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THE MIXTECA -- NOTES ON A TRIP THROUGH  
THE STATES OF GUERRERO AND OAXACA

INTRODUCTION

The following is a record of a trip through those sections of the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca generally known as the Mixteca Alta. The trip was made during the month of May and part of June (1931) in company with the American writer and student of Mexico, Mr. Carleton Beals. The latter was interested in gathering material for a biography which he is preparing of General Porfirio Diaz and the primary purpose of the trip was to follow the route of one of Diaz' most important military campaigns. Although this was the primary reason for making the journey it was, perhaps, not the most important one; for both the present writer and Mr. Beals are deeply interested in the changes which are taking place in Mexico as the result of the Revolution of 1920-21 and in the extent to which and the processes by which the country is being inducted into modern industrial civilization. In a sense, therefore, Diaz and his military campaign offered a convenient excuse and opportunity for observing economic and social conditions in one of the most isolated and inaccessible areas in Mexico. The route which was followed is indicated on the maps which accompany this report. The part of the journey made on horseback occupied some three weeks in the course of which some 21 villages were visited. Although the exact limits of the Mixteca Alta are not known, generally speaking it may be said that all of the villages visited were in that region.

## HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE MIXTECA

### Location

Historically the term Mixteca was used to designate the province by that name located in the sierras and on the Pacific coast of what is now the state of Oaxaca. As such the Mixteca was a political unit divided into the Mixteca Alta ("high" Mixteca, i.e., in the mountains) and the Mixteca Baja ("low" Mixteca, i.e., in the river valleys and contiguous to the coast).<sup>1</sup> At the present time the Mixteca no longer exists as a political entity with definite boundaries. The term is now applied to the area roughly bounded on the west by the 99th meridian, on the east by meridian 97, on the south by the Pacific coast and on the north by a line drawn from Chilapa, Guerrero to Parian, Oaxaca. Although important differences exist between the uplands and the lowlands (especially in Oaxaca where the contacts between the Mixtecs and Zapotecs have been very intimate), the area taken as a whole represents a fairly homogenous cultural unit.

### The Language

A number of different indigenous languages are to be encountered in this region but it is perhaps safe to say that some variety of Mixteca is predominant. According to Starr<sup>2</sup> "the Mixtec language is the type of the Mixteca-Zapoteca Family of Orozco y Berra."<sup>3</sup> It is a polysyllabic-polysynthetic language employing twenty-six elementary sounds in its words, which may reach sixteen or seventeen syllables in length. There is considerable use of nasals, two or even three consonantal sounds may come together and a doubling of vowel sounds is frequent. Variation in length of sounds and intonation vary the meanings

of words; words frequently begin with consonants and end with vowels. The language presents many dialects -- Orozco listing eleven, of which that of Teposcolula is claimed to be the most important. Not only are different towns said to have different dialects, but even parts of the same town."

#### Legendary Origin of the Mixtecs

As might be expected the origin of the Mixtecs is very obscure. Legend has it that the Mixtec "nation" sprang from two individuals born of two beautiful trees which in very ancient times grew on the banks of a river near the town of Achiutla. "The children of the trees of Achiutla", the legend goes on to state, "divided the land and went their separate ways in search of conquests. The bravest of all finally arrived at the town of Tilantongo /Oaxaca/ armed with shield and arrows and ready to measure his strength against the most powerful adversary. The land however was uninhabited and no enemy presented himself for combat except the sun which flooded the world with light and heat and which the Mixteco took to be the master of the place. The valiant champion believed that the sun, with its ardent rays, was seeking to prevent him from taking possession of the land. His valor did not weaken because of this, however, and without losing a moment, he covered himself with his shield, withdrew his arrows from their quiver, and shot them with great force at the sun. Since it was the hour of twilight when the clouds were beginning to gather on the horizon, the hero believed that he had mortally wounded the sun and that it was seeking its tomb on a mountain which he could see far off in the distance. Judging himself the victor, therefore, he took possession of the land and established



