaped leaves or rosettes. The cultivation of tobacco in the higher regions of this zone dates from ancient Indian days. It is now chiefly grown in the State of Oaxaca and in the surroundings of San Andrés Tuxtla in southern Vera Cruz on the west foot of the basaltic group of the San Martin volcano. Towards the steppe, on the outer fringe of the virgin forest, one often meets with outposts of scattered groups of single deep-rooted tropical trees such as the tall-stemmed silk-cotton tree (Bombax Ceiba L.) and the shady fig-tree (Higo, Ficus Amate L.).

Great dryness is a peculiarity of the northern Yucatan soil. Here the rain-water disappears in the crevices of a young limestone mass forming a cover over a part of northern Yucatan. The water collects on an impermeable marl bed at the base of the limestone mass into subterranean rivers and ponds. It is drawn up through shafts (“cenotes”), and is sometimes bitter. Now-a-days it is often raised by means of wind-driven motors. The dry soil is particularly adapted for raising sisal hemp (Agave sisalana or rigida) which gives this landscape its particular character. Merida is the centre of the sisal hemp industry.
At a height of between 600 and 1,800 metres, on the slopes of the high plateau, extends the “tierra templada”, the “temperate land”, along the Gulf coast near Orizaba and Jalapa. It is covered with evergreen woods. Rain falls here practically throughout the year. Heavy dew refreshes the plants every night. But the climate, away from the fever-laden swamps of the lowland, is mild and pleasant. Sugar-cane and rice thrive there without artificial irrigation. Beside a large number of indigenous tropical fruits such as mammees, aguacates, zapotes, anonas and papaws, mangos, oranges and bananas, introduced from the Mediterranean and India, thrive here as though they were at home. The lower levels of this zone, as for instance round Córdoba, are often characterized by red lateritious soil which glimmers through the green foliage. Here are the chief regions of the coffee plant. In these zones, on the southern slope of the high plateau in the State of Morelos, are situated the health-resorts Cuauhtla and Cuernavaca. The latter town was presented by Charles V. to the conqueror Cortes who was the first to cultivate the sugar-cane in its surroundings. Then there is Oaxaca, the capital of the state of the same name, and finally, on the south-west slopes of the plateau, not far from Guadalajara (the second largest city in Mexico), all the villa colonies along the shores of Lago de Chapala (the largest lake in the country). The mountain region that extends from the elevated valley of Puebla to the coast of the Pacific was called “mixtlan” (cloud land) by the ancient Mexican Indians, and is known to-day as Mixteca.

The fact that the arid plateau, the “tierra fria” (cold land) is situated on the lea-side of the eastern coast range, and does not thus receive the rain-laden trade-winds, explains its dry climate. Only about one-fifth of the precipitation of the tierra templada of Orizaba falls here. The year is divided, as further north and along the north-eastern shore, into a dry and rainy season. According to Edward Seiter's observations the months of February to April cover the period of relatively greatest aridity. The rainy season usually commences towards the end of May. The maximum precipitation and frequency of thunder-storms is greatest from June till July, and there is a second lesser maximum in September; whereas in August, in the dog days, there is usually a minimum. The thunderstorms are mostly in the afternoon, whilst the mornings and forenoons are clear. The pleasantest time of year on the high plateau is when the rainy season ends in October. Late autumn follows with dry, fresh, clear days and continually blue skies.

The most characteristic cultivated plant of the plateau is the maguey (Agave americana L.), the plant from which pulque and ixtle are made, and which is grown in long parallel rows. Fields planted with agaves are met with far in the north. On the whole of the plateau thick-leaved opuntias and cacti are frequently found, as well as yucca palms belonging to the order liliaceae, and thorn-acacias. These are all prickly plants and able to withstand long periods of drought. The magnificent savages or swamp cypress (taxodium trees) betray the presence of
running or ground-water. The Aztecs call them _ahuehuetl_, which means "Old man of the water".

