

pire on the basis of our knowledge of the New Empire, helped by a study of the architecture and art expressed in the Old Empire cities, as well as of the life now led by the Indians of Maya descent.

Today huge tropical forests cover the greater part of the country in which the Maya culture was developing towards its first great period two thousand years ago. The oldest cities, Uaxactún and Tikal, lie in the heart of the jungle. There the large public squares between the buildings are covered with impenetrable bush; the pyramids lie hidden under a carpet of trees and vines; and the roots of big trees are penetrating the walls of the temples, day by day completing their destruction.

Disembarking in Frontera, we stepped on Maya soil. From this point onward, we were going to explore the area inhabited by the ancient Maya race; so we again halted a few days to finish our notes on the country which we had passed over, and to freshen up our knowledge of the country and people which we were about to study.

Entering the mouth of the Grijalva river we again reached historic ground. It was, as a matter of fact, the ground touched by the first European Conquerors on their first voyage. In 1518 Grijalva discovered this river, trading with the Indians along its banks and giving them glass beads for gold. Again in 1519 the Cortes expedition entered the river. Only one of the three ships of this expedition could cross the bar. Upon entering the river, the Spaniards found it full of Indian canoes crowded with great numbers of armed men. At first the relations between Indians and Spaniards were friendly; but it was not long before war broke out. Several battles were fought, and here for the first time horses were used on the American Continent. Both horses and firearms were new to the aborigines and threw them into consternation, leaving victory with the small troop of Spaniards.

The main battle was fought at Centla, and several investigations have been made to locate this place. The general supposition is that it was at the place now called Bellota, across the river from the modern Frontera.

Just opposite Frontera is the ranch El Coco, formerly owned by Americans who made excavations of several ancient Indian mounds. From this ranch there is said to be a long string of mounds extending as far as the Laguna del Remate.

The first modern explorer to visit the ruins of Centla was Berendt, whose notes were published by Brinton. Charnay saw some ruins near Bellota, and tells us that burnt brick was used there