TAXCO, GUERRERO



CALE DEL ARCO, TAXCO



CHURCH IN TAXCO

there the capital of his dominion."<sup>4</sup>

### Early History of the Mixtecs

From other sources it would appear to be evident that the Tilantongo mentioned in the legend given in the above paragraph was the first town to be settled in the Mixteca Alta. Where the people who settled in this place came from or when the settlement was first made it is impossible to fix with any certainty. Gay, in his history of Oaxaca, holds that the Zapotecs moved into the valley of Oaxaca about 100 B.C. Shortly thereafter the Mixtecs were supposed to have<sup>been</sup> pushed out of the valley of Mexico by the Aztecs and to have settled in the highlands of Oaxaca.<sup>5</sup> Even at this early period the Mixtecs, according to Sahagun, had reached a relatively high stage of civilization. "The Mixtecs and the Zapotecs," writes Sahagun, "...were civilized and industrious peoples: they had laws, practiced the arts of the Mexicans and had adopted the same methods of computing time and the same pictures for preserving the memory of events."<sup>6</sup>

For over fourteen hundred years after their migration to the highlands and coasts of what are now the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca, the history of the Mixtecs is marked by steady development and progress. On the political side they gradually worked out a very practical system in which the considerable power vested in the hands of the village chiefs was checked and modified by the force of tradition and the respect for the elders. Economically a successful system of land holding combining both communal and private property features, was implanted. Finally, their religion, though somewhat sanguinary, came to represent the highest aspirations of the people and the priests and other functionaries were

truly "holy" men and leaders of the community. Until the coming of the Spaniards the only major interruption in the even tenor of the existence of the Mixtec people was their wars with the neighboring tribes. The most disastrous of these wars was the long drawn out struggle with the Aztecs in the middle of the 15th century which finally resulted in the conquest and the subjection of a large part of the Mixteca Alta to the yoke of Moctezuma.

### The Mixtecs before the Conquest

The best picture available of the life of the Mixtecs before the coming of the Spaniards is to be found in the answers to a questionnaire sent to various villages in New Spain by Felipe II in 1577. One of the most detailed of these so-called relaciones concerns the village of Malinaltepec. A translation of this document is given at this point in these notes not only because of the inherent interest of the material, but also because of the contrast which it presents between the past and present life of the Mixtecs. Malinaltepec was one of the villages visited on our trip (see below the notes for May 23) and represents a typical village in the Alta Mixteca. In reading this document it should be remembered that the individual who wrote it was a Spaniard and a Catholic.

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### Account of the Villages of Atlatlauca and Malinaltepec

In the village of Atlatlauca, which is in the province of Guaxaca, on the eighth day of September, fifteen hundred and eighty, Francisco de La Mesquita, Corregidor of this said village and its subjects, having seen the printed questions and instructions

which His Majesty commands be answered him, giving account of the things of this land, and which were sent me through the Most Excellent Señor Viceroy of this New Spain; and having taken account of and communicated what is contained in them to the oldest Indians and elders of these villages (who are those from whom some knowledge could be obtained) it seems to me that what may be answered to the said questions is that which follows....

The village of Atlatlaucça, although in itself it is a Corregidor's district, is under the jurisdiction and in the district of the chief Alcalde of Guaxaca. This village has six other little villages which are subject to it, which are called: Kayacatlan, Çoquiapa, Acontepeque, Huitzapa, Yztactepexi, Huitziltengo. They are from two to four and from five to six leagues away from the main town of the district. This said village of Atlatlaucça, together with another which is named Malinaltepeque, is given for benefice to Juan Rodríguez, priest, who visits here as will be declared below.

The village of Malinaltepeque...is eight long leagues /distant/ by a rough winding road and has one subject village, or farming community, which is called San Martín... The said village of Atlatlaucça is located to the northeast of Malinaltepeque. These two villages have few people, for between the two they number about seven hundred married Indians, with their farms, more or less, as is shown by their tax assessments....

The village of Malinaltepeque is called in the Chinanteca language (which is what the natives speak) Malama, and in Mexicana Malinaltepeque, which both mean in the Castilian language "twisted hills." They give it this name because the site of the said



village is on the highest hill there is thereabout, which has of level ground not even a stone's throw, and because the hills are enlaced and twisted one with another.