Sudden changes in the landscape are only encountered in places where, at the edge of the high plateau overgrown with grass and sparse trees, the rivers and brooks plunge down deep gorges clad with thick green foliage. Sometimes the waterfalls are a hundred metres high. Many of them are used to-day for waterpower.

At the time of the diluvial glaciation of northern America the climate of the Mesa Central must have been cooler and at the same time have had a greater precipitation. Glacial striae, cirques, _roches moutonnées_, snow and glacier deposits are still to be found on the high volcanoes about a thousand metres below the present snow-line. Moraines are found as low as 3,800 metres on the Nevada de Toluca.

In cutting the "Canal del Desagüe" about 50 species of mammals belonging to the different diluvial strata were found: the lowest stratum contained fossilized bones of a large primitive horse, the upper ones hyena-like canidae, several felidae, the mammoth-like _elephas colombi_ (spread all over Mexico in diluvial times), stags and antelopes. All these belonged mainly to a fauna of the Sonoran region, that is to say to the fauna of the northern steppes.

Lateritic soil under the recent sand-blown deposits, found for instance in San Luis Potosí, suggests greater precipitation in these times. So too does diluvial calcareous tufa, as well as the frequent occurrence of lacustrine deposits in old lake basins that are now dry. Probably most of the large caves in the limestone mountains date from this period. The remains on the slopes of the mountains of the once extensive forests of the high plateau prove that the climate was formerly much moister.

The large northern border states Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, together with Durango and Lower California, cover nearly the whole of present-day Mexico. But this bare northern district has only a small population. Settlements are chiefly in the mountains in connection with mines, along railways, and sometimes on the rivers along the banks of which cotton is grown and which flow into the salt-lakes ("lagunas") without exterior drainage of the bolsónes.

But to the south of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí the broken surface of the country favoured the development of smaller states at a very early date. The damp climate, which was much more propitious to settlement, together with the great fertility of a volcanic soil, favoured a greater density of population. Besides this the states of Hidalgo and Mexico are the richest in gold. Hidalgo is the state that produces the most silver. The majority of the great towns and cultivated areas are situated at a height of about 1,900 to 2,000 metres. The highest and
most important valleys are those of Toluca (2,680 metres), Mexico (2,280 metres) and Puebla (2,360 metres). But agriculture is carried on as high as 3,250 metres.

The soil is very fertile where it does not consist of limestone or basalt but of volcanic tuffs. Maize and beans, the two original food-stuffs of the people, as well as wheat and barley (introduced from Europe) grow annually without manuring and rotation. Besides native edible plants and fruits such as sweet potatoes, tomatoes and capsicums (the favourite spice), pears, apples, peaches, apricots and figs (introduced from Europe) all thrive here.

On the high plateau, the native houses are built of adobe (sun-dried bricks), in contradistinction to the wooded Gulf coast where the walls are made of bamboo stems, whilst the steep roofs are covered with palm-leaves or grass. The ground plan of these bamboo-huts is mostly oval in the northern part of the Gulf coast, or rectangular in the southern part. In the villages the walls are sometimes plastered with clay and whitewashed. The “ranchos” often have bakehouses constructed of adobe or clay, sometimes also clay urn-shaped barns for maize, standing on stone socles and thatched with straw. The lower classes, especially the Indians, still live in the same sort of dwellings as in pre-Columbian times.

The ancient cultures of Mexico are concentrated on the high plateau in the region south of the Tropic of Cancer on the border towards the steppe, just as the pre-Incan culture attained to its highest development and Incan culture reached its greatest power of expansion on the highland of Peru and Bolivia in the southern border-district of the tropical zone towards the Puna. The cultures of ancient Mexico attained to the highest development in the northern bordering climates. Probably man has long lived in this part as a hunter and made use of fire and neolithic weapons and implements.

