

## OXPEMUL

LATITUDE 18° 18.3' N.

LONGITUDE 89° 47.9' W.

*Range of Dates: 9.15.0.0.0-10.0.0.0.0*

Oxpemul, first reported February 2, 1934, was visited by the Third Campeche Expedition February 7-16. The site is reached via Rio Desempeño, whence, if the trails are open, it is possible to push through in one day. On the San Lorenzo trail about two and a quarter hours out of Rio Desempeño (some of the workmen estimated the distance to be three leagues), a small trail turns off sharply to the right leading to the aguada and abandoned camp of San Martin. Not over fifteen minutes' ride from the turnoff is the aguada of Nucal, which is small, shallow, and often dry. About 8 km. farther along the trail is the aguada of Lechugal, another undependable water hole. San Martin is said to be two leagues beyond the latter, although the expedition covered the distance in an hour. From San Martin to the abandoned camp of Rapido is one and a quarter hour's ride and the aguada of Oxpemul is an hour's ride south of Rapido. Most of the country passed through is extremely hilly with only an occasional small *akalche* (swamp). Many isolated mounds and large platforms supporting mounds were seen, as well as groups similar to those near Tres Marias and near Central Buenfil (cf. Becan). These—oval, round, or rectangular—are outlined by a single course of stones or rise as much as a meter in height. Built across some of the narrow, steep-sided valleys were low masonry walls, perhaps serving as check dams.

Similar constructions were also noted between Central Buenfil and Calakmul.

The name Oxpemul, a Maya word meaning "three hills" (*oxpe* "three," *mul* "hills"), was given to the site by chicleiros who worked in the region the previous year. The name was applied presumably because three pyramids (Structures III, IV, and VI) rise considerably above all the others. The surrounding terrain is very uneven, although the hills probably do not rise more than 50-60 m. The vegetation is dense, with much sapodilla and ramon. There are two aguadas: one, rather small, but sufficient at most times for camp use; the second, .5 km. south of the first, is much larger and supplied ample water for the mules.

The city, occupying a strategic position on the summit of a knoll 57 m. above the aguada level, can be reached in 15 minutes' uphill walk, almost due west, from the water hole. Somewhat irregular in shape, as the boundaries are determined by the crest of the hill, its long axis has a northwest-southeast length of 350 m. and its transverse axis a width of 140 m. It is arranged according to a somewhat carefully thought-out plan consisting of a West Plaza, an East Plaza, and an East Group (pl. 67). South Oxpemul was located on a hilltop a kilometer to the southwest.

## WEST PLAZA

This plaza has its long axis north and south with Structures I, II, and III defining the west side, Structure IV the north, Structure V the east, and Structure VI the south.

STRUCTURES I AND II, both now small mounds differing in size and shape, rise to the same height. On neither were any traces of a stairway or remains of a building, although it is reasonable to suppose that both were originally here represented.

STRUCTURE III lies north of Structure II and rises rather sharply 12.50 m. above the court level. Although no walls were observed on the summit, a building undoubtedly occupied this position. On the east side is a

stairway 5 m. wide (pl. 18*a*). The lower seven steps have treads and risers 58 cm. and 47 cm. respectively. The stones used are large blocks; some are 1.15 m. long, 53 cm. high, and 45 cm. deep. Stela 1 and a round altar are at the east base of the structure.