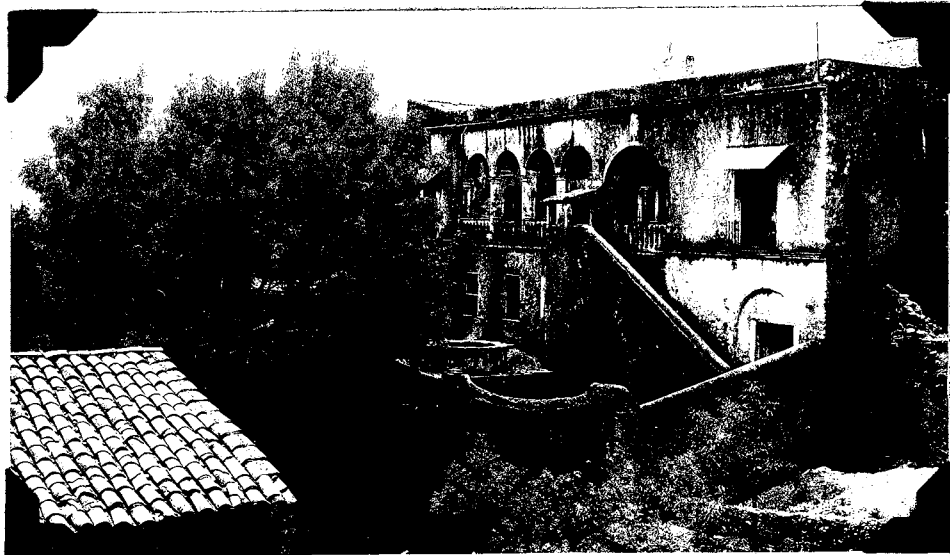
When the Spaniards came to this land, these two villages recognized as King Munteçuma, who has conquered them by force of arms and warring people whom he sent with his captains to this land and these provinces, where he subdued these two villages of which we treat. They know not how to tell how long before the Spaniards came Munteçuma conquered them. Some say ten /years/ and others twenty, and in nothing is there certainty because as they had no writing they put down none of these things. In paintings they showed all these ancient things, but these /paintings/ have been taken from them, because it was understood that having them they still practiced the same rites and ceremonies as before, and thus it was verified that they worshipped idols until a few years ago. Because of this /i.e. the loss of their paintings/ and because of the death of the old ones, there is no one who may say more than that...Munteçuma was the universal Lord of all, and the Lordship he had over them was a certain tribute of cochineal, cloths of cotton and green plumage, and of all colors, and some green stones which here are called chalchihuites which are of little value. These kinds of things the Indians sought in other villages, and obtained them in barter for some little cloths the size of a sheet of paper, which was used among them as money.

To collect this tribute there came on the part of Munteçuma two Indian princes, called calpisches, and these had it /the tribute/ gathered together and took it to the province of Cuestlauaca, where the said Munteçuma had established his outposts

of warriors. Moreover, when the captains of Munteçuma commanded them send warriors to go to other conquests, they did it. In everything else, neither Munteçuma nor his representatives interfered, rather they left the command and government to the native chiefs and lords in each village, who were among them so respected and esteemed that the people were not content with serving them as men but thought to adore them as Gods, and thus they gave them all they wished to ask, and the common people lived in continual servitude subject to all that was commanded, and they had no other will than what the chiefs wished to command and order, even though it be to take their own lives, which many times was commanded without there having been anything done to cause it. In order to make a sacrifice to the gods -- if there was no slave to sacrifice -- the Lord chose whom he wished and that one had to die for the sacrifice, and there was nothing else to do, as they say, than stretch out his neck.

All the natives of these villages adored the Devil in the shape of statues made of wood and stones, which they called gods. And they had a great number of them, varied by diverse names that they gave them: some for health and others for seasons or good weather, and others for the women-- in fine, for all human needs. They had in particular a God whom they revered more than the others, whom they called Cuacoqunyos, and whom they had put in a place of sacrifice where they feted him each year, which among them was three hundred and sixty days. This god they called the god-provider of all things, and thus they worshipped him as such.