Following a most ancient culture with earthenware figures of a very primitive style (productions of the Otomi Indians and kindred tribes), we find to the north of the present capital the development of a first archaic art of a very original culture (perhaps never superseded in later times) and whose founders were the Toltecs, a Nahua tribe surrounded with mythical legends and coming from the north. The existence of the flourishing empire of Tollan, erected by a first Quetzalcoatl, who was both priest and king, is proved by the ruins in Tula, as well as those of Teotihuacan and other places. Earthenware vessels and figures of the Teotihuacan type are found near Azcapotzalco, San Miguel Amaníta and other places in the high valley of Mexico; further at Puebla, Tlaxcala, Panuco, etc. Thus we may presume that the culture of this ancient empire once included the whole of the eastern area of the high plateau and a large part of the neighbouring coastal slope, or at least exercised considerable influence in these parts. According to Fray Bernardino de Sahagun, as Walter Lehmann tells us, the ancient Toltec Empire was already destroyed at the end of the 6th century A.D. The Olmecs, a foreign race, contributed largely to the downfall. But ancient Toltec culture revived once more with Cholula as the centre and trading city. Teotihuacan
and Tollan, however, and probably Cholula, were already ruins when the Spaniards arrived. In the 11th century A. D. the Young-Toltecs emigrated under the leadership of Quetzalcouatl-ce Acatl to the countries of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, to Tabasco and Soconusco. Mention is made in documents that the young Toltec dispersal had been hastened by famine; a phenomenon that is not unusual in climatic border-lands.

According to Walter Lehmann the calendar of the old Toltecs was based on a lunar “Weltanschauung”, whereas Cholula became the intellectual centre of a reform of the old religious system, and the sun was the centre of their “Weltanschauung”. This found its expression in the reform of the calendar.

Mexican culture had spread in successive waves from the high plateau districts to the lowlands. Thus we find names of villages and ranchos in an ancient Nahuatl dialect in the district of the Rio Pánuco. For instance, the Pipils of Guatemala and Salvador and the now extinct Nicarao of Nicaragua, who spoke ancient Nahuatl dialects, are descendants of the Toltecs. It becomes evident that during these migrations older pre-Mexican tribes were partly scattered and partly squeezed into enclaves. This explains the patchwork appearance of the peoples and fractions of peoples which strikes us when looking at a map of languages still spoken in Mexico.

It is possible, contemporaneously with the flourishing period of older cultures on the Mexican plateau, the old Maya peoples, who had long been living round the border-district of Chiapas and Guatemala, developed at the same time. Palenque, Occeino, Piedres Negras, Menché, Tikal, Quirigua and Copán were ancient cities here, and with the exception of the first two, were all situated in Guatemala and Honduras. Of these cities Palenque is said to be the first to have been abandoned. On the arrival of the Spaniards all these once so flourishing settlements belonged already to the past.

The Maya culture also had its renaissance, as for instance, within the confines of the Yucatan peninsula where there is one set of ruins next to the other, and where ancient American architecture reached the zenith of its development. Known places here are Uxmal, Kabah, Labná, Sayi, Tulum and Akanceh. There is a report that in the pre-Spanish epoch Nahua (Itza) had penetrated into Yucatan under a leader named Kukulcan (Quetzalcouatl). Cities like Chich’en Itza and Mayapán may be considered as mainly Toltec settlements both according to tradition and archaeological discoveries. The Quetzalcouatl façades of the Yucatan edifices, the Chich’en Itza feather-snake columns and the strange semi-recumbent Chaac-Mol figures (libation vessels) point emphatically to Toltec influence. History tells us further that Mayapán was destroyed (circa 1450 A. D.) by a Maya rising. After the destruction of Mayapán the old Indian culture of Yucatan decayed, and where once numerous large cities and mutually united principalities flourished, the Spanish conquerors only found small communities at war with each other.