STRUCTURE IV, the highest pyramid in the city, faces south and has on this side a stairway 22.50 m. wide. It is much covered with debris, but the risers, of which the first measures 36 cm., definitely have a slight batter. Cf. Coba, Court N (Thompson, Pollock, and Charlott, 1932, p. 51); Piedras Negras, Structure 1-6 (Satterthwaite, 1935, p. 22); Oxpemul, Structures Ve, VII (*infra*); Chichen Itza, Caracol, risers of lower section of lower

platform stairway (Ruppert, 1935, p. 51). The lower treads are apparently very broad and the stones used are large and heavy, but 3 m. above the plaza they are much smaller and the treads seem narrower. About 3 m. from either side of the base of the stairway is a stone block. The one to the west is 1.20 m. wide, 69 cm. deep, with the top 1.30 m. above the first tread. The stairway seemingly leads to a landing about 4 m. wide, 32 m. long, and 6.50 m. above the plaza. From this, a second and much narrower stairway ascends the pyramid, which supports a mound 2.75 m. high, 12 m. long (east and west), and 10 m. wide. This mound is roughly U-shaped, caused by a low 4-by-5-m. area on the south side. A roughly laid wall of stones, not faced and with no mortar apparent, lines the east side of this low area. On top of the wall is a 22-cm. beveled cornice stone; its face is 44 cm. long, its tenon 48 cm. long.

Stelae 2-5 and four round altars are at the east base of Structure IV.

STRUCTURE V, a long low mound on the east side of the plaza, surmounted by three major buildings, calls to mind the east range of Group E at Uaxactun. The platform is 86 m. long, about 28 m. wide, and rises 5.20 m. At its north end is a small mound (pl. 67, Vd) on which were seen some worked stones, now much weathered; none, however, was in alignment.

STRUCTURE VA. The northernmost of the three buildings usually found associated with this type of arrangement is shown in plate 67. It is now represented only by a mound at the eastern edge of the long platform, so that on the west side the platform has a width of only 6.50 m. Wall stones of two types were found lying on the surface; one type, consisting of rather large blocks, has average measurements of 15 by 18 by 26 cm.; the other, veneer-like, measures 20 by 22 by 16 cm. On top of the mound were a number of capstones 72 cm. long, 36 cm. wide, and 10 cm. thick; they are not worked with care and the ends are rounded.

STRUCTURE VB, occupying the middle position, seems to have rested on a low platform of its own, 16 m. wide, 20 m. long, and 2.80 m. high; the building-mound rises another 3 m. On the south slope is a corner apron-molding stone 1 m. by 99 cm. by 22 cm.

STRUCTURE VC, indicated only by a mound, south of the main central building, balances Va to the north. It is somewhat larger and rises 1.50 m. higher than Va and, like the latter, now shows no standing wall surfaces. Possibly these buildings, like Vb, may have rested on low independent platforms, but they are now covered with debris. Even though no stairways were seen leading from the plaza level it is reasonable to suppose, from the talus

in front (west) of the middle building, that there was a stairway here and that similar ones may have existed for the north and south buildings. Extending along the south edge of the top of the long platform and turning north to abut the east side of Structure Vc is a mound Vf rising not over a meter high. It shows no standing walls and in some places suggests little more than a parapet.

Between Structures Vb and Vc, at the extreme eastern edge of the platform and rising 2.50 m. above it, is a long narrow mound (Ve). A stairway ascends its east side; the lower section (16 m. wide, formed of five risers, each having a slight batter—cf. lower section of stairway associated with Structures IV and VII) leads to a small landing, from which a second flight of stairs, now covered with detritus, appears to rise. The treads of the lower section measure 1.01 m., 1.06 m., 87 cm., and 61 cm. respectively. The height of only the first riser could not be determined; the others were 34 cm., 31 cm., 26 cm., and 24 cm. Some of the stones used in this section of the stairway measure 96 cm. long, 34 cm. high, and 52 cm. wide. Structure Ve, together with its stairway, may be of later construction than the others and not an integral part of the symmetrically balanced long platform with its three major buildings.

Stelae 6-10, each accompanied by a round altar, are at the base of Structure V.