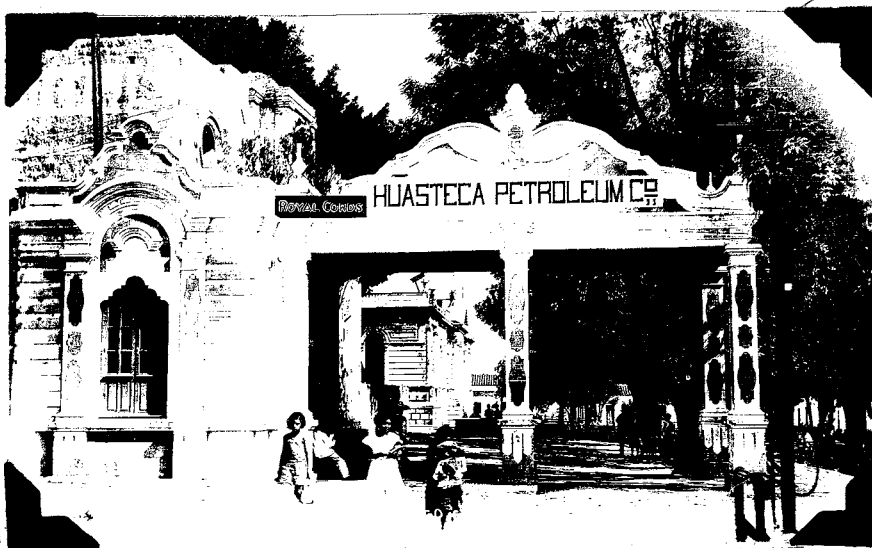
They also sacrificed men, and the priests killed them



THE HOUSE OF BARON HUMBOLDT, TAXCO



A STREET IN CHILPANCINGO



NEW ADDITION TO THE CHURCH IN CHILPANCINGO

and tore out their hearts and made a sacrifice of it, and of the body they made beverages and all who were at the feast partook of them. This kind of sacrifice they made to the Sun when they had to go to war. And if in the village there were slaves, these they killed, but if not, the Lord chose.

The priests were reared from childhood in the temples of these gods and in certain houses which were set aside for them, which were next to the temples. They were sons of the chiefs and other princes. They learned the ceremonies, and when some priest died or completed his time of service in the temple (which they say was seven years) the Lord chose among the youths who were brought up for it, one who seemed to him fitting, and put him in that position and while he was in it he could not go to a woman or drink pulque, and whichever of these two things it was proven he did, he died for.

The attainment to this dignified position of priest was to be more than a chief, because nothing could be done that had not passed under the priest's hand and been consulted about with him, and if he approved it it was put into execution, and if he advised against it it was dropped. In order to see if it was well to do /a given thing/ or not, the priests augured (echar suerte), which is a certain manner of witchcraft they have, in which they invoked demons. How they do not want to say, but declare that all who knew how are already dead, and it is because they have been punished for it. Particularly, they foretold when they had to go war, or when the Lord wished to go to war, to marry, or when he took sick; and thus what the priest said was believed when he had prophesied as if actually it were seen, and in conformity with his saying they did or did not do...

The chiefs had all the women they wanted, although among them there was one who was regarded as the wife, and only the children of this woman inherited the chieftancy, and not those of the others. And when the former had no children, although he might have them by others and the rest of his women, they did not inherit; the nearest relative inherited, and he supported the children of the chief who were left, who were considered bastards. This woman who was regarded as the wife /of the chief/ had to be daughter of another chief, and it was usually managed that she be of chosen lineage, and upon this great importance was put. The rest of the princes and the people had all the women that each one could support in accord with his means.

They gave no dowry or anything with their daughters to the husbands, rather the latter sent presents to the parents in order that they give their daughters, and this even today is observed among them -- I mean among the chiefs -- and if they /the daughters/ be of good lineage it is certain that no one of them need wait to marry.

They punished with great strictness adultery and theft, for, as is proven, no one could excuse from death him who committed either of these two crimes. The fortune of the said delinquent was from then on the chief's, even though he had children, and the proof /of the crime/ was as among barbarians, and thus they must many times have died without being at fault.

