

part of a warrior holding a spear. The complete brick has on its surface the drawing of a conventionalized serpent's head. The drawings on these bricks closely resemble the scratchings found on the walls of many of the temples in the Petén area, such as Tikal, Nakum, and San Clemente.

Not far distant from the ruins, to the east, is a large lagoon, the Mecoacán, where oysters abound. Here is where the ancient

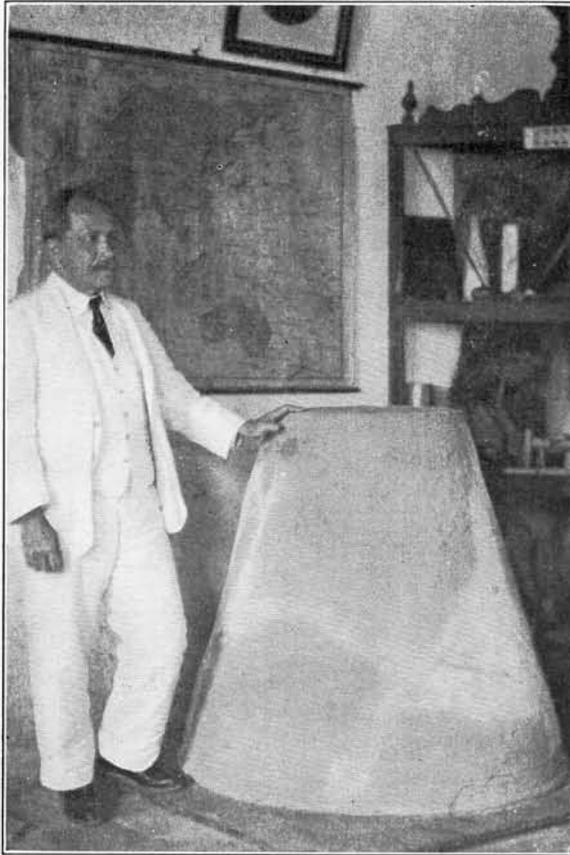


FIG. 95—Comalcalco, Tab. Professor Taracena with huge pot found by him in the North Plaza of the Ruins.
Circumference at bottom 3.40 m.
Height 1 m.

The Maya architect never learnt how to build the true arch. When the vertical walls of a building had reached the desired height, the mason pushed one stone at a time a little further in than the next lower one, and by doing this from both sides of the room, the stones would eventually meet in a point. In stone buildings a cut stone slab, the Key Slab, would close the arch. In the Comalcalco buildings the two slanting walls meet. This was a cumbersome

builders got the oyster shells which they burnt into mortar and used as binding material for their brick, and for the stucco surfaces of their walls. The layers of mortar between the brick are usually about one centimeter thicker than the brick itself, and the mortar used for the walls is crude, containing many unburnt oyster shells.

The rough walls of the building were covered with a layer of fine mortar, or stucco, and this was painted. The color most commonly used was a deep red, extracted from the red ochre earth so abundant in the whole of the Maya area. Blue, green, yellow, and black were also used.

One outstanding feature of all Maya buildings is the corbelled arch.