All these ancient cultures cannot be conceived without agriculture, the basis
of which throughout the whole of Mexico was the cultivation of maize. The wild original maize-plant (*Euchlaena luxurians*), known as teosinte, is native to the Pacific coast of Guatemala. Whereas a group of plants such as manioc are characteristic of the damp Atlantic virgin-forest districts of America, maize, in spite of its adaptability, is chiefly confined to the dry and higher parts of Mexico. Nowadays the two states of Jalisco and Zacatecas supply half the annual maize crops. In Mexico and Central America the growth of the ancient state and its development to a really high culture is limited to the arid districts where maize is cultivated.

In the old times it was chiefly the temples that were built of stone. An elevated position was preferred for sacred spots and the buildings belonging to them. Thus one found on the Gulf coast in the Huaxteca country roughly hewn stone sculptures of which some may have stood in the wooden sanctuaries as well as in important parts of the settlements on artificial earth mounds which were only surrounded by walls where suitable stone slabs were ready at hand. But on the Mexican high plateau, as well as in Chiapas, Guatemala and Yucatan the stone cella-like sanctuaries or other temple buildings rose from the platforms of step pyramids. Other edifices were on terrace-like substructures of which many were orientated so as to coincide with the cardinal points. These step-pyramids erected over stone heaps and earth mounds stood in roomy courtyards with numerous out buildings and were often of huge dimensions. In front of the main temple in Mexico City there was King Tizoc's ("Tlacktemalacatl") great sacrificial stone. The sacrificial receptacle ("quauhxicalli") to catch the blood of the sacrifice also belonged to the ceremonial vessels. Within the Mexican temple grounds is also the sacred ball-court ("tlachtli") dedicated to the gods. However, such a court is lacking in Teotihuacan, but there is one, for instance, in Chich'en Itza. The ball-game, in which a rubber ball ("olli") was used, was much in vogue in the sphere of Mexican culture and was played by the people.

Among the gigantic ruins of Teotihuacan, the two stone-cased mounds known as the "Moon" and "Sun" pyramids are particularly conspicuous, whilst quite recently a Quetzalcoatl temple with rich sculptures was freed from its vegetation and debris in the so called "Ciudadela" situated on the southern side of the Rio San Juan.

The pyramid of Cholula covers the greatest area. To-day a church dating from the Spanish colonial period stands on its crest. An ancient trade route led via Cholula, the celebrated centre of the Quetzalcoatl cult, and also that of trade, and famous for excellent ceramics and other products of flourishing arts and crafts. This route extended to anahuac vàicalanco (on the Boca de Terminos near the border of the Maya district) and to anahuac asolan the coastal strip of Soconusco, which is now celebrated for its cocoa tree plantations. The pyramid of Nochicalco near Guernavaca differs from those on the high plateau especially by reason of calculiform day symbols and the employment of a line as a symbol of the figure 5 (as was especially the custom on Maya monuments.
of a certain period). The pyramids in the Tzapotec country, as for instance those crowning a hill 300 metres high at the foot of Monte Albán, and the edifices of Mitla near Oaxaca, famous for their mosaics, frescos and columns belong to the pre-Aztec period. The pyramid of El Tajin near Papantla in the Totanac region in the State of Vera Cruz, the steps of which are interrupted by numerous niches, is also pre-Aztec. The pyramid of Huexotla (Hidalgo), Castillo de Teayo (Vera Cruz) and the pyramid of Tepozlán (D. F.) which stands high on a hill over the present town may be mentioned as examples of Aztec temple pyramids in small provincial towns.

The edifices of the Maya in Yucatán were technically the most perfect. It was here that the sacrarium was further developed. It contained two long corridor-like spaces which were covered with a sort of vaulting constructed of layers of steep stone slabs each projecting over the other. “The front corridor opens onto a columned gallery towards the steps, the back corridor contains a special small cela with the idols. The upper vertical façade is decorated with rich "Baroque" ornaments cut in limestone blocks with fantastic masks of gods” (W. Krickeberg.)