The government they had consisted in obeying what their chiefs ordered, for to this there could be no answer, whether it be good or bad. The chiefs had always in their houses one or two of their nearest and oldest relatives. These lived in another patio apart from where the chief lived, and all the complaints and

requests of the village and the embassies that came from other places were presented before him /them/ and he /they/ consulted with the lord, and declared his will to the people... When the lord wished to command something, he declared it to and commanded this old man, who was really his governor, and the latter communicated it to the rest of the princes; and once declared what the chief commanded, immediately it was put into execution, and if it was business that the common people must do, they called the tequitatos, who are some Indian foremen who are in every district and who have in their charge such Indians as are in that district in order to make them attend to the duties which they must perform... These foremen go from house to house telling the Indians what they must do, and in that way no one may fail, under penalty that, if it were business the Lord commanded, he would die right away for it although it be slight cause.

Thus with this cruelty and oppression they /the people/ were usually in such servitude that almost all their lives they were working for the chiefs; and when some one of them has to enter to speak to these latter, after having taken it up with the old man who is mentioned above and whom the Lord has in his house, and the Lord has given permission to enter, they enter without sandals....and while they speak with the chief they lift not their eyes from the ground, and in this and in all other things they showed the obedience and respect they had for him. In everything they /the chiefs/ were obeyed as Lords and revered as Gods, and their government was barbarous in everything and consisted in no law or reason, but only in servitude and misery of the poor people; and today, with all the favor they have from the officers of the

King, they still keep this respect for their chiefs in the villages where there are any.

Before Munteçuma sent his captains to conquer these villages, they had wars with the people of Tecuicuilco and with those of Ixtepex, and these wars only they had, and defended themselves in them.

The people of the village of Malinaltepeque had wars with those of Yolos and some Chinantecans, and they neither subjected themselves to them nor conquered.

The manner of their fighting was all together in squadrons, and some times divided into two wings; and, if they had to await the enemy, they procured to take some stronghold and go up to the highest hill they could, and there they had to be attacked and, face to face, they fought until some overcame the others, and the reward of the war was to make themselves slaves of the conquerors, and they became tributaries of them, as they were of Munteçuma.

The arms with which they fought were shields of otate, which is a strong reed, decorated with feathers of various colors and with bunches of the same feathers hanging from them; and what they call macanas, war clubs, and in Mexicano and in Misteco and Cuicateco, naateyuni, which are sticks of oak, two or three fingers in width, and on one side and on the other inset with sharp stones like knives that make two edges like swords. Their bodies they armed with skins of deer and tigers and lions, and sometimes with what they call escahuipiles, in Mexicano, and in Cuicateco teyoto, which are made of cotton cloth in three or four thicknesses, and, in between the layers, a cloth of the same cotton, and well stitched one with another. They painted their faces and their legs different

colors, to appear more fierce and make themselves fearful to the enemies. The Captains went before and were known by the fact that they wore their hair pulled up and tied in the middle with a leather string. The chief named these captains and they were those who were considered most valiant. Sometimes the chiefs themselves went to war; and when they did not they named in their place some one who was like a captain general, whom all obeyed. The war lasted only a short time because, since they used no stratagems but fought body to body, one or the other was conquered and subjected quickly.

The habit and dress they used in peace were some long cotton cloths, square, and they tied one corner with another on one of their shoulders, and they covered them down to the ankles; and these cloths were striped in colors, and many designs were woven in the lower part. They had one like a chasuble made of embroideries and interwoven in them white and colored feathers, and for this purpose they raised some birds which are a kind of duck (except that they are larger and have a red bill), which they call in Cuicateco dzacha, and in Mexicano canauctli. These mantles the princes wore, but the common people's were of henequen, which is a fiber they get from the leaves of the maguey of which they make a very coarse cloth. Many of them are not able to obtain even this, and they go about naked with only breechcloths of henequen. Their bodies under these mantles they left naked, and their shame they covered with breechcloths which hung from a string they wore around their waists. The priests wore these mantles tied to their necks with a cord, and by this they were known. The chiefs and princes wore earrings and lip-pieces of gold, and beads of green-stone and gold about their necks, and for





REBOSO WEAVERS - CHILAPA



STREET SCENE IN SAN AGUSTIN ATENANGO



REBOSO WEAVER - CHILAPA

shoes they wore something like slippers except that at the instep there was nothing but some leather strings with which they tie to the toes and in the back to the heels. The princes wore these heels well painted and gilded, and the people could not use them except plain. This shoe in Cuicateco is called dagun and in Mexicano cactles.