STRUCTURE VI comprises two distinct yet closely related constructions. One, a pyramid plainly associated with the West Plaza, of which it forms the southern boundary, measures 25 m. on the west by 31 m. on the north and rises to a height of 14 m. No definite evidence of a stairway was found on its north side although the talus suggests the location of one here. A projection on the south side, which rises from the base and may have supported a building, attains an added height of 3.50 m. over the section of pyramid just described. The east slope rises from the top of a long mound which faces the East Plaza. On this side of the pyramid the talus slightly suggests a stairway or projection leading from its summit down to the long mound. This mound, its long axis north and south, has a length of 44 m. and a height of 6.20 m. A stairway on the east, now covered with debris, has an approximate width of 17 m. At its base are Stela 17 and a round altar. No standing walls were seen in the complex, but the east mound may have contained a series of longitudinal chambers. These two constructions are independent in that they face different plazas but are related because of their contiguity.

## EAST PLAZA

The east mound of Structure VI and Structure Vc, which lie on the west side of the East Plaza, have been described. Structure VII defines the south end, Structure XI the north, and the East Group, the east side.

STRUCTURE VII has a length of 75 m., an average width of 10 m., and rises from either end with a number of low terraces. No standing walls are visible and the only worked stones noted are in the stairway. This stairway, located on the north side of the mound, has a width of 17 m. and gives onto a landing approximately 2 by 29 m. The treads measure 1.21 m., 91 cm., and 81 cm. respectively, and the four risers average 27 cm. high and are set at an angle (cf. Structure IV). A second flight of stairs apparently led from the landing to the top of the platform, upon which are two small mounds, each approximately 3 m. square and not more than a meter high. These mounds, the highest portion

of Structure VII, rise only 6 m. above the plaza level. Stelae 14-16, each associated with a round altar, are at the north base of the structure.

STRUCTURES VIII, IX, AND X are in line with the longitudinal axis of the plaza. A stairway on the north side of the last has a width of 13 m., is made up of three treads and four risers each 34 cm. and 20 cm. respectively. At the northwest corner of Structure IX is a single worked stone; its face, 26 by 38 cm., has been rabbeted longitudinally to a depth of 7 cm. and a width of 12 cm.

STRUCTURE XI, defining the north side of the plaza, shows no traces of a building although it is probable that there had been one, composed of a series of longitudinal chambers. Stela 11 and a round altar are at the base of the structure. The altar is plain and the standing stela is carved on three sides.

## EAST GROUP

STRUCTURE XII of the East Group is a complicated arrangement of mounds, platforms, terraces, and courts. The principal mound has a length of 100 m. Attached to its east side is a great terrace supporting a number of small mounds which, unquestionably, are fallen buildings. Projecting eastward from this terrace are two parallel constructions, the apparent remains of a series of longitudinal chambers, one at the north and one at the south, which are 33 m. and 28 m. long respectively. Following the edge of the crest of the hill in this section of the city are a number of small, low mounds. These, together with the two long parallel ones, break up the East Group into three somewhat irregularly shaped courts, the North, Central, and South.

Occasional bits of standing wall were found in the group. One of the best preserved is on the south side of the Central Court and represents the wall between two parallel, longitudinal chambers. The wall stones are rough, irregular blocks; some show very little working, if any, and only rarely is a well-dressed stone encountered. The vault stones, for the most part, are slabs 38-40 cm. long, 24 cm. wide, and 5-13 cm. deep; the exposed face is usually thicker than the tenon. Other vault stones measure 20 by 28 cm. on the exposed face. Some show a casual working to give a bevel. As the vault has here been thrust out of shape, the angle at which it rose could not be determined. No beam holes were noted in the standing sections of wall or vault (pl. 17d).

## SOUTH OXPEMUL

On February 11, while the expedition was at Oxpemul one of the muleteers reported a small group, with two standing stelae, on a hill a short distance from the main part of the city. This group, in which no building was standing, occupies the summit of a hill 1.22 km.

southwest of Structure VI and was given the name South Oxpemul. Its plan is seen in plate 67.

STRUCTURE XIII is noteworthy in that it has a broad flight of stairs at its north base and has Stelae 18 and 19 at its northeast and northwest corners respectively.