

or basket of corn on their heads (fig. 35). Many wear flowers or leaves as a crown in their hair. The small girl children are carried astride the hip of their mothers, and as soon as they can walk they trail along after them, always with flowers in their hair, shiny glass bead chains around their necks, and dressed in small skirts—an exact miniature of their mothers (fig. 36). The young boys run around stark naked.

The town was preparing for a "fiesta," a great celebration in honor of its patron saint. These "fiestas" rarely take place without much noise and shooting of rockets imported from the Mexican towns along the Tehuantepec railroad. We were, therefore, not astonished when awakened about two o'clock in the morning by some shots, rockets going off to tell the world that Tatahuicápa would be celebrating before long.

Reducing our packs to two cargoes, we set out the next morning towards the Gulf coast.

Where the territory of Tatahuicápa and of Pajápan meets, the Indians have erected a cross, and this is constantly kept decorated with flowers.

First we reached Pajápan, a place more sophisticated than Tatahuicápa, with several houses built in Spanish style, and a huge old Spanish Colonial church. As we passed through we, as usual, presented our respects to the chief, an old white-haired Indian, who looked perfectly unreliable. He glanced at our government papers and called for his secretary, saying that he could not see very well. That is the excuse always used when the good chief cannot read and write.

Pajápan lies on the eastern slopes of the San Martín Pajápan volcano, and from the village Plaza is a fine view both of the mountain towards the west and over the Laguna de Ostiones (the Oyster Lagoon) in the lowlands of the Coatzacoálcos valley to the east.

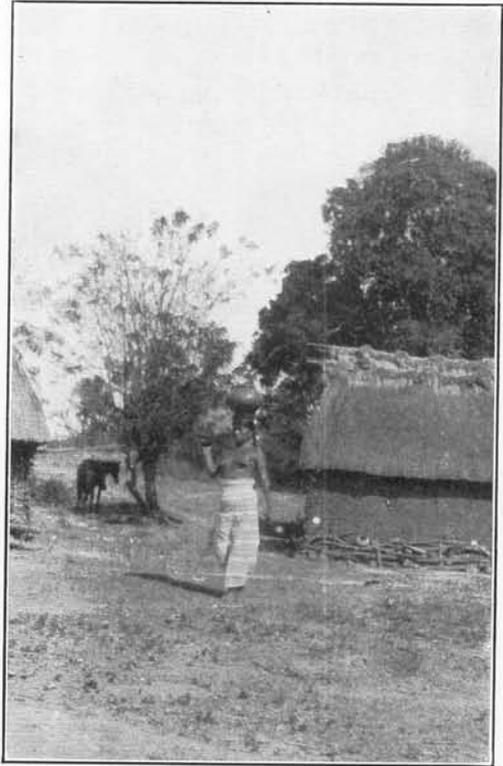


FIG. 35—Tatahuicapa, Ver. Indian woman going to the river for water.