The Aztecs or, in the narrower sense of the word, the Mexicans (the *Mexica*) were the heirs of Toltec culture on the Mexican high plateau. They traced their origin, especially the inhabitants of Tetzoco, from the Chichimecs. The Aztecs traced their name back to a legendary home (“aztlán”). Like the Toltecs they had migrated from the north. From a philological point of view the Nahuatl-speaking Aztecs (belonging to the group of the Nahuatlacan-speaking tribes), as well as the Nahuatl-speaking Toltecs belong to the Sonoran linguistic stock who spread far to the north-west and across the frontier of Mexico. According to traditions the foundation of Mexico-Tenochtitlán dates back to the year 1325 A.D. But in ancient times Colhuacan was the metropolis of Mexico-Tenochtitlán.

The view of this city must have been beautiful beyond description, situated as it was in the salt-lake of Tetzoco. Like Venice it was intersected by numerous canals and built on dams and sand-islands surrounded by wooden piles. Where the cathedral now stands the step-pyramid rose in five steep terraces. Its base was square; its sides are said to have had a length of 375 feet. It was only built in 1487. It contained a cela for each of the two gods Uitzilopochtli (the real Aztec national or war-god) and for the rain-god Tlaloc. The king and princes lived in extensive palaces. The life of the people was chiefly concentrated in the market near the main temple. It is said that when Cortés entered the city on the 8th of November 1519 A.D. the inhabitants numbered 300,000. That is about one-third of the present population.

In some respects the Aztec state was a military monarchy with extensive organizations of political and religious bodies. But even the high valley of Mexico was not a unified state. There were three leading principalities: Tenochtitlan, Tetzoco and Tlaxcapan which were held together by an offensive and defensive alliance, in which, however, Tenochtitlan predominated. The neighbouring Tlaxcala was a free state. The important nation of the Tarascans, an ancient
tribe with a distinct language and inhabiting Michoacan far to the west, had remained independent of Aztec rule. The advance of Cortés, only successful because of the help of the Totonacs and Tlaxcaltecs, shows us how the different tribes quarrelled. But in contradistinction to the conditions in Yucatan, the Aztec empire, which was hardly two centuries old, was at the time of the Spanish conquest still in full possession of its power, although governed by Montezuma II, (Motecuzoma) an irresolute and melancholy monarch. Under the powerful rulers of ancient times, especially of Motecuzoma I. and his successors, many cities and districts belonging to numerous neighbouring tribes were successfully subjugated by the Aztecs. Of this we have information, especially from the important hieroglyphics in the Codex Mendoza, both as to the conquests and important cultural tributes. About 50 years before the arrival of Cortés, the Aztec empire had extended to the Gulf of Mexico. The subjugated countries were not incorporated, but fortresses and garrisons were established to levy tribute. The destruction of so many antiquities and cultural monuments in the Totonac district of Vera Cruz, as well as the replacing of ancient place-names by Aztec designations bear eloquent witness to the methods employed by these conquerors.

According to Walter Lehmann the Aztec language was equal to all the requirements of a powerful empire in contradistinction to the many other phonetically and grammatically complicated Indian languages. For many years Aztec also served as the official language during the Spanish colonial period.

To the south of the capital, on the fresh-water lake of Xochimilco, Aztec gardens are still extant which are called by the misnomer “swimming gardens”. The very fertile black soil was drained by canals of various width and the vegetable-plots enclosed by stakes and trellis work. Such enclosed plots were called “chinampas”.

If we enquire what was the chief difference between ancient American and European culture we shall find that iron, domestic animals (with the exception of the turkey), vehicles, wheels, the potter’s wheel and firearms were unknown. In architecture the vaulted arch was also unknown. Gold and silver were employed, as well as copper; the latter partly for bronze. The land was cleared and stone was hewn with stone or metal implements. The Huaxtecans and Totonacs on the Gulf of Mexico cultivated cotton and wove fine shawls and garments of it. Particularly in Tabasco, but also on the Mexican high plateau, very fine work was executed in birds feathers. The Olmecs on the Atlantic coast to the south of Vera Cruz derived their name from caoutchouc (ollii) which they employed for various purposes. Milk, butter and cheese were unknown as food. Honey was used instead of sugar, and bee keeping is still extensively carried on in the country. The use and development of hieroglyphics and the development of the calendar system raised the Mexican Central American sphere of culture far above that of the other advanced Amerinds.