The women wear a dress they make from the same cotton cloth and they tie it at the waist and it covers them down to their ankles. They are called in Cuicateco tazcaa, and are worn, by the princesses. /They are/ beautiful and many colored, and woven in them /are/ many ornaments. From the waist up they wear another piece which in Cuicateco they call teyoto and in Mexicano huipil, which is another square cloth, sewed on the sides, and open where the head and arms come out. These blouses were very elegant and had the same border below as the mantles of the Indian men, and also about the opening for the head they had a border of colors and feathers. The same dress they use today except that the Indian men now wear shirts and breeches (caraguelles) and blouses of cotton cloth, which is like linen, and many wear jackets of woolen cloth, blue and green, and breeches of the same, too, and cloaks, and shoes and boots of leather; and others wear their jackets and cloaks and breeches of coarse wool cloth. And there is no difference between the people and the princes, but each one may dress according to the extent of his means, and many because they have none go about naked.

The food they used and use now is corn, of which they make tortillas, and these they cook on clay plates, and it is their ordinary bread; beans which are like small horse beans; chile, and some wild herbs which they commonly call quelites; hares,

rabbits and deer. Although in ancient times all did not eat game, because hunting was prohibited them by the Lords, today it is common for those who wish it. They kill with net and sticks; they eat lizards and rats and other uncleanliness. In ancient times, the common people could not eat chickens, but only the princes could. Today all who wish to eat them are free to do so. They also eat mutton when they can afford it. They make a beverage of cacao, which is a fruit like almonds and which passes among them for money. They grind it with the dough they make of corn and mix it with water and drink it and it is of great nourishment; not all of them can afford it all the time, because it costs money and the people have none. They drink also a beverage, like honey-water, which they get from the maguey plants, and drunk plain it is good and healthful, but they throw a root in it, which in Cuicateco is called yacuaa and in Mexicano ocpatli, and by only putting this root in it and leaving it two or three days it becomes so strong a drink that they become drunk with it. And this is a very ordinary vice, although in this village of Atlatlaucca the magueys do not grow because it is hot land, but they bring it from two leagues away and from other places for the purpose, besides which they have some plums which they call obos, with the juice of which, pressed out and left to sour, they make a drink with which they get drunk too. They have another drink which is nourishing, called in Cuicateco yocinde, and in Mexicano chia, which is also common among them and held to be healthful and refreshing.

The Indians say that in ancient times there were many people in these villages, and this /much/ clearly is known, that of twenty parts of them there is not one left. They cannot say whether they lived more healthfully or not; I suppose that it must

have been in the same way, except that as there were more Indians they noticed less those who died. The cause of their having been destroyed they say has been three very great pestilences which have appeared since the Spaniards came, and there is no doubt that this is so, because in one which was three years ago, which we all saw, there was no village where the fourth of the people did not die, or a third. At present there are about seven hundred Indians in these two villages...

The site of Malinaltepeque seems to be healthful because it is cool and the sun bathes it, and it is not humid land because it is very high.

The sicknesses common to the natives are fevers with head- and body-pains, bloody stools, pains in the groin, and pain of the side and belly, and for the women mother-sickness. The remedies which they use are to go to the temazcales, which are a kind of artificial baths to be found in every village, and when the sicknesses are known to be of heat, such as fever or head-pain, they bathe in the arroyos and springs. Sometimes they bleed themselves, and there are among them barbers who bleed with stone lancets and break the vein, like those with which we bleed ourselves. Also they use many beverages and ointments of herbs, and there are among them doctors who perform the office of curing, and mostly these are women...

These Indians make use of many medicinal herbs, and among those they know are the following:

For breakage or dislocation of arm or leg, they take the bark of a tree which they call in their tongue yandandaqueno and in Mexicano cacalosuchil, and this, placed hot on the break and bound, they say mends.

For head-pain, they take a snake tooth and prick the head of the sick one, and it is beneficial.

For belly-pain they drink mesquite bark dissolved in hot water.