It was only since the Spanish colonization that European domestic animals were introduced, above all the horse, horned cattle, sheep and goats. The
Spaniards were the first to mine silver, mostly by surface-mining. The hammock, which is now so largely used in Yucatan and the Isthmus, is said to have been introduced by the Spaniards into Mexico from South America via the Antilles. History in America as written in Europe is only met with since the beginning of the 16th century.

The Roman Catholic Church set foot in Mexico with the Spanish conquerors. Franciscan monks were the first teachers, the first historians and the first protectors of the ill-treated unfortunate natives. The number of Spanish Baroque churches, chapels, monasteries, schools, noblemen's seats and buildings on Spanish hacendadas was very great. The aqueducts with their towers and bridges are striking. Handicrafts flourished in the cities where each had its own quarters. According to historical records a German, a pupil of Gutenberg, is said to have introduced the art of printing into Spanish Mexico and also to have published a newspaper.

The oldest church is in Tlaxcala. It dates from the year 1521. The church of Titzatlan near Tlaxcala is also very old, and unique in its restrained Renaissance style. The atrium of the cathedral in the capital dates from the year 1523. The main façade was only completed in 1667. The greatest of the Mexican churches visited by pilgrims was erected in 1532 in Guadeloupe Hidalgo near the steep rock of "Tepeyac". The city of Puebla, which for many centuries was to be the trading centre between Spain and Mexico, was founded in the same year. It is the town with the most churches, and where the art of making glazed tiles ("azulejos"), introduced from Spain, developed. The ecclesiastical and secular subjugation of the north from Mexico to California and of the coastal strip on the Gulf of Mexico proceeded from the capital and the high plateau. One of the oldest churches in the Mexican Gulf region, built in 1749, is in Altamira, north of Tampico, a place from which a long-established salt trade was carried on up the Río Pánuco, and southwards to the Huaxteca by the Huaxtec Indians.

Five governors and sixty-two viceroys have ruled Mexico. It is characteristic of these times that about a third of the silver circulating in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries came from Mexican mines. Spanish rule lasted three centuries. During the last years of its decline, Alexander von Humboldt visited Mexico (1803/4). This was an epoch-making journey, and it is remarkable that no diaries of the great German explorer are known of this journey. Dissension in connection with the Spanish succession and the example of the secession of the United States from England led in 1810 to the outbreak of the struggle for independence. The idea was favoured by the Viceroy himself, but it had its roots in the people. Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, who was 57 at the time, and curate of the village Dolores in Guanajuato, became the leader of the movement and rang
the bells as a signal of revolt on the night of 15th September and placed himself at the head of the movement. The idea of freedom, which was also enthusiastically greeted by the Indians, was never given up. Hidalgo himself, however, had to retreat before the superior forces of Spanish troops and was captured and shot in 1811, after numerous battles, together with the priest Morelos. In 1820 General Iturbide put himself at the head of the revolutionary movement. He first fought on the side of Spain and then on that of the revolutionaries and proclaimed the independence of Mexico in 1821.

Violent political struggles kept the country in a turmoil, and in addition to the internal troubles war broke out with the United States which ended with the loss of Texas (1845) and California and New Mexico (1846). In 1848 the Rio Grande del Norte was established as the northern frontier of Mexico. The gifted Benito Juarez, a man of indomitable energy, born as a poor Indian in a little village in Oaxaca, stepped to the front. He was victorious in the armed struggle against the church (1855—61), reformed the laws and finally survived as president of the Republic the disastrous intervention of Napoleon III. who, together with Maximilian of Austria, wanted to erect a Mexican empire in 1867. Numerous urban gardens and decorations in the castle of Chapultepec, the royal seat of Mexico, date from this French period.

Benito Juarez died in 1872. New troubles arose. They were put an end to by General Porfirio Diaz, Mexico's greatest statesman, who had already re-taken the capital from the French in 1867, and who became president in 1877. He is the real originator of the social and economic reforms and public education.

During the thirty-three years of peace under this both intellectually and morally eminent man economic conditions reached their highest development. The investment of European capital, especially English and, later on, American gradually increased. The extension of the railway system took place during the years 1890 to 1910, as well as the completion of several harbour works, namely those of the town of Vera Cruz which was formerly protected from attacks by sea by the fortress of San Juan de Ulua.

Numerous modern public and private buildings in the capital, as well as in all the cities of Mexico, were erected in this period, and further the new quarters such as Colonia Roma and Juarez in the capital and the garden cities. The long projected sanitary works and draining of the capital were finally completed in 1900 under Porfirio Diaz by the construction of the “Canal del Desagüe”, which is thirty miles long, as well as the “Tunel de Tequixquiaco”. In 1900 Mexico City had 500,000 inhabitants. To-day with over 1,000,000 souls, it is the largest of all highland towns of the new world, being situated at an altitude of 2,240 metres above sea-level.

The grand fêtes in celebration of Mexican independence in 1910 marked the most glorious event in Porfirio Diaz' term of office. The same year saw the sudden end of this great period of development. With the Madero and later the Carranza revolutions in the north began a period of 15 years of intense
unrest and social upheavals which were only possible in times of violent
dissension and war between the European peoples themselves. During these
years of heavy losses of foreign capital and of the growing influence of the
United States only the oil districts on the Gulf coast, the centre of which is
Tampico, were economically prosperous. This period of prosperity started at
the end of 1910 with the bringing up of the two gushers Potrero del Llano
No. 4 (belonging to W. D. Pearson the constructor of the harbour-works on
the Gulf coast) and Juan Casiano Nos. 6 and 7 (belonging to the American
E. L. Doheny) which suddenly established Mexico's reputation as an oil
country. To-day petroleum is by far the most important item in the revenues of
the state.

In 1917 the new constitution came into force under President Carranza,
whose merit it was to have kept Mexico politically neutral during the Great War.
Mexico's favour is much sought after as a supplier of raw material. This
country with, it is said, a population to-day of 13\,\text{m}illion inhabitants holds
the first place in the production of silver, the second in oil and lead, the fourth
in gold and the fifth in copper. Other metals exported are: zinc, mercury,
arsenic, antimony, molybdenum and tin. Other exports, besides petroleum, are
graphite and semi-precious stones. Mexico has no coal. But there is enough
lignite, iron and waterpower for home consumption. The chief agricultural
exports are cotton, sisal hemp, tobacco, sugar, coffee, cocoa, vanilla, precious
woods and dye-woods and tropical fruits. As home industry is not much de-
veloped, finished goods are chiefly imported.

Mexico's great wealth is intimately connected with the geological structure
of the country. Most of the mountain ranges are built up of a thick series of
folded limestone banks intruded in the period of mountain-building by mag-
natic rocks which brought up the ores from the bowels of the earth. Laccolithes
(of diorites and syenites) and dome-shaped masses (of porphyries), in the contact
zones of which the most copper ores are found, form the nuclei of the anticlines
and folds. On the southern and western part of the Mexican High Plateau,
the older eruptive rocks, the andesites, are especially met with as pipe-fillings and
lavas. The gold and silver ores are connected with these older effusive rocks.
The greatest ore-vein, near Pachuca, is 16 kilometres long and the most exten-
sive silver-lode, the Beta Madre of Guanajuato, often 150 metres wide, is many
kilometres long. Under the silver-bearing rocks, in deeper zones, veins of galena
and zincblend occur. They are also spread over the limestone mass even some
distance from the intrusive body. In the tertiary period, on the western side
of the high plateau, especially in the Sierra Madre Occidental, streams of fresh
volcanic lava poured out again and again along the fractures and faults over the
already eroded and buried folded limestone ranges. The obsidian, of which the
Indians made their skillfully shaped sacrificial knives, spears and arrow-heads, is
a glassy species of this most acid of lavas. Where in the most recent geological
epoch effusive activity was limited to single areas, such as on the southern edge
of the high plateau, great crater volcanoes were thrown up. Hot mineral springs are the last traces of this volcanism on the high plateau. Both on the Atlantic and Pacific coast effusive rocks are basalts. The famous oil-pools of the oil-fields north and south of the Pánuco River valley are secondary accumulations of the precious liquid in cavities of the limestone banks which are closely shut off from the surface by a gently folded series of impermeable marls. The limestone masses are also excellent water reservoirs. Numerous fresh-water springs flow from the rock at the foot of the Sierra Madre Oriental. Where there is gypsum in deeper parts of the limestone series, the water comes up as a sulphur spring.