For bloody-stools, lion fat and bones of the same, ground and drunk with a rose called suchinacaztle, dissolved in water they say is beneficial.

For groin-pains they take a root called in their tongue acondoho and in Mexicano matlacpatl; this, drunk dissolved in water they say is much used among the natives.

For women in childbirth, in order that their flesh heal, they give a root called chichiepatle to drink; this is given ground and dissolved in water, and with this they are cured.

For side-pain, they give a root they call in their tongue macondoho and in Mexicano tlacopatle, and this they give, as the others, to drink.

They use potions and purges of herbs and roots of little moment, which because they provoke vomitings ~~and~~ therefore I do not put them down.

These herbs and plants the Indians declare they have for curing, and these are used by the doctors among them, and many others they must have, but they do not want to declare them, nor those poisonous ones they have...

The houses of the natives in this village of Atlatlaueca are all of straw, because the earth is not /suitable/ for roofs, since it all leaks when it rains, well built though it be. The houses of the common people are very small and with one or two rooms next to the street. Two or three married Indians with their women and children live often in one house, as if in a pigsty.

The houses of the princes and chiefs are larger, and some have two or three patios and around them some rooms without doors which serve as reception rooms; and this is all there is to their houses. All the materials they need to build they have in their villages.

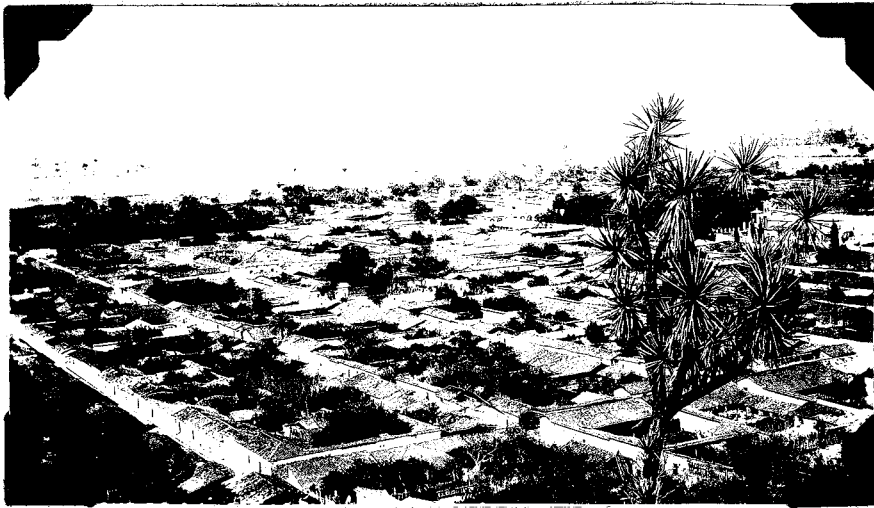
All these villages are built in strongholds, for the land is very rugged and they are enclosed by great unassailable hills.

The trade and occupation of the natives in these villages is the corn /which/ they harvest, and the other seeds and fruit /which/ they gather in great quantity from the land. These they go to sell and barter in the markets, and other things they bring from other places, and this is their business and gain. Their taxes they pay in corn and in money, in conformity with what the Royal Audience has assessed.

These villages fall within the diocese of the Bishopric of Guaxaca, fourteen and ten leagues from the said Ciudad de Antequera, where the cathedral is located, to the northeast of the said city. The main town of this corregimiento is this village of Atlatlaucca: the rest is already said, where they lie and the leagues there are from here to them. All the roads are crooked, rough, and mountainous, and the leagues are long.

In both these villages there are Churches roofed with straw where mass is said and the Sacraments are administered to the natives... In neither of them is there a chaplaincy or living whatever.

This is what it seems fitting to me to answer to the said questions and what I have been able to learn about them from the oldest Indians and natives of the said villages, present the governors, alcaldes of them, who signed with me. -- Francisco de



CHILAPA, GUERRERO



STREET IN CHILAPA



FEDERAL RURAL SCHOOL IN CHILAPA

la Mesquita (signed) -- Don Martín Maldonado (signed) -- Juan Baptista (signed) -- Pedro García (signed) -- Pedro de Spinosa (signed).

### The Conquest and Afterwards

Oaxaca and the land of the Mixtecs and Zapotecs was added to the other conquests of Hernando Cortés in New Spain in the latter part of 1521 as the result of a successful campaign in that region waged by Francisco de Orozco. Beginning with 1521 the story of the Mixteca is, with only slight variation, the story of all the rest of central and southern Mexico. The cross soon followed the sword; churches and monasteries were built; and the whole system of Spanish civil administration was implanted throughout the region. Wise enough in most cases to seek to adapt their own institutions to those of the Indians, the Spaniards nevertheless, in "civilizing" and Christianizing the Indians broke down in large part the native institutional structure and disrupted the indigenous cultural pattern. The Catholic clergy and the Christian gods undermined the authority of the native priests; the parceling out of the agricultural lands to the conquerors in encomiendas in many sections resulted in the virtual enslavement of the Indians and seriously disorganized their economic life and their communal system of land holding; and the ravages of recurrent plagues of the new diseases brought in by the Spaniards (syphilis, small pox, and measles) decimated the population. New arts, such as the weaving of silk were introduced here and there, the mining industry was developed and some attempt was made to exploit the tropical products of the region, but these things added little if anything to the wealth or welfare of the native groups.



The winning of Independence from Spain in 1821 brought no improvement to the lot of the Mixtecs. On the contrary their condition during the turbulent decades of revolution and internecine strife which followed independence and during the thirty years of the Díaz regime went from bad to worse. Isolated and forgotten, the people eked out a miserable existence as peons on the great haciendas which had enclosed their lands. Abandoned by the State and with the Church unable or unwilling to use its power for the advancement of the people, with few exceptions the Mixtec villages were left without schools or any other means for developing leadership and improving their situation.

The final blow to the Mixteca came with the revolution of 1910-21. Rebels and loyalists, bandits, and what not fought back and forth, villages were burned, abandoned, rebuilt and burned again. Whichever side won, the Mixtecs always lost. The <sup>final</sup> ~~harsh~~ result of it all is that the Mixteca, and more especially the Mixteca Alta of Guerrero, once the home of a proud and capable people, is today one of the most poverty-stricken and backward regions to be found anywhere in Mexico. The post-revolutionary governments have been seeking to change this unhappy state of affairs by applying the sovereign remedies of schools and roads. It remains to be seen whether the medicine can be administered in strong enough doses and whether it will kill or cure the patient.

#### TRAVEL DIARY -- MAY 11 TO JUNE 2, 1931

Monday, May 11



After the usual preliminaries of patching the car together, the Simpson-Beals expedition set out from Mexico City at 8:30 this morning and managed to get as far as about eight kilometers

this side of Taxco (Place-of-the-ball-game). At this point, despite the fairly respectable appearance of the old Cadillac in which we were riding, internal and external complaints of one sort and another began to develop. First it was the radiator cap, which blew off, then one of the back tires blew out, and finally the "unión universal" (whatever that may be -- it sounds like a communist labor organization) broke into several parts. This put a definitive end to any further progress. Luckily a bus came lumbering along shortly and, albeit somewhat informally, -- i.e., sitting on the floor jammed in between the feet of various and sundry peons -- we reached Taxco.

Here we are staying for the night with my good friend Bill Spratling -- familiarly known as the "alcalde of Taxco." Spratling, who was for some time a teacher of architecture in Tulane, has been living in Taxco for the past two years. He has bought a house and more or less gone native. Most of his time is spent in writing occasional articles for the N.Y. Herald Tribune and in collecting idols, masks, and other archaeological specimens from the surrounding pueblos of the state of Guerrero.

This afternoon we spent in an inspection of Moisés Sáenz' week-end house which he recently built here and in bargaining with an old lady for the sale of her place. Beals thinks he will buy it and settle down in Taxco. If this deal is actually consummated, Taxco may be said to be fairly on the way to becoming a "colony" after the fashion of Cuernavaca, for Beals will make the fourth American to buy a house here during the last two years. (Hubert Herring owns two houses here and recently Abbott of the Chicago Art Museum bought a place which he plans to visit whenever he can get away from Chicago.)