On Mexican soil the folded North American mountain-ranges, which originated somewhat earlier towards the end of the cretaceous period, are replaced by the Central American arcs thrown up in the tertiary period. The shape and contour of the Mexican land mass resulted from the interaction of these different mountain-building movements. The uplift of the Mesa Central is a consequence of this crucial folding, and is the cause of the tempering of the tropical climate.

Dr. Walther Staub
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Sierra Madre Oriental zwischen Monterey und Saltillo

La Sierra Madre Oriental tra Monterey e Saltillo

Sierra Madre Oriental entre Monterey et Saltillo
Las Canoas. Trozo de vía férrea y barranca de Tamasopo

Las Canoas. Railway and Tamasopo Cañon

Las Canoas. Eisenbahnstrecke und Tamasopo-Schlucht

Las Canoas. Línea ferroviaria col drupo di Tamasopo

Las Canoas. Chemin de fer et gorge de Tamasopo
Bosque cerca de Mirador
Panorama de foresta virgen

La foresta presso Mirador
Veduta d'una foresta vergine

Virgin forest near Mirador

Wald bei Mirador

Forêt verge près de Mirador

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Tamasopo. Panorama del rio. Estado Vera Cruz

Tamasopo. River view. State of Vera Cruz

Tamasopo. Flußbild. Staat Vera Cruz

Tamasopo. Veduta del fiume. Stato di Vera Cruz

Tamasopo. Vue de la rivière. État de Vera Cruz
Tamasopo. Paisaje de palmas

Tamasopo. Paesaggio con palme

Tamasopo. Palmenlandschaft

Tamasopo. Paysage avec palmes
Pozo de Petróleo en Tamboyóche cerca del río Pánuco.
Estado Vera Cruz

Petroleum well in Tamboyóche on the Pánuco River
State of Vera Cruz

Petroleumbrunnen in Tamboyóche am Pánuco-Fluss. Staat Vera Cruz

Sorgente di petrolio a Tamboyóche sul fiume Pánuco.
Stato di Vera Cruz

Puits de pérole à Tamboyóche sur la rivière de Pánuca
Etat de Vera Cruz
Bananas and papayas. State of Vera Cruz

Bananas und Papayas. Staat Vera Cruz

Bananes et papayas. État de Vera Cruz
Shore scene with ceiba tree. State of Vera Cruz

Uferbild mit Ceiba-Baum, Staat Vera Cruz

Veduta della riva con un albero di Ceiba, Stato di Vera Cruz

Bord d'une rivière et célba, État de Vera Cruz
Waterfall of Nacaxa  
State of Puebla

Wasserfall von Nacaxa  
Staat Puebla

La cascada di Nacaxa  
Stato di Puebla

Cascade de Nacaxa  
État de Puebla
Ruins of Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Temple on the Ball Game grounds

Ruines de Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Temple sur la place du jeu de paume

Ruin von Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Tempel am Ballspielplatz

Ruinas de Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Templo cerca de la Plaza de Pelota

Rovine di Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Tempio presso la arena del gioco alla palla
Uxmal. Yucatán. Interior of the ruins.